



# **Understanding Conflict Trends in Africa: A Peer into the Psychocultural Conflict Perspective**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Conflicts within continental Africa have been a recurring decimal in the socio-political, economic, and cultural history of the people of Africa from time immemorial. In the last few decades, especially from the mid-twentieth century, African societies have been undergoing difficult times vis-à-vis interstate and intrastate conflagrations. This study attempts to provide a critical glimpse into the nature of the concept of conflict, its inherent characteristic features and the various types of conflicts applicable to the African continent. It relied on the qualitative content analysis of secondary sources of data, and the psychocultural conflict approach was adopted as the tools of analysis for the study. The paper argues that conflicts in the different African regions are both interstate and intrastate; the latter remaining the dominant form of conflict in Africa with an increasing amount of actors. Also, the essay holds that conflicts have undermined Africa's development by causing the loss of human lives and economic resources, dislocation of people, and increased poverty rate. The paper, therefore, recommends the need for a context-specific and multi-layer conflict resolution, management and prevention initiative(s) encapsulating a broad based local, regional and international collaboration between all concerned stakeholders; the unfettered adherence to the rule of law; and the governments' need to place as their basic attention the welfare of the citizens through well guided policies so as to increase citizens' living standards and support human capital development.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Conflicts within continental Africa have been a recurring decimal in the social, political, economic, and cultural history of the people of Africa from time immemorial. In the last few decades, especially from the mid-twentieth century, African societies and the emergent nation-states have been undergoing difficult times in terms of interstate and intrastate conflagrations. According to the Department for International Development (DFID) [1:3]: “The total magnitude of major armed conflicts increased rapidly during the decolonization period (mid-1950s through the mid-1970); it increased strongly again through the 1980s. The general trend reversed in the 1990s and has decreased by nearly 50 per cent since its peak in 1991.”

The demise of the cold war which marked the fall of the Berlin wall and the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century brought about the appearance of a new-found form of confrontation encapsulated within religion and culture in a highly radicalized fashion in continental Africa [2], especially in its Northern region and other areas below the Sahara Desert. This is in addition to the several variants of interstate conflagrations and societal tensions – ethnic cleansing, tensions for resource control, revolutionary wars, inter-communal clashes, electoral violence, civil wars, political mass murder, coup d'état, etc., – occurring in Africa. These, in turn, complicate the security, industrial and infrastructural developmental strides within the continent, and earns the region the image of an ultra-explosive and frail sub-system in a globalizing world system. These several variants of interstate conflagrations and societal tensions show that conflicts in contemporary Africa as well as the number of actors, particularly non-state actors, appear to be increasingly fragmented. This is evident, as Cilliers and Schunemann [3] wrote, in regions such as Darfur in Sudan, where the peace process that was finalized at the all Darfur Stakeholders' Conference in May 2011 in Doha, Qatar, was significantly complicated by divisions among various rebel groups.

Many approaches have been proposed to explain these conflict trends. In his 1954 classic, Gordon Allport notes that most of such approaches were “as a rule ... advanced by their authors to call attention to ... one important

causal factor, without implying that no other factors are operating” [in 4:1182]. This remains a truism today, as it was six decades ago. The different approaches to conflict trends in Africa focus on a wide variety of specific and different causal factors, and no analytical framework or approach has yet been proposed that provides a complete explanation of conflict trends in Africa. Taking a cue from the foregoing, it may not be out of place to mention that this study, though not oblivious of the fallacy of the single cause, holds that most scholarly works on tensions within continental Africa have been pursued at the nation-state level, focusing largely on the following factors: “un-demarcated borders, irredenta, resource distribution and refuge questions, liberation wars and/or conflicts as diversion from domestic political or economic crises” [5:445]. Detailed analyses of the dynamic subjective psychological and cultural disposition of Africans and existing socio-structural components have been met with infinitesimal attempts.

To that extent, therefore, this essay is poised at analyzing the concept of conflict which Rahim [6] defines as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement and dissonance within or between social entities. Also, the study aims at discussing Africa; to answer the question of how many countries make-up the continent, since it is the study's focus. It also seeks to undertake an explication on the types of conflicts in Africa as well as the expatiation of the psychocultural theory that explains the factors which generate and sustains conflicts in Africa.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Conflict

There is no generally accepted definition of the concept. This is because there is a myriad of them available by scholars who are influenced by their personal experiences and environment. Added to this is the fact that two other contentious issues exist: whether conflicts are biologically induced (a type of human natural behavioural disposition) or whether conflicts are induced by situational factors; and whether there is a dividing line between conflicts and other forms of aggression in Africa. The latter, taking a cue from Burja [7], draws from the fact that in discussing the conflict, there has not been a

consensus as to whether the term conflict should be used interchangeably with other terms like civil war, hostility, violent conflict, war, political instability, and civil strife. For instance, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Aide-Memoire in Burja [7], equating conflict with civil war, perceive it as exhibiting significant military actions with at least 1000 battle-related (combats and civilians) deaths recorded per year. Meaning anything less than 1000 deaths, say 950 deaths, the conflict cannot be called a civil war but something else – a hostility maybe?

The definitional divergences, nevertheless, the definitions all agreed on some facts which are imperative in aiding our grasping of the concept at hand. For instance, on a general basis, conflicts refer to some form of friction, disagreement or discord arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of a group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group [8].

In his 2005 study, Miller [in 9] describes the conflict as a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends. He tends to agree with the idea that conflict may be either manifest, recognizable through actions or behaviour, or latent, in which case it remains dormant for a time as incompatibilities as unarticulated or are built into systems or such institutional arrangements as government, corporations, or even civil society.

For Burja [7:3], conflict means “a violent and armed confrontation and the struggle between groups, between the state and one or more groups, and between two or more states. In such confrontation and struggle, some of those involved are injured and killed. Such a conflict can last anything from six months to over twenty years”. One can, however, ask if it is more than twenty months, will it not be called a conflict (despite the casualty rate)?

Conflicts could be or take the form of what scholars term “jaw-jaw” (war with words – spoken, sung or writing), or it could be “war-war.” Usually, conflict situations start from “jaw-jaw” and then metamorphose into “war-war” To that extent, therefore, Osaghae [10] purports that conflicts start from the point of simple disagreements to a point where open violence becomes inevitable and a continuous hostile environment is perpetrated.

More so, Mengistu [11] defines conflict as an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles. It is present when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or pursue their interests through actions that damage the other parties. Quite similarly, Rahim [6] sees conflict as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement and dissonance within or between social entities. These social entities or parties may be individuals, small or large groups, and countries [11].

