

## The Contemporary Conflict in Africa: Enemy within or without? Nigeria's Experience

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### Abstract

*The paper examined the contemporary conflicts in Africa with a view of determining whether they are internally induced or externally influenced using Nigeria as a case. The African continent is currently bedeviled with various internal conflicts, which has impeded the socioeconomic and political development. Africa has become a continent with negativity in terms of human security globally. The continent has not had favorable vertical relationships with her counterparts ranging from the slave trade period to the colonial era. However, Nigeria has the largest concentration of black African population on earth, with an estimate of two hundred and six million people, and two hundred and thirty ethnic nationalities. Nigeria was engulfed in a civil war that lasted for 30 months barely 6 years after the attainment of political independence in 1960. The civil war led to the destruction of lives and properties worth billions of dollars. The contemporary conflicts in Nigeria have been internally induced, particularly the Boko Haram terrorism, herdsman/farmers conflict, poor leadership, ethnic strife, the existence of Overlords, among others. The investigation was informed on the fact that there have been several accusations of external forces in contemporary conflicts in Nigeria and Africa in general. The paper adopted qualitative methods of data gathering techniques using content analysis. The paper unraveled that most of the contemporary conflicts in Nigeria and Africa at large are internally induced, though with a relative external capitalistic undertone. The paper recommends amongst others a regular security conference among African countries to harness her potential in conflict management.*

**Keywords:** *capitalism, conflict, crisis, ethnicity, terrorism.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Conflict is as old as mankind. "Conflict is inherent to the human condition. It arises when individuals or groups hold divergent interests and values" (Picciotto, 2011, p.51). The African sovereign states have been engulfed in several conflicts since they attained political independence in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s from the imperialist's rule. However, the complex nature of these conflicts is a combination of several factors such as social, political, economic, among others. Empirical evidence has proven that some of these conflicts are caused by Africans who are surrogates to external forces.

Africa is the second-largest continent in the world. The continent is endowed with both human and natural resources. Hence, has been an attraction of external forces. A few centuries ago, the African continent suffered direct, indirect, and cultural violence by both internal and external forces, which harmed the socio-economic and political development of the continent. During the slave era, millions of Africans were seized and carted away beyond the continent by the Arabs in the Middle East, and the Europeans to the West Indies respectively (Palmer and Perkins, 2004, p.505). Boddy-Evans disclosed that "Britain had had some success in halting the slave trade around the shores of Africa, but the inland story was different. Muslim traders from north of the Sahara and on the East Coast still traded inland, and many local chiefs were reluctant to give up the use of slaves"(Boddy-Evans, 2017).

The invention of machines led to the abandonment of the slave enterprise for another phase of exploitation. Anikpo (1985, p.39) noted that:

...increased economic activities in the plantations of the New World, the scientific inventions led to the Industrial Revolution in Europe and the demand for cheap raw materials and human labour to work in overseas plantations ...

The new epoch led to the 'scramble for Africa'(1880 to 1900) by the European countries to support their domestic contradictions arising from the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution propelled the European nations to contend over who controls wherein the African continent. To avert this continental crisis in Europe, the Berlin West African Conference was held from November 15th, 1884 - February 26th, 1885 to address the competition among these imperialist countries. The main aim of the Berlin West African Conference was to share African empires, kingdoms, and chiefdoms among the European countries except for Ethiopia and Liberia among European countries. The Conference established international rules to manage the competing claims of European powers, drawing boundaries and creating states in the African continent. The decision reached at the Berlin Conference to date is called the Berlin Act. Hence, the map present Africa was redesigned, and kingdoms, emirates, empires, among others amalgamated and renamed by the imperialists.

Consequently, African countries were directly colonized by Western European countries until the late 1950s, 60s, and 70s when they were granted political independence status. One of the major causes of internal conflicts in Africa was the configuration of African independent empire, emirate, chiefdom, kingdom, among others into various political entities called sovereign states. The effects of these forced unions began to manifest soon after most of these countries were granted political independence status.

Knowing the consequences of forced national integration, African countries agreed that "the boundaries that existed at independence should remain inviolate. This principle was enshrined in a 1964 resolution and has remained the Organization of African Unity (OAU) policy since then" (DFID, 2001, p.7). Another major challenge was the Cold War scenario likened to another scramble for an ideological alliance among independent Africa countries between the Power blocs using local leaders and compradors to created conflict. To an extent, some of the contemporary conflicts in Africa were viewed as a by-product of the Cold War (DFID, 2001, p.7).

At present, Africa is viewed as a troubled continent and bubbling with conflicting forces. The image of the African continent in the international media is characterized by internal conflicts, ranging from ethnic cleansing, genocide, civil wars, terrorism and insurgency, military intervention, religious clash, electoral violence, Arab Spring; herdsmen and farmers, among others, which most Africans leaders are found culpable with particular reference to the Nigerian state.

Consequently, the paper interrogates the contemporary conflicts in Africa with a view of tracing its sources both internally and externally with prejudice to Nigeria. There is no doubt that the continent's vertical linkage to the global community has contributed to the present conflicts in various African countries, however, the internal forces cannot be completely exonerated from this ordeal that confronts the continent presently. The internal contradiction has proven that African conflicts are about the enemy within. The paper adopted a qualitative method of data gathering technique. The paper suggests that Africans and their leaders have played key roles in the internal conflicts in the African continent.

### **Conceptual framework:**

The conflict has been defined by various scholars and professionals who are influenced by the events. Within the human realm, a conflict might occur between two or more individuals or groups, or within or between large social organizations or nation-states. Zartman (2008,p.1) refers to conflict simply as " an incompatibility of positions, a static situation when mutually exclusive views are present. Escalation is a dynamic conflict, an effort to prevail in a contest between those incompatible positions." Similarly, Folger, Poole, and Stutman (2005,p.4) defined conflict as "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatibility and the possibility of interference from others as a result of this incompatibility."

