

A Constructionist Perspectives of Violent and Destructive Conflicts

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Abstract

Conflict is generally inevitable, among humans and human habitation and bodies, subject only to degree, prevention and mitigation. The causative typifications and consequential symptomizations of violent and destructive conflicts (wars) is the focus of this paper, with a view of preventing and or mitigating them for the building and enhancement of peace and harmony globally, continentally and locally. Bordering on individual and national needs and primordial tendencies, the world today typifies/symptomizes a stark decline in the humanity of mankind as a result of intractable and undesirable conflicts; thus necessitating the direst need for, and call on mankind to Pause, Ponder and Pally. In other words, to reflect, introspect and adjust. The often intractability and unpredictability in the prosecution and outcomes of violent and destructive conflicts (wars) across the world, are indicative hallmarks of the futility, needlessness and undesirability of war, rather than peace; forceful and violent settlement of conflicts rather than diplomatic and alternative resolution (amicable settlement). Simply put, military or forceful victory and defeat do not produce and guarantee peace and harmony. Diplomatic and amicable resolution does. The senselessness of war and violent conflicts lies in the fact that; if all wars end at the table (dialogue and reconciliation), why fight war in the first place? The making of this paper relied on secondary source of data collection, then synthesis, analysis and synchronization, in tune with its theme. It explores the general global trends, cascaded downwards to continental, national and local situations. It concludes by recommending that the world (leaders) should Pause, Ponder and Pally, and develop enduring strategies and synergies to mitigate/stop current ravaging conflicts, and prevent future conflicts, for as it is often said; prevention is better than cure, which, in the context of this paper connotes reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation.

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The inevitability of conflict in man, and among men (and nations) thrives on the quadruple phenomena namely: man's fallible nature; his divinely endowed free-will; his primordial tendencies, and conflicting interests, bordering on individual differences. The interplay between these, and man's over indulgence in them, as a result of greed, insatiability and insensitivity to the environment and to other persons and nations, often evoke conflict between individuals, groups and nations. These conflicts, either intra or inter nations, often turn intractable where the causative factors, especially primordial, self-interests are rigidly entrenched. Pursuant to the above, the world today reflects a stark decline in the humanity of mankind, as a result of endless, intractable and undesirable conflicts and wars. Thus, killings have become a pastime, and violent destruction has become a terror game.

On the decline in the humanity of mankind, the sad and stark reality is that, even within the realm of natural inequality of mankind, the crafty and deliberately orchestrated material gap between the rich and poor, among individuals and nations, has turned so tenuous and intolerable, such that the unhappiness of the deprived majority poor and hungry has made the minority rich and affluent unsafe and vulnerable. Thus, massive and relentless security strategies and armaments by various governments and countries guarantee little or no safety and security, because of injustices, which operate to rob mankind of its existential and enduring humanity. These injustices are pervasive in the world's flashpoints – Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Contestations and conflicts thrive between the human classes in many of those countries, largely owe to historical injustices and contemporary exploitation and manipulations.

The dilemma, intra and inter-nations, foists a lose-lose scenario, whereby peaceful and quality life becomes difficult to attain and sustain by the privileged minority, and also the unprivileged majority. Conversely, material prosperity of individual and nations does not automatically guarantee peace and security, in the reality of excruciating social and economic imbalances. Or, where the management of material resources is mismanaged, and general leaderships are inept and typified with corruption.

The typifications and symptomizations of global conflicts include geopolitical transition; north-south geo-polar economic divide, environmental pollution, deprivations and constraints, proliferation of weapons,

ideological contestations, climate change, vagaries, and varied responses thereto; diplomatic double standards, hypocrisy and partiality; entrenched hegemonic tendencies, manipulation and exploitation.¹

For Africa, environmental and demographic (climate change) problems; default and faulty democratization cum leadership process; along with decline in governance and state capacities, cumulatively form the typifications and symptomizations of conflicts within the continent.²

Regarding the above, and relative to Africa, and Nigeria in particular, poor political leadership, endemic corruption and the effects of colonialism, constitute the debilitating tripod of Nigeria/Africa's developmental quagmire. Some leaders in some of the flashpoints, especially in Africa perpetrate sit-tight syndrome; and other leadership ineptitudes through election rigging, constitutional manipulations, resource misapplication towards desired political outcomes, as well as ethno-religious divisive tendencies for political advantages. The problem of corruption which pauperizes the majority population, is cancerously endemic among many leaders and the elite in many underdeveloped countries, particularly in Africa, Nigeria inclusive.