According to Mengistu [11:29], the contested interests can diverge in a number of ways:

- i. Over resources – territory, money, energy sources, food – and how they should be distributed;
- ii. Over power, how control and participation in political decision-making are allocated;
- iii. Over identity, concerning the cultural, social and political communities to which people feel tied;
- iv. Over status, whether people believe they are treated with respect and dignity and whether their traditions and social positions are respected; and
- v. Over values, particularly those embodied in systems of government, religion, or ideology.

From the above definitions the following components are most discernible:

- i. There is a contentious issue(s) which breeds resentments and hostilities;
- ii. There are recognized parties whether individual, groups, states, or nations in a zero-sum situation with opposing interests;
- iii. There must be a belief by each side that the other is acting or will act against them;
- iv. This belief is likely to be justified by actions taken;
- v. The taken action may be words - usually, but not necessarily, at the initial stage - and brute force;
- vi. Conflict is a process, having developed from past interactions. Therefore, it is a characteristic of human existence; a part of the dynamics of life that drives us into the future, but which needs to be managed constructively;
- vii. Violent conflict stands as a measure of a fundamental disturbance in the ‘normal’ social dynamics of state-societal systems,

- i.e., warfare is symptomatic of the degree to which social conflict, coupled with ineffective conflict management, has transformed collective action from constructive to destructive modes of behaviour; and
- viii. Conflict is undesirable since it results in the loss of human lives, crops and livestock, destruction of property, displaces people and heightens refugee crises, and diverts human and financial resources away from development [6,9,1,11].

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

As seen in the introduction many explanatory approaches have been proposed to explain conflict trends in Africa. In this vein, the 'psycho-cultural' approach of conflicts is analyzed as it identifies a very interesting source of conflicts in Africa.

### 2.2.1 Psychocultural approach

This theory, developed by Marc Howard Ross in his 1995 study, explains conflicts vis-à-vis psychological and cultural forces that frame beliefs about the self, others and behaviour. The dispositions that make-up the inner worlds of a group and its members are used to make sense of the external events and behaviour of others [9]. Basically, the psycho-cultural conflict theory focuses on the individual as a cultural being. That is, albeit certain fundamental psychological processes seem to determine an inherent human readiness or propensity for violent conflicts, these processes do not operate in an automatic and inevitable fashion; they exist in cultural group structures within a society where conflict (either manifest or latent) may be socially widespread. For instance, in Rwanda one is born into his/her own nationalities – Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. In apartheid South Africa, the primordial folk lines are around racial segregation, thus, one is either born into the white or black community. In this vein, this approach emphasizes that all persons are not prejudiced or conflict-oriented against all out-groups. Some out-groups may be liked, others elicit indifference, whereas still others may be disliked or even hated [4]. Hence, it can be argued that not all Hutus are genocidal but that Hutus with genocidal tendencies are conditioned to be conflictual because they are products of their culture, the process of socialization, acculturation and interference with hostile environmental factors, and their personality conditioning. Or as Ross (in 9:576) puts it, "Early

socialization and relationship with others are particularly important in forming psycho-cultural dispositions, but later experiences continue to reinforce and modify them at other stages of the life-cycle", causing the individual to raise walls of defense in response to a sense of culturally categorized in-group and out-group competitive interests.

A psycho-cultural account of conflict emphasizes the importance of disputants' deep-seated interpretations of conflict and draw attention to how events arouse culturally shared fears about threats to self-esteem and identity. The approach emphasizes the importance of individuals' definitions of their social worlds, identification of key actors, groups and individuals, their goals, interest and motives. The processing of events and emotions, perceptions and cognitions these events evoke are central [9]. Taking a cue from the foregoing, the Frankfurt School, in particular, maintains that there is a particular type of person, the 'Authoritarian Personality,' who is likely to be conflictual. As developed by Theodor Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel Levinson and Nevitt Sanford based on their research conducted in 1950 [12], the Authoritarian Personality seems to be involved in stereotypic thinking, disguised sadism, the veneration of power, and the blind recognition accorded to anything that appears forceful [12]. Usually, the personality is regarded as a response to an emotionally deprived childhood accompanied by over strict parenting – a loveless and overly rigid environment.

Psychocultural dispositions are culturally shaped response tendencies acquired via mechanisms spelt out in both psychodynamic and social learning theory from the earliest stages of life (Levine, 1973). This psychodynamic theory explains that prejudice could be seen as the result of the operation of universal psychological processes such as defence mechanisms. These processes operated unconsciously, channelling tensions and the problem arising either within the personality or from environmental stresses, threat and frustrations into conflictual attitudes against (innocent) out-groups and minorities [4]. A variety of psychodynamic processes could be identified as projection, frustration, scapegoating, and displacement of hostility.

This approach could, thus, be integrated into a coherent explanation of racism in apartheid South Africa, and for some of its most disturbing expressions, such as lynching (Hovland & Sears

in 4). Also, the Nazi's virulent anti-Semitism in Germany, the Rwandan genocide, the Nigerian civil war, the North Korean repressive regime, and the Boko Haram's widespread Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad can be inclusive. 'The Holocaust' by the German warlord, Adolf Hitler, the 1994 Hutu-Tutsi clashes in Rwanda, the Biafran violent secessionist move from Nigeria, and the raiding of villages, burning of churches, mosques and schools, and the kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls from their hostel in Chibok, Borno state in April of 2014 by Abubakar Shekau-led Boko Haram extremists, did not seem comfortably explicable vis-à-vis universal and essentially normal psychological processes characteristic of all persons. For instance, during the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) (where over 1 million Nigerians lost their lives) and the Rwandan genocide in 1994 where over 800,000 Tutsis were killed by Hutus, and the current Boko Haram terrorism on the Nigerian state, it is alleged that the Igbos led by General Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Hutus led by Juvénal Habyarimana, and Boko Haram led by Mohammed Yusuf and later Abubakar Shekau, underwent a period of conditioning, which made them view the Nigerian state as repressive and partial, and the Hutus to view the Tutsis, members of the minority ethnic group but which wielded state power, as 'cockroaches' respectively. This goes a long way to affirm the Babylonia Talmudic words adopted by Anaïs Nin in her 1961 work "Seduction of the Minotaur" that "we don't see things as they are; we see them as we are" [13:124]. Psychologists, therefore, believe that violent conflict was seen as the expression of an inner need generated by basically pathological personality structures – the authoritarian personality [4].

The psychocultural approach helps us to construe action from specific cultural point of view and their importance reminds us to be cautious when imposing external assumptions about interests or motives on a situation [Ross in 9]. It is for this reason that culturally sensitive conflict resolution needs to pay attention to elucidating the relevant cognitive representations and their accompanying effects.