One of the contemporary conflicts theorists, Johan Galtung argued that "human conflicts are largely due to a real or perceived incompatibility, or contradiction, between conflicting parties attitudes, behaviours, interests, needs, positions, and or values" (Barash and Webel, 2014,p. 270). In describing the nature of the conflict, Galtung buttressed the phenomenon as a:

Dynamic processes in which structure, attitude, and behaviour are constantly changing and influencing one another. As the dynamic develops, it becomes a manifest conflict formation as

parties' interests clash or the relationship they are in becomes oppressive. Conflict parties then organize around this structure, to pursue their interest. They develop hostile attitudes and conflicted behaviour" (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, 2005, p.10).

Conflict grows, intensify, and widening by drawing in other interested parties. The phenomenon implies that deepening and spreading or generating secondary conflicts within the main parties and outside sympathizers may intensify the conflict. Hence, many scholars had questioned the existence of various forms of conflicts based on different definitions of the phenomenon. Also, some scholars have challenged the 'conflict typology'. In conflict studies, many typologies do exist "and the criteria employed not only vary but are often mutually incompatible, some differences in terms of conflict parties, others in terms of conflict issues, other in terms of conflict causes" (Ramsbotham et al, 2005, p.63).

Nevertheless, it will be more helpful to analyze conflicts from the point of history that is geographically based rather than typologies in this paper. This is because the root of major conflicts in Africa is traced to their historical past, especially inter-ethnic conflicts before the amalgamation of many ethnic groups by the imperialist's government. In the retrospect, African fought themselves for various reasons. However, the emergence of the imperial government led to a new social formation in Africa, which disarticulated and disordering the existing pre-colonial structure, hence, created intergenerational conflicts in many African countries.

From the political economy perspective, Wallenstein (2002, p.22) "sees conflict as a result of the new forms of production, monetization of the economy and the resulting, dissolution of traditional forms of social integration." In the same vein, Mark Duffield in the paper "Evaluating Conflict Resolution (2000, p.100) argued that "far from contemporary internal wars being aberrant, irrational and non-productive phenomena" are part of the challenges that resulted in contemporary conflicts in emerging states in Africa. The fact remains that a paradigm shift in the social formation adapted to facilitate the vertical relationships for the survival of the global economy. Hence, the powerful economics and governments handle these wars as local symptoms of state failures and consequently expect behavioural and liberal governance, which are externally imposed with the motive to dominate the global system (Ramsbotham et al, 2005, p.7).

The traditional Marxian criticized liberal conflict resolution methods as unethical, naïve, and theoretically uncritical based on its inability to reconcile various interests that ought to be reconciled. The traditional Marxian also argued that the liberal conflict resolution also failed to take sides in unequal and unjust struggles, and lacked an analysis within a properly global perspective of the forces of exploitation and oppression (Ramsbotham et al, 2005, p.7).

In most Third World Countries, the formation of new social relations in the production process, and new social class escalated conflicts in many countries making them fragile. For instance, a scenario where local mobilization is based on monetary economics that exposed the local actors to the high level of vulnerability to the extent that they can be used by external forces to maintain hegemony in the continent.

The above assertion that most of the conflicts in Africa were externally influenced using the compradors, especially during the Cold War is valid because the era witnessed ideological differences among Africa leaders leading to conflicts in most newly independent countries (intrastate crisis). For instance, the killing of the first Prime Minister Patrice Émery Lumumba of Congo by President Mobutu Sese Seko Koko Ngbendu Wa Za Banga of the Democratic Republic of Congo during the Cold War era was aimed at satisfying the desire of Belgium and United States of America to have firm control over the country. Second, the Ogaden war (1977-1978) which lasted for eight-months was a long military engagement between the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia and the Somali Democratic Republic. The conflict was traced to the territorial partitioning following the end of World War II, and subsequent the political independence of Somalia from Italy and Great Britain in 1960. The Ogaden War is imperative in the history of East Africa not because there was a direct conflict between Soviet and American backed forces, but because of none involvement of the US in Somalia regime. The decision of President Jimmy Carter not to confront the socialist aggression led to slowly decline of the détente between the US and the Soviet Union in Somalia. Third, the Angolan Civil War (1975-2002) was another protracted conflict that spilled over to neighbouring countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Namibia. The conflict was fought along ethnic and political cleavages. It involved external state actors such as the U.S. USSR, China, Cuba, and the apartheid regime of South African.

From the above analysis, Ake (1981, p. 9) noted that "it is inevitable that the capitalist, forever bent [on] profit maximization, would look for a new environment in which the process of accumulation could proceed apace. Capitalism has turned foreign lands, attacked, and subjugated them and integrated their economics to those of Western Europe." Nevertheless, several scholars have debunked the notion that the contemporary conflicts in Africa



were products of the continent's vertical relationships but have argued that the conflicts in the African continent emanate from inherent contradictions in African countries.