### **3. AFRICA: HOW MANY COUNTRIES CONSTITUTE IT?**

Africa is regarded as the second largest continent with an area of over thirty million square kilometers, which makes it three times

the size of Europe [14]. It is, also, the second most-populous continent (after Asia) because with its estimated 2015 figure of almost 1.2 billion people, it accounts for 15.9 per cent of the total world's human population [15; Boyles, 2013]. Africa possesses the world's longest river, the River Nile, and two deserts: the Sahara Desert, the world's largest; and the Kalahari Desert. The continent is bordered Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Indian Ocean to the east and southeast, and the Suez Canal and the Red Sea along the Sinai Peninsula to the northeast.

How many countries, then, does this vast continent contain? This is a very important question since it helps in the categorization of people, units, things and events in the continent as 'African'. In attempting to answer this question, certain issues, however, come to mind. It is worth noting that it is believed that in Africa, the concept of state or nation is based on the continent's history of colonialism. Now, if this holds complete truth, what can be said of Liberia and Ethiopia which did not experience colonial rule – that there are not Africa states? Also, if we go by the geographical locations of units in the continent as a basis for classifying them as nations within the continent, will it not be contradictory to say, at least going by the membership of the African Union and the United Nations, that Morocco and Western Saharawi Republic are not African nations respectively? That the Moroccan experiences from the 'Arab Spring' that swept through the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region in 2011 should not be classified as a conflict within Africa? What about the externally administered colonies in Africa; do they automatically qualify as nations in Africa? Bearing these in mind, a knowledge of the figure of states in Africa is imperative because it facilitates the detailed comprehension of conflicts as they occur in the continent called Africa. It gives a clear trajectory to take off on issues concerning violent conflicts in Africa since we have something solid (nation-states system) to base our assertions and arguments on.

There is no generally agrees upon a number of the countries in Africa. This is an end of the trajectory upon which one takes-off. According to the United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management [16], 54 countries belong to the African Group and are Member of the United Nations. This figure excludes Saharawi Arab Republic (also called Western Sahara) and Somaliland. This same

figure of 54 recognized nation-states in Africa is recorded by the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD) [17].

More so, according to ECA [15:4], "...10 countries together (with Nigeria at the top) make up nearly 61 per cent of Africa's population. The remaining 44 countries constitute only 39 per cent of the population of Africa..." Drawing from this, Africa is home to 54 nations. This figure, also, does not include the Saharawi Arab Republic and Somaliland.

According to the African Union (AU) [18], there are 54 member countries and as such 54 nations in Africa. This figure recognizes and includes Saharawi Arab Republic, while simultaneously excluding Somaliland and Morocco (Morocco withdrew her membership from the AU owing to the latter's recognition of Saharawi Arab Republic; a territory Morocco believes it has sovereign control over). Also, it is noteworthy that though it is still considered a member of the AU, Central African Republic (CAR) has its membership in the AU suspended since 25<sup>th</sup> March 2013 owing to the nation's ongoing conflict.

According to the Saylor Foundation [19], there are 55 nations in Africa inclusive of Western Sahara. Boyles [20] corroborates this figure when he wrote that there are 55 countries in Africa, which is, adding Saharawi Arab Republic to all the 54 African regional member states of the United Nations.

The matter is even more vexed by other figures that the number is actually 56, i.e., when we take Somaliland as a country. Interestingly, it is believed that there are 66 countries in Africa: the 54 fully recognized states by the UN; the 2 de facto states (Saharawi Arab Republic and Somaliland); and 10 externally administered territories. The ten dependent territories comprise: French Southern and Antarctic Lands; Mayotte; Reunion (French overseas territories); Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha (British overseas territory); Canary Islands; Ceuta; Melilla; Plazas de Siberia (Spanish overseas territories); Madeira (Portuguese autonomous region); and Pelagie Islands (Italian overseas territory).

In view of the contested figures, one can ask: is it possible to study the factors that generate and sustain conflicts in the African continent in entirety? This essay would adopt the figure of the

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) [15] which puts the figure at 54 countries. The countries, in alphabetical order, include: Algeria; Angola; Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; Cape Verde; Central African Republic (CAR); Chad; Comoros; Congo, Democratic Republic; Congo (Brazzaville); Cote d'Ivoire; Djibouti; Egypt; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Equatorial Guinea; Gabon; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Kenya; Liberia; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mauritius; Morocco; Mozambique; Namibia; Niger; Nigeria; Rwanda; Sao Tome and Principe; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Somalia; South Africa; South Sudan; Sudan; Swaziland; Tanzania; Togo; Tunisia; Uganda; Zambia; and Zimbabwe [ECA, 15:26-28].

#### 4. CAUSES OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

A cursory look into the literature on the exploration of the causes of conflicts in Africa shows that several elucidations have been produced concerning the social phenomenon – conflicts in Africa. As Kenneth Omeje [in 9] writes, recent studies and leading schools of thought have highlighted conflicts of varied significance and consequences both within and across a range of proximate African States. Corroborating this, Adedeji's Workshop on Comprehending and Mastering Conflict in Africa (held in Mali, in 1998) [cited in Burja, 7:13] aptly captures the nature of conflicts in continental Africa this way:

...Africa is a vast and varied continent made up of countries with specific histories and geographical conditions as well as uneven levels of economic development. The causes of conflicts in Africa reflect the continent's diversity and complexity. While some causes are purely internal and portray specific sub-regional dynamics, others have a significant international dimension. Notwithstanding these differences, African conflicts show a number of crosscutting themes and experiences...

Taking a cue from the foregoing, a multiplicity of factors causes conflicts in Africa ranging from the legacy of European colonialism to the selfish and corrupt manipulations of domestic political structures by leaders, and the lopsided and fragile extractive structure of most post-colonial African economies. Though these share different purviews to the understanding of the causes of conflict in Africa, it noteworthy that they also

overlap themselves and they do not seek to constitute a 'one-size-fit-all' model or single deterministic cause to all conflicts in Africa.

#### **4.1 The Lopsided Extractive Structure of African Economies**

The lopsided and fragile extractive structure of African post-colonial economies precipitates the occurrence of a number of armed conflicts in Africa. Natural resource-dependent rentier states are more likely to be conflict-oriented and authoritarian than democratic because, as Ross [in 9] writes, public expenditure is based not on taxation but on rents, and as such, the government is not obliged to embrace the principles of representation and accountability. The tensions that this creates renders the state susceptible to violent conflagrations. Added to this is the fact that the rentier nature of some states increases underdevelopment and the capital accumulation of the states' resources by multinationals operating in the states. Confronted with a ravaged environment and a desire to reclaim domestic control over resources, factions within continental African states take up arms against the multinationals. The Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) conflicts in oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria is a quintessence.

For Le Billon in DFID [21:13], Africa accommodates two types of economic or resource-based conflict: "wars of resource scarcity and wars of abundance." The most common conflicts of scarcity relate to the control of grazing and water rights for nomadic people, while the most common conflicts of plenty relate to the crises in Angola over crude oil and other minerals. In this vein, James Fearon [in 22:10] argues that the presence of oil is a significant determinant of civil war for two reasons: "the state apparatus behind oil-producing nations is generally weak given the general level of per capita income across such states, and the presence of oil resources incentivizes territorial control." Added to this is the fact that the prevalence of lootable natural resources like diamonds, cobalt, crude oil, etc., is likely to increase the duration and intensity of armed conflicts as well as the chances of relapse into war in the post-conflict dispensation. The Liberian civil war, the war in Sierra Leone and the war in D.R. Congo are examples of these resource-based conflicts.

Continuous economic decline plays a major part in African conflicts. Economic shock is a more

direct and potent cause. For DFID [21] this can take various forms ranging from natural catastrophe to sudden large shifts in terms of trade. The Ethiopian famine of 1974 was the main factor in the overthrow of Haile Selassie's government and the violence that ensued. Famine can cause mass displacement increasing pressure on scarce resources. Other economic shocks have similar effects. The sudden shift in the terms of trade in Nigeria in 1992/3 halved Nigeria's income, introduced hyperinflation and led to violence and the overthrow of the government [21].

#### **4.2 Selfish and Corrupt Leadership**

This factor holds that conflicts arise owing to the manipulation and politicization of the nation's domestic institutions, resources and primordial features such as ethnicity and religion by political actors and elite usually for their selfish private interests. Burja [7] believes that it is undeniable that intense elite political competition for control of the state is generally for purposes of using the state and its institutions for accumulation of wealth, i.e., rent-seeking, and, as Mengistu [11] writes, in order to redress grievances that lead to the weakening of the state.

Competition for resources and exploitation typically lies at the core of the conflict, and determines the sources and extent of conflicts. Little wonder conflicts arise as local politicians and elite compete and struggle for state power and resources, often by recruiting militia and private armies from their ethnonational constituencies to challenge, unseat and replace the 'prebendal state', but not necessarily to improve or transform it [9]. This scenario of power struggle, Anne Sundberg opines in her study of Congo in 1999, played out in the Congo-Brazzaville conflict. According to Sundberg [in 7:26]:

During the ethnic war of 1993-94, two ethnopolitical blocks emerged in Brazzaville, each of them with its own militia. Militias have been part of the political picture since a few years after independence, but the democratization process, or rather the multi-party system, seems to open up "the market" for militias. Every political leader of any importance needs his bodyguard. The militias are not only formed by the political leaders but are also an initiative from below, because the young are aware of how they can explore

the situation... Sassou Nguesso was supported financially by the French petrol company ELF. Similarly, the Angolans helped him because Lissouba allowed UNITA to operate from Congo Brazzaville. Lissouba, who was elected as President of Congo, was eventually overthrown by Nguesso after bitter fighting between their militias. Nguesso is now president of Congo – unelected but recognized in Africa and internationally. But the Lissouba militia and supporters from his region continue the struggle against Nguesso and his government, hoping that one day he will overthrow Nguesso.

### 4.3 Legacy of European Colonialism

Alabi (2006) [in 23] observes that the colonization of Africa by European powers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century created political units that divided ethnic groups in some cases and combined rival groups in others. In this vein, Williams [9:579] opines that “some of Africa’s federated ethnic communities and groups are age-old hostile adversaries with historical animosities that date back to the unrestricted precolonial wars of conquest and supremacy among various African tribes, chiefdoms, clans, kingdoms and empires”. Thus, it is seen that African societies have a unique conflict dynamics. As currently composed, most border crises occur because the boundaries of most of the newly independent Africa states were arbitrarily drawn by the colonizers without regard to ethnic and cultural affinities. To this end, as Mengistu [11] states, neighbouring countries got into armed conflicts or wars. The 1961, 1964-67, 1977-1978 and 2006-2009 Ethio-Somalia war and the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrea war are some but major manifestations of this colonial-boarder settings.

Also, European colonialism, according to Krymkoski and Hall (1990) (in 9:580), tends “to combine, and thus enlarge indigenous political and social territorial units, and to centralize resources, power, status and privilege in the administrative centre”. This situation has the tendency to prompt the federating ethnic units to form new sociopolitical conglomerations different from the old order birthed by colonial rule. The Biafra war in Nigeria caused by the secessionist move by the Igbo ethnic nationality’s dissatisfaction and feeling of marginalization from the nation’s seat of power – a seat controlled mostly by the Hausas and then the Yorubas – is

a case in point. Idowu (1999) [in 7:19] clearly examines this point, thus:

If one state is so powerful as to be able to vie in strength with many of them combined, it will insist on being the master of the joint deliberations. If they are two, they will be irresistible when they agree, but whenever they disagree, everything will be decided on a struggle for ascendancy between the two rivals. In the present-day, the “Northern elites” refusal to share power is the single most important reason why tribes have been resurgent and ethno national consciousness has come to override overall Nigerian Nationalism.

This foregoing analysis on the legacy of European colonialism as a cause of conflict in continental Africa is comprehensively encapsulated in the 1999 report of the UN Secretary-General’s discussion of the cause of African conflicts. Briefly, the Secretary-General’s [in 7:17] views on the causes of conflicts are:

...Historical legacies: (i) the colonial boundaries forced on the newly independent states a simultaneous task of state-building and nation-building. State-building led to the heavy centralization of political and economic power and the suppression of pluralism. But the challenge of forging a genuine national identity from among disparate and often competing communities has remained; (ii) the character of the commercial relations instituted by colonialism, also created long-term distortion in the political economy of Africa. The consequences of this pattern of production and exchange spilt over into the post-independence state. As political competition was not rooted in viable national economic systems, in many instances the prevailing structure of incentives favoured capturing the institutional remnants of the colonial economy for factional advantage...