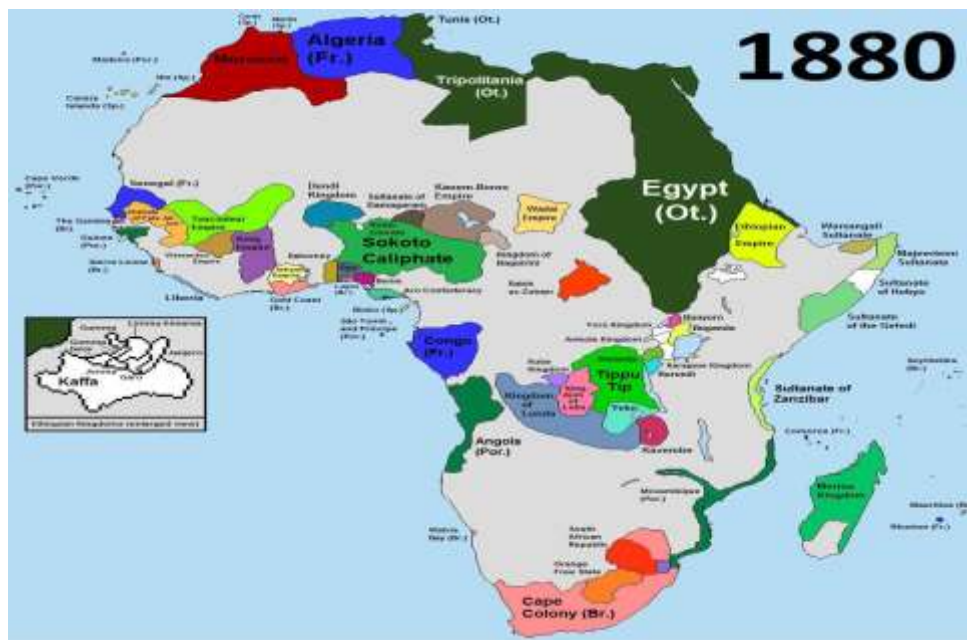
### **A brief history of the African Continent**

Africa is the second-largest continent globally. In Africa, the Sahara area alone is "the largest desert in the world, is nearly as large as the United States"(Palmer and Perkins, 2004, p.503). Historically, it has been scholarly and archeologically proven that the African continent was considered the birthplace of humankind. The assertion was anchored on the recent discoveries in Uganda, Kenya and the Transvaal that support the theory of Africa, and not Asia, was the cradle of the human race (Bartlett, 1953, p.15). African civilization was not simultaneous. One section was in contact with the present civilization since the early years. They were the people who inhabited the north of the Sahara. The Nile Valley was the center of one of the oldest of all civilization, which was traced to more than five thousand years (Palmer and Perkins, 2004, p. 4504).

In the 15th Century, the African continent had one of the worst records of inhuman treatments in human history. Millions of Africans were seized and carted away through the Trans Sahara desert by the Arabs in the Middle East, and Transatlantic Ocean by the Europeans to the West Indies, the United States, and South America to labour in their plantation (Palmer and Perkins, 2004, p.505). The fact I want to buttress here is that Africa as a continent has suffered direct, indirect, and cultural violence sponsored and carried out by external forces, which harmed the socio-economic and political advancement of the continent. Africa's relations with foreign counterparts have been characterized by continuous exploitation of both human and material resources. The slave trade was an unethical enterprise that came to halt in the first half of the nineteenth century. The British businessmen were some of the beneficiaries of this illicit trade. When the trade was no longer profitable, particularly after the industrial revolution, the British government began to champion a halt of this nefarious enterprise around the shores of Africa. (<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/grade-8-term-3-scramble-africa-late-19th-century>)

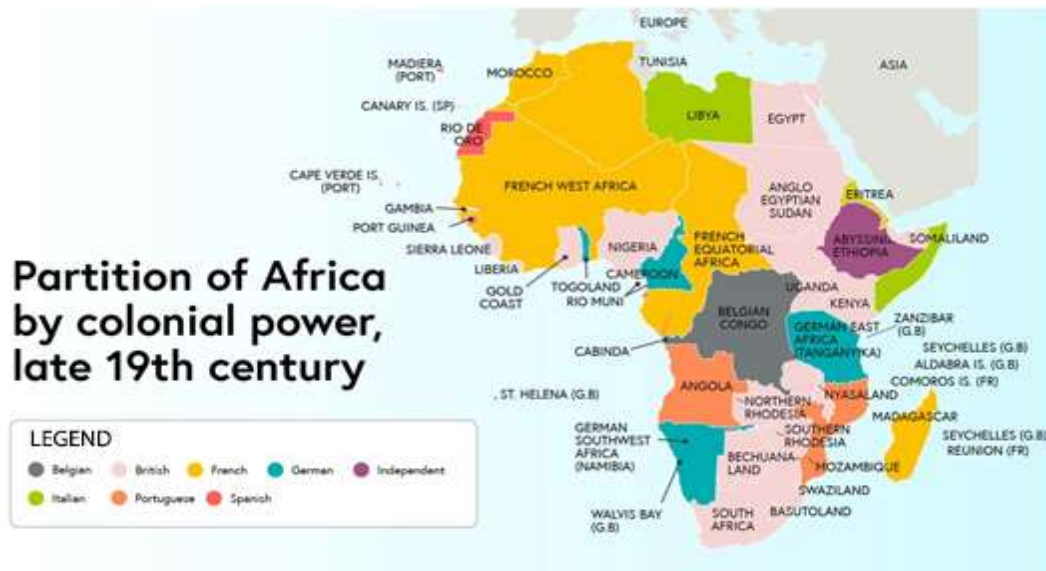
However, the next phase of hegemonism by the European imperialists was the 'scramble for Africa' (1880 to 1900) to support their domestic contradiction arising from the industrial revolution. They needed raw materials and markets for their manufactured goods. Hence, they have to come down to Africa where the raw materials are available. For instance, the Britain government-controlled West Africa geographical entity, which includes Gold Coast protectorate, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Lagos, and in Southern Africa- Cape Colony, Natal, and the Transvaal which was later annexed in 1877; Southern Africa also included the independent Boer Oranje-Vrystaat known as Orange Free State (Boddy-Evans, 2017). However, the struggle over who to control where in Africa among European countries led to the summon of the Berlin West African Conference that was held from November 15th, 1884 - February 26th, 1885. The Conference aimed at sharing Africa empires, kingdoms, and chiefdoms among the European countries except for Ethiopia and Liberia. To date, the decisions reached in that Conference are referred as the Berlin Act. It is imperative to note that European nations were adequately represented in this joint policy of the Balkanizing of African independent societies and forceful amalgamation of these independent Africa empires, kingdoms, and chiefdoms as one political entity. The European nations that were represented in the Berlin Conference include Austria, Belgium, Demark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherland, Ottoman, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Norway, and The United Kingdom. Thereafter, independent African kingdoms, chiefdom, emirate were directly colonized by Western European countries. Below are the maps of Africa before and after the Berlin Conference.

Fig.1 Africa before the European colonialism



Source: <https://matadornetwork.com/read/mapped-africa-scramble-africa/>

Fig. 2 Africa during and after European colonialism



Sources: Microsoft Encarta

### The emergence of contemporary conflict in Nigeria

Before the emergence of the Nigerian state, various ethnic nationalities were independent Africa empires, emirate, kingdoms, and chiefdoms societies. Utuk (1975,pp.4-6) revealed that:

In the North, the Hausas adopted a feudal system of government which was also inherited by the Fulanis, their conquerors. The emirs were vassals of the Sultan of Sokoto, who was the chief of the emirs. ...In the West, culturally the most homogeneous area, the Yoruba and the Edo operated a modern form of government that was organized in cities and towns. Oni of Ile-Ife was the King. ...In the Eastern territory, the most heterogeneous part of Nigeria, where the Ibos constituted the majority of the population, there was a strong government. Except in the area of the river, the people were elaborately organized into small semi-autonomous communities like the clan, the village, and the family. In the area of the river such as Calabar, Opobo, Bonny, and Onitsha, Kingship was common.

Sadly, most of these independent sub-Sahara Africa territories were conquered and amalgamated as a political entity called Nigeria in 1914 by the Governor-General, Lord Lugard. Nigeria was designed and governed by the British government after the Berlin Act until 1960 when she was granted political independence status. Some of the reasons deduced by Lord Lugard for the policy of amalgamation were the shortage of personnel and finance to administer the territory. Sir Hume Clifford, the Governor General of Nigeria (1920-31) described "Nigeria as a collection of independent Native States, separated from one another...by great distances, by the difference of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers (cited in Obasanjo, 1980, p.1). It was not long, the challenges of multi-plural ethnic societies began to manifest in Nigeria. In 1947, late chief Obafemi Awolowo in his book titled, Path to Nigeria freedom stated that:

Nigeria is not a nation; it is a mere geographical expression. There are no "Nigerians" in the same sense as there are "English" or "Welsh" or "French". The word Nigeria is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not (Ekpu, 2017).

The continuous ethnic strife in the new amalgamated Nigeria led to the statement made by Sir Author Richards in 1948, that "it is only the accident of British suzerainty which had made Nigeria one country. It is still far from being one country or one nation socially or even economically... socially and politically there are deep differences between the major tribal groups. They do not speak the same language and they have highly divergent customs and ways of life and they represent different stages of culture" (Ekpu, 2017).

The manifestation of this fear of Sir Author Richards was the ethnic related conflict that led to the collapse of Sir John Macpherson Constitution in 1951. The Kano riot of May 1953 was a fallout of the motion for Nigeria's independence by Anthony Enahoro in 1953, and subsequent reaction of "Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, leader of the NPC [who] then proposed an amendment to Enahoro's motion, suggesting instead that self-governance should be granted "as soon as practicable", replacing "in the year 1956"(Nwanze, 2018). The commotion on the floor of the House emanating from the political independence motion and counter-motion propelled the northern delegates to stage a walk out of the Assembly. The created a scenario where the northern delegates were jeered by the Lagos crowd as they came out of the Assembly. Angered by this development and humiliation suffered by the northern aristocrats on the hands of the Lagos crowd, the northern elites swore not to come back to Lagos for any political discussion or Assembly. A few days later, a delegation of the Action Group (AG) and National Citizens of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) led by Samuel Akintola, made a tour to the north (Kano) to enlighten them on the motive behind self-government motion. However, this enlightenment campaign was greeted with violence at Sabon Gari, in the city of Kano. Nwanze (2018) disclosed that:

...riots broke out in the ancient city of Kano, the largest city in northern Nigeria. On Monday, May 18, 1953, the colonial government declared a state of emergency in Northern Nigeria and troops were deployed to Kano. Forty-six people were killed during the riot which was pronounced as an ethnic clash by the Colonial Government but downplayed as a political riot between those who wanted self-government in 1956, and those who wanted imperialism to continue... The riots resulted in clashes between northerners; generally opposed to Nigeria's independence; and Southerners who supported immediate independence for Nigeria. The riots lasted for four days (<https://guardian.ng/politics/echoes-of-1953-kano-riot/>)

Nigeria attained political sovereignty in 1960. The first general election that was conducted by the Nigerian government in 1964 was bedeviled with electoral violence, which led to the destruction of lives and property worth millions of U.S dollars in the Western Region. Ogele (2020, p.10) revealed that "there was unprecedented electoral violence before and after the election. The power tussle between Obafemi Awolowo led Action Group and Samuel



Akintola led Northern People's Congress (NPC) was what triggered the electoral violence. This led to the collapse of the [Nigeria's] First Republic" and a subsequent military coup in 1965 that had ethnic coloration. The aftereffects of this coup led to the Secession Declaration for the Republic of Biafra (Eastern Region) by Col. Chukwumeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. This Secession Declaration was not treated with kid-glove by General Yakubu Jack Gowon who then the Head of State and Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The antithesis led to the Nigerian civil war that lasted for 30 years (1967-1970). The Nigerian civil was fought along ethnic cleavages. Some of the contending issues that led to Kano riot in 1953 are still in existence to date in Nigeria. The ethnic politics that split the Yoruba/Ibo bourgeoisie alliance and distrust between the North and South still exist in Nigeria to date.