## 5. TYPOLOGIES OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

Given attempts to conceptually clarify the phenomenon, conflict, and to construe Africa (and its number of constituent countries) above, it is needful to discuss the different types of conflicts that are happening (and have taken place) in Africa. Borrowing from Bagherpour et al. [22] on their analysis of the Middle-East and



North Africa (MENA), continental Africa is one of the most conflict-prone regions in the world. The spate of conflict in Africa is of global concern for several reasons:

- i. The growth and endurance of extremist groups such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, al-Shebab, Boko haram, Ansaru, etc.;
- ii. The humanitarian catastrophe created by violence, with millions of refugees, displaced families, and migration crises destabilizing neighbour countries and Europe;
- iii. Economic reliance on access to thirty per cent of the world's crude oil production and forty per cent of the world's conventional gas reserves; and
- iv. Growth in religion-related hostilities between members of the Abrahamic religions – Christianity, Islam and Judaism – that as a whole represent fifty-five per cent of the world's population (3.8 billion people) [22].

Conflicts can be categorically studied in various ways depending on the type of criteria one uses. Salim [24] classified conflicts in Africa as follows: boundary and territorial conflicts; civil wars and internal conflicts having international repercussions; succession conflicts in territories decolonized; political and ideological conflicts; and others including those related to transhumance and irredentism.

Generally, most writers tend to think of conflicts in Africa as being political conflicts in which the state is involved in one way or another, e.g., wars between states, armed rebellion against states, coups d'état, etc. There are, of course, other types of conflicts which in the past were not given much attention. These are urban violence (sometimes ethnic, religious, and class-based), and rural conflicts (ethnically based, mainly over grazing land and over cattle amongst pastoral people) [7].

The DFID [1:6], giving a dual categorization, wrote that the majority of conflicts or warfares in Africa, especially from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, comprised inter-state conflicts and the several variants of 'societal wars': ethnic, revolutionary, inter-communal, and political mass murder. In his study in 2011, Kidane [in 11:28] corroborates the DFID's categorization while adding a third category when he wrote that "... conflicts in Africa occur at several levels, including direct interstate wars and armed conflicts; intrastate

civil wars and conflicts; and inter-communal conflicts."

Within the field of international relations, Immanuel Wallenstein [in 9] identified three general forms of conflict: interstate, internal, and state-formation conflicts. Today, attention has also been focused on 'global conflicts', where non-state groups combat states and international or regional organizations.

This essay adopts the "interstate" (between sovereign African states) and "intrastate" (usually between groups within the state, or the groups against the state) category of conflicts in Africa. In fact, the intrastate conflict is the most popular in Africa. Under these two, others like civil wars, boundary disputes, coups d'état, religious crises, political and ideological conflicts, secessionist rebellion, etc., can be broadly sub-categorized.

## 5.1 Interstate Conflicts in Africa

Interstate conflicts refer to conflagrations between nation-states. In the context of Africa, interstate conflicts can be seen from any one of two perspectives. The first being what the DFID [1] notes as comprising wars of independence (about half of which, i.e. the anticolonial wars, degraded into civil wars). This exhibits the nature of interstate conflicts involving African states and the overarching powers of the European colonizers. The second perspective of interstate conflicts in Africa involves all forms of hostilities between sovereign African states. These interstate conflicts, DFID [21] explains, are fought with regular troops along a defined series of fronts, and targets and objectives are primarily military and strategic. Interstate wars between African states have been minor and somewhat short-lived (though without exceptions), and they are majorly connected with, as Aremu [23] wrote, intermittent border crises and issues of territorial sovereignty. Interstate wars in Africa have, also, taken bilateral and multilateral outlooks [25].

The first bilateral conflict in post-colonial Africa was between Algeria and Morocco over the Atlas Mountains area in October 1963 [23,7]. Other bilateral conflicts in Africa include: the Nigeria-Cameroon dispute over Bakassi Peninsular; Eritrea-Ethiopian crisis of 1962-1979 and 1998-2000 (the latter was the only war in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century); Somali-Ethiopian dispute of 1964 to 1978 over the Ugandan desert region; the Kenya-Somalia border war of 1963-1967 in which Somalia aimed at recovering its

lost territories including the Northern frontier district of Kenya; the Chad-Libya crisis of 1980-1982; and the Tanzania-Ugandan war of 1978-1979 [23,1,25].

For Zeleza [25], the multilateral wars are illustrated by the multinational war over the DRC that spanned between 1998 and 2004. Additionally, the DRC war, bred and superimposed on an already ferocious civil war, was fuelled by a mad scramble for the country's vast mineral, forestry and agricultural resources, and involved Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe on the side of the DRC government, and Rwanda and Uganda on the side of the rebels [25]

These conflicts have led to a skyrocketing rate of loss of human lives and damage to material infrastructure and environmental resources. On the case of the (multinational) war in the DRC, it was reported that by the end of 2004, the war alone had claimed a staggering 3 to 4 million lives.

## 5.2 Intrastate Conflicts in Africa

Intrastate conflicts in Africa refers to all forms of hostilities that occur within the territorial boundaries of African states. These conflicts happen within particular states with little or no form of involvement by other states. As DFID [1] states, the vast majority of armed conflicts since 1995 have been societal (ethnic, communal and revolutionary) wars. Cillier and Schunemann [3:3] affirm their view while adding that though civil or internal wars remain the dominant form of conflict in Africa, "the number of wars, however, halved since the 1990s and the nature of the conflicts has changed significantly with increasingly blurred lines between criminal and political violence."

To come to terms with the nature of intrastate conflicts in Africa, this study adopts a regional analysis – all the 54 African countries are grouped into their specific geographical regions.

### 5.2.1 East Africa

The region of Eastern Africa, also referred to as the Horn of Africa (HOA), spans from the northernmost part of Eritrea, the westernmost point of South Sudan, the easternmost point of Mauritius, and to the southernmost part of Tanzania. It is bordered by the Indian Ocean to the east, the Red Sea and Sudan to the north, and by CAR, DRC and Zambia to the west.

According to ECA [15:26] the following 14 countries make up Africa's eastern region: Burundi; Comoros; Djibouti; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Kenya; Madagascar; Mauritius; Rwanda; Seychelles; Somalia; South Sudan; Uganda; and the United Republic of Tanzania. Moreover, if the self-declared independent state of Somaliland receives international recognition as a sovereign nation-state; then the number of East Africa will increase to 15 countries.

The East African region has been earmarked as one of the most disputed regions in Africa. In fact, the DFID [1] notes that there is a long and pervasive trend of conflicts; the region experiences one of the highest magnitudes of violence of all African regions, and this has remained particularly strong in the post-Cold War period. For Mengistu [11], the nature of conflicts in the region span from full scale interstate conflicts (the Ethio-Eritrea war 1998-2000 and the Tanzania-Uganda crisis 1978-1979); ongoing inter-clan fighting (in Somalia till today); cross-border fighting (between Sudan and South Sudan in 2012); terrorism (emergence of a more radical Islamist insurgency group, al Shebab in Somalia); and ethnolinguistic and religious polarization disputes (the Darfur crisis); as well as civil wars (Ethiopia and Djiboutian civil wars) where in it catches the attention of most developed nations including the USA for their strategic interests over the region.