## **Types of contemporary conflicts in Nigeria**

### **Terrorism**

Terrorism is a complex concept. There have been contentions over what constitutes terrorism or who is a terrorist? Hence, terrorism has been defined from various perspectives, whether political, religious or ideology, to suit a particular situation or to justify an action or disapprove it. The debate on what constitutes terrorism at the global level is the most contested based on the principles of sovereignty. However, over the period, strong state actors have carried out a known terrorist act against the weak states that violate the principles of sovereignty. Most times, these state actions are justified based on an ideological alliance, and these were very common during the Cold War era. Hence, Ahmad (1998, p.3) argued that "we are to feel the terror of those groups, which are officially disapproved. We are to applaud the terror of those groups of whom officials do approve." Ahmad writes that the U.S. policy during the Cold War period sponsored all sorts of terrorist regimes such as those of Somoza, Batista, and Pinochet, to name just a few. Radical Third World scholars of African extraction have argued that the West and their allies melted terrorist acts on the African Continent over the centuries without any reparation. One of such terrorist acts was the transatlantic slave enterprise where many Africans were forcefully transported across the Transatlantic Ocean, which has contributed to African underdevelopment (Rodney, 1972, p.108-119). The above submission is anchored on the historical antecedent of the North-South relations. Further argued that what the West claim to be a terrorist attack on them is counter-terrorism melted on Africa in the past and present.

Sadly, terrorism has continued to receive moral justification among scholars, irrespective of the effects on human security. For instance, Robinson (2001) buttressed that it is imperative to see the events of September 11 within the context of the transnationalized fractions that have gained a powerful hold over most nation-states worldwide. The global capitalist historical bloc is attempting to consolidate its social compact but is driven with contradictions and competing forces. But the truth of the matter is that many of those social groups most severely exploited by the forces of transnational Capital are located within the Third World population. Hudis (2002) suggested that there is need for the Third World to renew their commitments to anti-imperialist struggles, which he consider to be inevitable, not in the narrowly-defined sense of being anti-Western, but in the sense of disallowing class struggles inside the Third World countries, and everywhere that capitalism hacks it way throughout the globe, dragging imperialism in the wake of its impersonal law of social domination. These attacks were, according to Hudis (2002), "the reverse mirror image of capitalism and imperialism" and not the opposite of capitalism and imperialism. Such attacks have been propelled by reactionary religious fundamentalist ideology— that could more accurately be called Islamism—that represents only a small and fanatical number of followers of Islam.

In Africa, there are many notable terrorist organizations. They include al-Shabab, Jarna'atu Ahlis Sunnah Ladda'awatih wal- Jihad (Boko-Haram), AI-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), AI-Qaeda, Abdullah Azzam Brigades, Al-Mulathameen, AI-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Allied Democratic Forces, Ansar al-Sharia (Derna), Ansar al-Sharia (Libya), Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia), Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, among others. These terrorist organizations have caused havoc in many Africa countries. They have caused cross border conflicts, killings, and destroying properties, sacking communities leading to forced migration, among others.

The nefarious activities of Boko haram, one of the deadliest sects in the world was once justified by some highly placed Nigerian politicians and clerics in northern Nigeria. Over time, some have made statements which suggest that the Boko Haram sect received religious and political endorsements in their early years of operations before they intensification mayhem on innocent citizens in northern Nigeria. The Jarna'atu Ahlis Sunnah Ladda'awatih wal- Jihad (Boko-Haram) sect was formed by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, northeastern Nigeria. The Boko Haram aimed to establish an Islamic State under Sharia law in Nigeria and beyond. Hence, the Boko Haram has extended its

operations to neighbouring countries like Cameroon and Chad. Mohammed (2104,p.9) revealed that Boko Haram came to prominence in 2009. That in July 2009, Boko Haram carried out an open confrontation against the Nigerian State and was violently suppressed. Thereafter, the Boko Haram went underground but resurfaced again in October 2010 with a remarkable prison break at Bauchi State. Since then, the Boko Haram sect has changed their tactics such as suicide bombing, kidnapping, hostage-taking, assassinations, drive-by shootings, and massive deployment of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including vehicle-borne IEDs

On several occasions, Boko Haram has attacked Nigerian military barracks and camps, civilians, and their communities, which led to forced migration and displacement of the local indigenous people in northeast Nigeria, particularly in Bornu, Adamawa, and Yobe states. Records available indicate that since its inception, Boko Haram has killed thousands and scores of people, and destroyed properties worth billions of US dollars. Before the emergence of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, the Boko Haram insurgent group captured and occupied some local government areas in Bornu State where they pinned their flag and declared the local government areas as Caliphate. However, the Nigerian military reinforced and recaptured those local government areas. At present, the Boko Haram terrorist group has not been brought to waterloo in Nigeria, the military campaign and the theater are still ongoing in favour of the Nigerian military.

### **Herdsmen/Farmers conflict**

The Farmer-Herdsmen conflict has become a burning issue in Nigeria. The farmers/herdsmen conflict requires urgent attention. Since the inception of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999, one of the most debated conflict-related issues is the Herdsmen attacks on farmers' in their various communities, particularly in North Central Nigeria. Egbuta (2018) argued that the struggle over grazing land and limited resources over the decades result in the growing occurrence of violence intensifies conflicts within the region. The underpinning wave of farmers/herdsmen's violent conflict is attributed to environmental and demographic factors such as desertification caused by climate change and an increase in population. This devastating conditions emanating from climate change and population explosion coupled with the drying up of Lake Chad basin has increased the rising wave of the struggle for scarce resources between herdsmen and farmers leading to a violent clash that has resulted in deaths, forced migration, and displacement including the destruction of farms and livestock.