Many of the horn's conflicts can be linked directly to structural issues like a contest for resource control, economic disparity or ethnolinguistic and religious colourization. For instance, the Darfur crisis that sprouted on 26 February 2003 is a major armed conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan. The Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) clan-based rebel groups started attacking government targets, accusing Khartoum of oppressing black African (non-Arabs) mostly farmers from the Fur, Massaleet, and Zaghawa communities in favour of (nomadic) Arabs [26]. The government of Omar Al-Bashir, the sequel to the rebel attacks, admittedly mobilized "self-defence militia," and organized a genocidal campaign against Darfur non-Arab citizens. This led to the death of hundreds of thousands of Sudanese and Al-Bashir's indictment by the ICC on several count charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide [27].

Another scenario is the Rwandan ethnic cleansing in 1994 where hundreds of thousands

of Tutsis (the minority ethnic group that wielded state power) were killed by Hutus (the much larger ethnic group). It has been alleged that the quest for power by the Hutus, aside whatever ethnic turmoil that existed, prompted the genocide. More so, as witnessed by Sudan and Somalia, the East African region is threatened by religious fundamentalism which is brewing rivalry between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims in the region. These religious fundamentalists or terrorist groups, like al-Shebab in Somalia and the coalition of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) in Uganda, aims at toppling the regimes in place and establish an Islamic caliphate system.

Also, it is believed that conflicts in the horn are generally characterized by weak political and administrative institutions and a strong and repressive political system. The governments of Idi Amin of Uganda and Siad Barre of Somalia are some but bold instances of oppressive ruling systems of the horn [11:32]. In fact, the ongoing Somali civil war grew out of resistance to the military junta led by Siad Barre during the 1980s. By 1988-1990, clan-based armed opposition groups like the Somali Salvation Democratic Front, the Somali National Movement, and the United Somali Congress began violently attacking the Somali Armed Forces until they eventually overthrew the Barre government in 1991 [28]. The tussle has taken a different outlook like the splintering of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) into more radical groups like al-Shebab, which has been fighting the Somali government.

### **5.2.2 West Africa**

West Africa stretches from the westernmost point of Cape Verde, the northern tip of Senegal, to the easternmost part of Nigeria. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and south. According to ECA [15:27] the following 15 countries make up the Western region of Africa: Benin; Burkina Faso; Cape Verde; Cote d'Ivoire; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Liberia; Mali; Mauritania; Nigeria; Senegal; Sierra Leone; and Togo.

West Africa is one of Africa's regions blighted by virulent conflicts. On a large scale, the region suffers from the ills of ethno-religious tensions. A quintessential case is the Biafran secessionist movement by the Igbos which triggered the 30-month civil war (1967-1970) that led to the death

of up to a million Nigerians, not to mention the destruction of material resources, sociopolitical capital, interethnic and interreligious relations, national integration, and democratic governance [26]. In fact, the neo-Biafran movement, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), has also been antagonistic to the Nigerian state organizing violent protests and riots. A notable reaction of the government to the insurgents is the "Operation Python Dance." Countries like Mali, Mauritania, and Nigeria are experiencing severe religious fundamentalist-oriented conflicts. Mali and Mauritania are bedevilled by the Insurgency in the Maghreb as perpetrated by AQIM and al-Shebab. Nigeria's case is spearheaded by Boko Haram. This is outside the clashes in the country owing to the (full or partial) institution of the Sharia in 12 out of the 19 northern states in the nation [2].

In view of the rentier, extractive, and frail nature of most post-colonial economies, the region has been plagued by virulent conflicts emanating from inter-group competition over environmental resources and economic opportunities by a number of socio-political and economic factions. The story remains the same from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) war in Sierra Leone, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel war in Liberia, the Niger Delta crises in Nigeria spearheaded by the constantly evolving rebel groups like the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and now the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) [29]. Additionally, Nigeria, Senegal, Cameroon, Mali and Burkina Faso experience occasional hostilities between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farming communities. In Nigeria, for instance, the herdsmen crises has become a serious national issue with series of communal and interethnic based attacks in the north and middle-belt areas especially Benue state.

Added to this is the fact that there have been a number of political (and election) based violence in the region that have dovetailed into varied forms of constitutional crises. The Gambia, for instance, between 2016 and 2017, nursed a crisis that ended with the outgoing president Yahya Jammeh being forced out of office to be replaced by Adama Barrow, his elected successor. In Nigeria, violence broke out following Gen. Ibrahim Babaginda's (and his northern dominated military regime) annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential elections that was

supposed to bring late Chief M.K.O. Abiola into office [30:107]. Also, in Senegal, ten years of political alternation have led to a patrimonialisation of power and the concentration of power in a single family, which is a serious danger to the republic and encapsulates the real meaning of the revolts taking place in the nation [31]. More so, Omeje [29] notes that the outbreak of war in Cote d'Ivoire in 2002 was triggered by divisive politics of succession (between Henri Konan Bedie and Alassane Ouattara) following the death of Houphouet-Boigny – the country's first President for over three decades (1960-1993). In fact, this power tussle between the Bedie and Ouattara precipitated the first successful military coup in Ivoirian history, which brought General Robert Guei to power in 1999.

### **5.2.3 North Africa**

The northern region of Africa spans from the western tip of Morocco, the southernmost part of Sudan, and the northernmost point of Tunisia. The region is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the north, and the Suez Canal and the Red Sea to the east. According to ECA [15:27] the following 7 countries constitutes the region: Algeria; Egypt; Libya; Morocco; Niger; Sudan; and Tunisia. Moreover, if the de-facto state of Saharawi Arab Republic receives international recognition as a sovereign nation-state, the number of states in the North Africa will increase to 8 countries.

The conflicts in the region have particularly been one of the political concerns and have intensified and radicalized sequel to the Arab Spring in 2011. The region witnessed mass uprisings against repressive and brutal regimes. According to Gartenstein-Ross, Barr, Willcoxon and Basuni [32], Morocco and Algeria experienced minor protests. In contrast, the three easternmost states – Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia – have been beset by varying degrees of instability. For Bagherpour, et al. [22], the politically repressive actions include detainment, torture, political killings, and forced disappearance of opponents of the regime. In light of this, Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Qaddafi were accused of running repressive regimes prompting civil unrests and their concomitant backwashes.