However, not long ago, the "Christian leaders in Nigeria claimed that 6,000 people were killed at the beginning of this year by the Muslim Fulani group, and the majority of people who were murdered are women and children" (Clark, 2018 cited in Li, 2018,p.2). The continuous attacks on farmers have increased food scarcity and poverty in the north-central region and Nigeria at large. Though there is a lack of an adequate statistical record on the number of deaths and damages arising from herdsmen attacks, however, the International Crisis Group (2018) disclosed that "the conflict between Nigerian farmers and herders killed at least 1,300 people in the first half of 2018."

### **Ethnic conflict**

There is no doubt that ethnicity has remained a central factor in African politics, both in academic discourse and social praxis. Most Africa independent societies were forcefully amalgamated in one political entity. These ethnic groups in the pre-colonial handled conflicts on their own and enhance social cohesion based on cultural heritage. However, after the Berlin Act of 1886, most of these independent societies were brought under a single political entity for administrative convenience as the case of Nigeria. The amalgamation of various Africa societies has produced more conflicts than ever. Hence, the former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan (1998, p.3) disclosed that the "sources of conflict in Africa reflect... diversity and complexity."

Shaw (1987, p.588) contends that in Africa, "the resilience of ethnicity as a paradigm and politics, ideology and reality, is one of the few continental continuities since independence." The question is what is ethnicity? There are several scholarly descriptions and definitions of ethnicity as a concept. Egwu (2001) identifies two "compelling" reasons why the concept needs clarification. First, there is a common error and the tendencies to simplify the concept merely as a derivation from an ethnic group even if the etymological link can never be denied. Second, there is the problem of the tendency to conflate ethnicity with other social phenomena that share common attributes. However, ethnicity and tribalism have been erroneously used interchangeably.



Ethnicity emanates from group consciousness, particularly among homogenous people. According to Nnoli (1978) ethnic group is a "social formation distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries." The relevant communal factors may be language, culture, or both. Nnoli further argued that acceptance and rejection of linguistic and cultural groups become the character of social relations. This leads to discrimination in access to material and non-material resources. Ethnicity in Africa has always been explained in the context of social dynamics. Hence, Nnoli (1989) identified four attributes of ethnicity. First, it exists in ethnic plural societies. Second, it is characterized by exclusiveness that is manipulated during inter-ethnic competition. Third, conflict is inherent in ethnicity, particularly in situations of competition. Fourth, it involves the consciousness of being one regarding others. According to Egwu (2001), it is primarily a political phenomenon as long as it has much to do with the allocation of values, linking ethnicity with the state, which is not just an archaic survival mechanism of African people as it is often presented.

Egwu (1998, 2001) buttressed that the existence of ethnic groups, or pluralism, is not the only pre-condition for ethnicity. Pluralism could be a necessary factor, but not a sufficient condition for the emergence of ethnicity. Mafeje (1997) also observed that ethnicity is not merely an abstract norm but an ideologically loaded concept, which is not a natural outcome of ethnic existence in any objective sense. This explains the fact that ethnicity does not exist independently. Hence, Doornbos (1991, p.56) noted that:

It essentially represents a single element, aspect or dimension lifted from more complex reality. It derives its meaning and significance from the interplay between other variables such as class, state, and power, while in turn; it can infuse such dimension with meaning and political clout.

The contemporary ethnic strife in Africa can trace its origin to the colonialist rule. The emergence of the modern African states was not a conscious act as was obtainable in most advanced democratic societies. It was designed by the Europeans to advance her economic interests. Various ethnic groups were amalgamated under one nation-state with a new system of government. Hence, there are bound to be ethnic competitions thereafter. For instance, in Nigeria, about 250 ethnic groups were forcefully amalgamated in 1914. The reasons deduced by Lord Lugard were the shortage of personnel and finance to administer the country. However, Lugard succeeded in bringing them together but also created room for ethnic conflicts that have remained in existence for 67 years since after Kano riot in 1953. Despite all the rhetoric of the successive governments on national integration, the ethnic consciousness has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria to the extent that every national issue is debated or view along ethnic lines. Hence, Nigeria has witnessed several conflicts emanating from ethnic strives. For instance, the Nigerian war was fought along the ethnic lines leading to the estimated deaths of over 2 million persons, and the destruction of property worth billions of dollars.

Nevertheless, in the retrospect, there were conflicts among African societies. Bayart (2005,p.92) disclosed that "conflicts enchant the pre-colonial period as the golden era of identity relations, pointing to the low politicization of ethnic or other identities in society. Mixing of identity groups often occurred during trade, wealth, and provision of skills." These were merely internal and external conflicts among overlords contesting for supremacy and domination of small ethnic groups. However, contemporary ethnic conflict has anchored the formation of a new social system. Mamdani (2002, p.9) argued that "the ethnicization of politics started with the construction of ethnicity as a legal entity that was elevated over otherwise fluid and loose characteristics of populations." It was obvious that ethnic competitions were eminently based on the divide-and-rule tactics used by the colonists to administer Rwanda. Unfortunately, the negative manifestation was what culminated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Azar (1990, p.6) revealed that:

Many conflicts currently active in the underdeveloped parts of the world are characterized by a blurred demarcation between the internal and external sources and actors. Moreover, there multiple casual factors and dynamics, reflected in the changing goals, actors, and targets. Finally, these conflicts do not show clear starting and terminating points.

Ethnic related conflicts in Nigeria seem to be endless. Political elites employed ethnic sentiment after independence in 1960 to sustain their socioeconomic and political base. These ethnic strives among political elites result in regular conflicts, particularly in fragile societies with weak institutions such as Nigeria. Ake (1985, p.11) noted that:

... As independence drew near it became manifest in the bitter struggle of a fractious Nigeria petty bourgeoisie fighting under ethnic ideologies. There were demands for the creation of more regions as a check on ethnic domination. In no time at all the fears of ethnic domination reached the point of paranoia. Since there is so much mystification about ethnicity. It is important to note that political competition among the nationalist leadership would assume this ethnic form. At independence, the nationalist movement, a bourgeoisie revolution, had to change its character. For in power the nationalist leaders would be the new butt of mass discontent and the class character of their politics would be revealed starkly. They had to deradicalize the masses and at the same time try to conceal class contradictions. There was hardly any other way available for doing this except to appeal to ethnicity. Ethnicity would smother class consciousness among the masses across and allow vertical integration of leaders and the masses across class lines.

Nevertheless, as stated earlier, the power elites are the major beneficiaries of ethnic politics in Nigeria. Each time they are denied or want to achieve a set goal(s), they create ethnic sentiments, especially when it comes to allocation of values (national cake). Some of the internal conflicts in Africa are rooted in our diversity and our inability to take advantage of the diversity to advance our course has become a challenge that has led to our underdevelopment. Using Nigeria as a case, there are several instances of ethnic conflicts. They include the Jukun-Tiv conflict in the Wukari Local Government Area of Benue State; the Zangon-Kataf conflict involving the Kataf and Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups in Kaduna State; the Bachama-Hausa conflict in Adamawa State, the Agila of Benue State and Igbo of Enugu State.

In some cases, the conflicts occurred among members of the same ethnic group, living in the same state. For instance, in Anambra State, there have been conflicts between Agulen and Umuleri, Achina and Akpo; Onitsha and Nkpor; Adazi-Nnukwu, and Nn. Amawbia and Awka; Unubi and Uga; which led to scores of deaths. Another instance is the conflict over Otu Ocha land, between the two Igbo communities of Aguleri and Umuleri, both in Anambra State and Anambra Local Government Area have fought for several years which is similar to those from different ethnic extractions

### **Oil-related conflict**

The Niger Delta region has been a flashpoint of conflicts in the last few decades. Niger Delta is a region endowed with crude oil deposits, which have become a source of controversy and conflicts. The Niger Delta region is the commercial hub of oil-related businesses and an attraction of multinational oil companies. Despite the degree of oil exploration and exploitation ongoing in the region since 1956 when crude oil was first discovered in commercial quantity, the region remains underdeveloped. The Niger Delta region has suffered from environmental degradation emanating from various anthropogenic activities. However, in the 1990s, the inhabitants commenced agitation against the multinational oil companies and the Nigeria State. The peaceful protest later metamorphosed into arms conflict between the inhabitants (militants) and the state-backed by the multinational oil companies. On several occasions, the multinational oil companies have been accused of complicity in various conflicts in the oil-bearing communities using the agents of the state to accomplish their missions. The Human Right Watch (HRW) (1999, p.12) Report disclosed that:

A document alleged to be a leaked government memorandum from 1994 implicated Shell in planned "wasting operations" by the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, stating that the oil companies should pay the costs of the operations. The head of the Task Force several times publicly claimed to be acting so that Shell's oil production could resume. Former Ogoni members of the Shell police have claimed that they were involved in deliberately creating conflict between different groups of people, and in intimidating and harassing protesters during the height of the MOSOP protests in 1993 and 1994; Ogoni detainees have also alleged that they were detained and beaten by Shell police during the same period.

Owolabi and Okwechime (2007) provided representative cases of oil-related genocide attempt on Niger Delta inhabitants by the Nigerian State backed by the multinational oil companies regarding Iko-Shell clash (1987), the Oboburu-Elf clash (1989), the Umuechem Massacre (1990), the Uzere-Shell clash (1992), the Kaiama bloodbath (1998), the Odi and Choba killings (1999) and the Okerenkoko, Kokodiagbene, Oporoza Kurutie, -genocide

orchestrated by the JTF (2009), Ayakoromo community (2010), among others. The struggle against environmental injustice and global Capital backed by the state power resulted in the death of many, including prominent sons, destruction of properties, among others in the region.

There are other oil-related conflicts among the oil-bearing communities over oil-related benefits leading to loss of lives and destruction of properties. They include Nembe and Kalahari conflict, Ogoni and Asa-Ndoki; as well as Ogoni and Okrika are directly or indirectly over who should receive monetary compensation for land acquired by oil prospecting companies. There are many situations where communities fight among themselves over who should control the contracts or how monies paid by oil companies should be shared. For instance, Rumuekpe Community in Emuoha local government, Rivers State got involved in a protracted oil-related conflict that led to the annihilation of the community.