More so, the conflicts in the region have taken Islamic fundamentalist shades. The Islamic fundamentalists, with the aim of expelling Western influences in the region and establishing an Islamic caliphate system, have perpetually

disrupted the activities of the region ensuring short-lived, unstable and unpopular government transitions. Though the Muslim Brotherhood-supported Mohammed Morsi was elected Egypt's President in June of 2012, a new movement surfaced in Cairo in 2013, protesting and accusing the Morsi's government of ruling through fiat and plebiscites. The intensity of the protests prompted the military to oust Morsi. The Brotherhood was subsequently declared illegal, and a serious ISIS-inspired jihadist insurgency that has been building in the Sinai for years grew stronger and increasingly [32:4]. The Libyan case is quite similar with the central government unable to reestablish its writ following Muammar el-Qaddafi's fall. The Libyan conflict has escalated ever since, and extremist groups including al-Qaeda and ISIS have seized territories like the Mediterranean city of Sirte [see also 32:7].

In the region, there have also been conflicts based on resource control, devolution and secessionist-based tensions. A particular example is Sudan. For Yokwe [33:82] the case of the Sudan conflict centres on the question of "self-determination" demanded by the African South but rejected by the Arab North since British colonial rule. Zeleza [25:7] explains the case in Sudan by noting that:

The long-running civil war in Sudan, rooted in the history of colonial divisions, uneven development, exploitation and marginalization between the North and the South, was reignited in 1983 following the introduction of Sharia – Islamic law – by the Numeiri regime and disputes over sharing oil riches, and it persisted until the signing of a peace agreement in early January 2005 by which time more than 4 million people had been displaced and many more killed.

Zeleza [25] adds that another regional conflict, also based on the effects of marginalization and resource disputes, has erupted in the Darfur region.

### **5.2.4 Central Africa**

The region of Central Africa spans from the westernmost point of Sao Tome and Principe, the northernmost part of Chad, the easternmost and southernmost points of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The region is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Angola and Zambia to the south, Libya to the north, and the Great Lakes to the east. According

to ECA [15:26-27] the following 8 countries constitute Africa's Central region: Cameroon, Central Africa Republic (CAR); Chad; Congo (Brazzaville); Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); Equatorial Guinea; Gabon; and Sao Tome and Principe.

Central Africa experienced an increase in armed conflicts in the immediate post-Cold War period. Nearly all armed conflicts have been societal. However, foreign interventions in local conflicts or in cross-border pursuits of rebel groups have been common [1]. The Central African Republic (CAR), for instance, has been in an ongoing civil war since 2012. The conflict involves the government, alliance of rebel militia factions and terrorist groups that formed the Seleka coalition and the Anti-Balaka militias. Particularly it must be noted that this civil war has ethnolinguistic and religious colorations with the Seleka coalition fighters (that successfully ousted the CAR government of Francois Bozize in March of 2013) are alleged of being almost entirely Muslim, and the Anti-Balaka militias (formed in CAR in reaction to Seleka's rampages and the installation of Seleka leader, Michel Djotodia, as the nation's president from March 2013 until his resignation in January 2014) are alleged of being almost entirely Christians. Thus, intensifying fighting and increasing ethnic and religious divides between CAR's Muslim minority and Christian majority [34]. The DRC has also been enmeshed in a number of conflicts most of which are still ongoing. For instance, there have been secessionist attempts since July 1960 by a number of rebel groups like Mai Mai Kata Katanga in the DRC to form a separate state within Katanga.

Added to this is the fact that the region has also been plagued by religious tensions, terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. For instance, in the DRC, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) has been waging antagonistic attacks against the government since 1995 with the sole aim of replacing the nation's government with an Islamic fundamentalist state. Chad is suffering severely owing to the Insurgency in the Maghreb, i.e. Islamist militancy and terrorist activities in the Maghreb and Sahel regions of North Africa since 2002. This violence has been spearheaded by the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (an alliance between the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat with al-Qaeda) [35]. Cameroon is also not spared from the region's religious tension. Boko haram has been a critical actor in Cameroon since 2004 with

confrontations with Cameroon's armed forces. The International Crisis Group (ICG) [36] captures the situation in Cameroon by noting:

Within Christian communities, the rise of Revivalist Churches has ended the monopoly of Catholic and Protestant churches. Most Revivalist Churches have no legal status and are poorly-regarded by Catholics. Born again pastors often preach religious intolerance, stay away from interreligious dialogue and are kept out of the official religious sphere, although they mostly support the regime.

### 5.2.5 South Africa

The Southern region of Africa stretches from the northernmost point of Mozambique to the southern tip of Cape Town in the Republic of South Africa. The region is bordered by the Indian Ocean in the east and the Atlantic Ocean in the west. According to ECA [15], the following 10 countries constitute Africa's Southern region: Angola; Botswana; Lesotho; Malawi; Mozambique; Namibia; South Africa; Swaziland; Zambia; and Zimbabwe.

The region has suffered from a range of intrastate conflicts. There have been civil wars, liberation wars, and guerilla attacks, often triggered by the obduracy of settler minority regimes supported by the Western powers in defence of global wealth and whiteness against appeals of common sense and decades of peaceful protests by the colonized, which exacted horrendous costs [26]. It is believed that the protracted nature of the guerilla wars fought is at the core of the ongoing conflict in Zimbabwe. South Africa too, trapped longer than any in murderous racial fantasies, was rendered increasingly ungovernable by civil unrest and guerilla attacks that led to the demise of apartheid in 1994 (Campbell, 2003). The case of Angola is no different. The civil war (1975-2002) started owing to a power tussle between three former liberation movements: the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA); the National Union of the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA); and the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA).

More so, violent conflicts in the South Africa region, to borrow from Cilliers and Schunemann [3], has increased in line with the rise in political contestation before, during and after polls. This is particularly common in settings where

democracy has not been entrenched, such as during the elections in Zimbabwe in 2005 and Mozambique in 2014 or where the government has been actively factional in benefiting one ethnic group above others.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS OF CONFLICT TRENDS IN AFRICA

Conflicts, as they occur in continental Africa, have varied dimensions and their implications are far-reaching; taking both positive and negative outlooks.

### 6.1 Positive Implications of Conflict Trends in Africa

- i. **Self-Rule:** Wars of liberations in Africa occurred largely during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century between the colonized territories of Africa (that sorted self-governance) and the overarching powers of the European colonizers. From Algeria in the northern region to Zimbabwe and South Africa in the southern region and not forgetting Kenya in the eastern region, the colonizers faced different forms of heated hostilities and aggressions from “rebel groups” fighting for African self-rule. The successes of these groups, the high death tolls notwithstanding, liberated African societies from colonialism and culminated in their countries’ independence.