### **Land disputes**

In Africa, the land is not just a physical attribute but it has a spiritual and cultural attachment to the natives. "It [also] provides the context within which people define and organize themselves in socio-political terms and also define the local political economy" (Chabal, 2009). Agricultural is a predominant occupation in Africa. Hence, the land is key to survival in agrarian societies since the majority of the population are farmers. Communities or tribes in Africa fight over land. Abdu (2010, p.115) revealed that "ethnic claims over space and land are often buttressed by a specific history of migration and settlements. This often generates serious controversies, sometimes resulting in violent conflicts." For instance, in Akwa-Ibom State, the two communities of Ashanti in Ibinono-Ibom LGA and Ekpemiong in Ikono LGA clashed over a contested area of land on 24 December 1996. The two fought with guns, machetes and explosives which led to the death of at least 12 persons were killed and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed, including 17 residential houses. On 9th April 1997, in Geno village near Bukuru in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, violent conflict broke out between the indigenous Berom inhabitants and the immigrant Hausa farming community over the land-related dispute. The fundamental cause was a long-standing struggle over control of the land between the immigrant Hausas and the indigenous Beroms. Over 25 people were killed, 120 others were seriously injured, while over five thousand were displaced. In July 1997, in Bayelsa State, three communities of Beletiam, Liama, and Igbabelen were involved in the dispute over fishing water that led to serious conflict. Though, there is a long history of disagreements over fishing waters among the people of the area.

### **Religious conflict**

Religious conflict is more pronounced in Nigeria and other African countries. There are two dominant religions in Nigeria. They are Islam and Christianity. Northern Nigeria is dominated by the Islamic religion, while southern Nigeria has a greater number of Christians. However, over the years, Nigeria has witnessed devastating religious uprising in northern Nigeria. The conflict is always between the majority of northern Moslems and minority northern Christians. Each this religious conflict occurs, scores of deaths on both sides are recorded and destroyed properties worth millions of dollars. Most times, this religious conflict is usually religious in nature but over time showcased ethnic character. In recent years, there have been major religious conflicts in Kano, Bauchi, and Kaduna states among others in northern Nigeria. In Kano State alone, the Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) (n.d.p.2) disclosed that:

The first major religious violence in Nigeria was associated with the Maitatsine sect, which drew mass support across major towns and cities in Northern Nigeria. The sect turned violent in 1980, culminating in riots in several northern towns in which over 5,000 Nigerians, including Muhammadu Marwa, the sect's founder, and members of the security forces were killed. In 1991, a religious riot was triggered by the reported decision of Kano State Government to approve a preaching event by a German Christian evangelist after allegedly turning down the request of Muslim preacher to organize a public preaching event. The bloody riots leftover 500 people dead. In 1999 and 2004, southerners and northern Christian in Kano were attacked in reprisal for the killing of northern Muslims in some southern cities. In 2007, a group of armed men and women known as the Taliban, who were believed to have originated in Niger or Chad engaged the state's security personnel in a fierce gun battle in Challawa outside of Kano City and 'disappeared'. In 2011, three days of rioting across northern Nigeria followed the announcement of the results of the



presidential election; eight killings and 22 injuries occurred in Kano. Kano was one of the centres of this violence, which was directed at non-Muslims, politicians of the winning party, and their supporters.

Another area prone to religious conflict violence is the Kaduna State. There several instances of conflicts such as Kafachan riots of 1987, Zangon Katab violence 1992, Kafachan conflict of 2011, among others. Most times, the places of worship are always their first target, and later destruction properties, killings, and displacement of local people.

### **Political related Violence**

Electoral violence has been counted as one of the common conflicts in Africa, particularly in every election cycle. Pre and post-election violence have become a common phenomenon in Africa. In Kenya's general election, the Human Rights Watch (2013) revealed that "in December 2007 [general election] led to the most serious violence, with an estimated 1,300 people dead." Similar to Kenya, Nigeria's general elections have been characterized by electoral violence. The Human Rights Watch (2011) also disclosed that "deadly election-related and communal violence in northern Nigeria following the April 2011 presidential voting left more than 800 people dead...The victims were killed in three days of rioting in 12 northern states." Every election cycle was not without the threat of violence since the inception of Nigeria. For instance, the 1964 general election in the Western Region, Nigeria was characterized by the electoral irregularities, especially in the Western region. There was unprecedented electoral violence before and after the election.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The contemporary conflicts in Africa are both internally induced and externally influenced. Though, conflicts in Africa predate contacts with Western and Arab World. African empire, kingdoms, emirate, or chiefdom attacked each other for various reasons. Nevertheless, some of the contemporary conflicts in Africa are attributed to the balkanization of Africa and amalgamation of African independent societies which have resulted in ethnic strives among the people. The Cold War also witnessed the scramble for ideological alliance in Africa leading to the sponsorship of internal wrangling among African leaders and each faction was supported with arms. Based on the findings, most of the conflicts in African states were internally induced. The post-colonial Africa witnessed several terrible conflicts leading to the death of millions of Africans, mostly women and children who are vulnerable and contributed less to the factors that triggered those conflicts. Some of these conflicts are initiated by African's ruling power elites who want to continue to relevant in the system. Hence, it is not out place to conclude that the enemies of Africa in the contemporary conflicts are Africans who are used as surrogates by external influence and others who perpetuate these conflicts to sustain their personal and ethnic interests. Hence, the paper recommends that:

1. Since conflicts are inevitable, the African States should emulate Rwanda's Gacaca traditional dispute settlement methods.
2. There should be regular security conferences among African countries to review extent protocols on implementation or domestication of the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in their various member states.
3. The African Union should adjust treaties that will encourage timely intervention to domestic conflicts to avoid intensified campaign in the theater.
4. There should be collaborative efforts in the fight against terrorism and insurgency in the African continent on humanitarianism.
5. The African Union should encourage member states to establish and domesticate Alternative Conflict Resolution where a dispute can easily by resolve before it escalates.
6. The African Union should encourage member states to look inward and develop their natural resource where they have a comparative advantage to avoid unnecessary foreign aids that vertically integrates to more advanced countries.
7. The Africa Union should encourage the member state to establish Peace and Conflict Resolution Centre and also include in their school curriculum.

8. African countries should also strengthen the country's Electoral Management Boards and relevant institutions to improve in the conduct of elections.

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