### 6.2 Negative Implications of Conflict Trends in Africa

- ii. **LOSS OF LIVES:** Conflict trends in Africa, both directly and indirectly, affects the society to a great extent. The destructiveness of the conflicts is exemplified in the death and injury of Africans on a large scale thereby thwarting the continent’s vibrant human resource base. For instance, the 1994 Rwanda genocide and Liberia’s fourteen years of civil war (1990-2004) resulted in the loss of about 800,000 Rwandan lives and over 250,000 Liberian lives respectively [Global Coalition in 23]. The civil war in Sudan and the (multinational) war in the DRC are believed to be two of the deadliest and protracted wars in Africa with an estimated two million Sudanese lives lost and a staggering three to four million Congolese lives lost respectively (Global Coalition in

Aremu, [23]; Institute for Peace and Justice in Zeleza, [25]).

### iii. **Refugee and Other Humanitarian Crisis:**

The conflicts in continental Africa precipitates the massive displacement of the citizenry (both within and across the borders of affected countries) who attempt to flee for their lives the predatory and violent attacks perpetrated by marauding insurgent fighters. Also, there have been cases of extra judicial killings, illegal arrests and detentions, and torture of citizenry who are against the dominant group’s (usually the government) position on the conflict or, as usually implemented by rebel groups, these human abuses are utilized as a medium to induce unprecedented fears in the minds of the public. For instance, according to Amnesty International (AI) [37], the Nigerian military extra judicially executed more than 1200 people; they have arbitrarily arrested at least 20000 people, and at least 7000 people have died in military detention in the course of security operations against Boko Haram. This humanitarian crisis is at an alarming rate in view of the spate of violent conflicts in Africa. For instance, in Nigeria, the Boko Haram crisis has led to the displacement of over 1.3 million denizens of the northeastern region [38]; in Sudan, an estimated 4.7 million Sudanese were displaced during the nation’s prolonged civil war [23]; and during the Kenyan liberation war – dubbed Mau Mau by the colonialists – some 1.5 million people were detained, a far cry from the official figure of 80,000 (Elkins in Zeleza, [25]). In fact, as at 2017, the number of registered African refugees, internally displaced, or seeking asylum is placed at over 20 million [39].

- iv. **Increment in Poverty Rate:** Conflicts in Africa exacerbates poverty in African societies since it ravages the prerequisite human capital for producing the continent’s economic fortunes and it leads to the disruption of the economic activities of production, distribution and consumption which are a sine-qua-non for generating wealth for the state. Aremu [23] opines that the political stalemate and periodic eruptions of violence have resulted in significant cumulative declines in Gross Domestic Production (GDP) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). For instance,

according to Duke, Agbaji and Etim [2:223]: "...the Nigerian economy lost a whopping ₦1.33 trillion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) owing to Boko Haram activities...FDI flows fell to 4693.83 million USD in 2014 from 5608.45 million USD, and further fell to 3064.17 million USD in 2015." The heightened difficulty to get investments in African nations has promoted poverty across the continent. According to Ferreira, Lakner & Sanchez [40], 390.2 million Africans in the sub-Saharan are living below poverty line (i.e. \$1.90/day).

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It has been the purpose of this essay to provide a critical glimpse into the nature of the concept of conflict, its inherent characteristic features as well as the various types of conflicts applicable to the African continent. Transcending this, this essay attempted to discuss on continental Africa as well as the psycho-cultural factors that generate and sustains conflicts within Africa. The study, it must be added, is not, neither did it seek to be, a complete account of all aspects of conflicts that have bedevilled the continent since the start of the first liberation wars, let alone from earlier times, say, the precolonial and colonial eras.

As seen from the preceding discussions, conflict trends in Africa are very complex and broad. Since the independence period from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, African states in the northern, southern, eastern and western regions have been enmeshed in varied forms of conflicts from wars of liberation to civil wars, genocides, inter-communal clashes, resource-based conflagrations, religious tensions and interstate wars. These conflicts are perpetrated by individuals – their capacity notwithstanding – operating with social groups that are inherently conflictual, just as there are also structural issues like policies and socio-economic and political institutions that help facilitate and fan into flames the embers of conflicts in Africa. More so, conflicts in Africa, aside from the value of granting self-governance to the aggressive former territories, have issued the continent a coup de grace in its human and physical capital development, economic prosperity, food security, and national cohesion and integration. The continent has been lagging behind in developmental strides amongst other regional

entities in the sporadically globalizing world system. It cannot compete with them favourably because it has been besieged by conflicts that create and are still creating lacunae in the continent's prospect for growth and development.

Unless all Africans see conflicts as a misnomer and act to abate them before they escalate with concrete and sustained actions, peace and development, to borrow from Duke, Agbaji and Bassey [38], will only be themes read in history books. To that extent, therefore, the following recommendations, we believe, will help reduce the trends of conflicts in Africa and sustain peace and development in the continent:

- i. There is the need for a context-specific and multi-layer conflict resolution, management and prevention initiative(s) encapsulating a broad-based local, regional and international collaboration between all concerned stakeholders;
- ii. African governments should be open to and consider negotiations (and amnesty) if that will help stave the crisis in any nation;
- iii. African leaders must lead by example, abhor corruption, and pursue policies that are inclusive rather than calculated at marginalizing or secluding in whatever form one ethnic group or person from others;
- iv. There is a need to solidify the military-base of African states in the area of intelligence gathering, effective surveillance, security strategies etc. through international collaboration with developed countries;
- v. There should be the unfettered adherence to the rule of law. This involves, as Aremu [22] purported, equal access to justice by all citizens irrespective of their status, respect for court decisions by the government and influential, and conduct of free and fair periodic among others;
- vi. Owing to the intensity of religious-based violence in the continent, especially its northern region, there is a need for religious leaders – Priests, Rabbis, Imams, Pastors, etc. – to be cautious of what they teach their followers especially on issues of religious tolerance, and to encourage them to be peaceful, law-abiding citizens, and ambassadors of their nations; and
- vii. Governments of African nations need to place their basic attention on the welfare of their citizens through well-guided policies so as to increase citizens' living standards and support human capital development.

- viii. A lot more humanitarian supports should be provided for those at the different IDP camps across Africa. Without these supports, the displaced are also at risk of dying owing to starvation, malnutrition, and the spread of infectious diseases.
- ix. Also, cattle routes, grazing reserves and ranches for pastoralists should be provided to reduce herders-farmers' clashes in Africa.

## CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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