On the above debilitating causes of violent conflicts, and underdevelopment, namely, poor political leadership and corruption, one of the few exemplary Nigeria's elder statesmen and former Nigerian Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon (Rtd) opines:

Our citizens often have become hostages to sit-tight crafty and foxy pseudo-democrats with proclivity for looting, greed, corruption and mal-administration.

And in a nadir remarks on corruption, a Nigerian well respected legal luminary, and a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Yusuf Ali, intoned:

I see corruption as a very terrible sin. Eighty percent of the country's problems are caused by corruption. I support death penalty for people who are convicted for corruption. That is the only way we can get out of this mess.

The intractability of wars along with their unpredictable outcomes point to the futility and needlessness of wars as means of either power expression or need satisfaction. Often, physical (military) power alone does not guarantee victory for the mighty and powerful. The trend flows from history to present time. Whether it is the episode between Goliath and David; America and Vietnam (1955 – 1975); Russia and Afganistan (1979 - 1989); Israel, Hamas and Hizbollah (Oct. 7, 2023 -); Russian and Ukraine (Feb. 24, 2022 -) and most recently, USA, Israel and Iran (28th Feb., 2026 -), the lessons are obvious. And the lessons favour diplomatic, dynamic and alternative amicable approach to conflict resolution than resort to physical/military (destructive) might. Preference should be given to conflict prevention, through removing the causes and triggers of conflicts, rather than reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation which usually follow destructive conflicts. The approach of a 5th Century BC, Chinese war strategist, Sun Tzu, expressed in his work: "The Art of War", laid the foundation for the above view and recommendation. He explained that: "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill". He postulated on victory through strategy, preparation and psychological dominance rather than brute force.

Thomas Hobbes modelled his position, in his Leviathan, along Sun Tzu's earlier conflict/war doctrine, to the effect that: true peace is not just the absence of violence, but the removal of the reasons that cause people to go to war.

On the effect of colonialism as basis of conflicts and under-development in Africa, while Africa's colonial experience, including slavery could be viewed as 'rape of virginity', the post-independence dependency-syndrome, along with steep, continuous and environmentally unfriendly exploitation of its natural and mineral resources by multi-national companies, and by some other means, amount to 'marriage in bondage', and flag independence devoid of economic and holistic freedom.

Unpredictability in wars lies in the fact that the weaker side might be bruised but not defeated or vanquished in proportion to the mighty power of the stronger side, that fails to achieve its war aims. In a nutshell, the intractability and unpredictability in the prosecution and outcomes of violent and destructive conflicts (wars) are indicative hallmarks of the futility and needlessness of wars rather than peace. Forceful and violent settlement of conflicts rather than diplomatic and alternative (amicable) means of resolution, is contrary to good reasoning, morality and religion, and to that extent unconscionable and inhuman.

Contemporary conflicts arising from the selfish activities of man, either as individuals or nations are unmitigated by law (legislation and enforcement), because laws are often rendered ineffective by selfish legislations and selective applications and enforcements (double standards). Hence, at inter-nation terrain, bilateral and universal treaties and resolutions are flouted and or applied, depending on the ever swinging interests of those concerned. At the intra-nation sphere, the poor and the deprived citizens visit their travails and frustrations on the society through crimes and violence, while the privileged rich and powerful use the machinery of leadership and the law to punish, oppress and tame them. In all these, the law itself is handicapped, because in most cases the processes of law legislation are not only faulty but are also devoid of requisite moral contents and basis.

The law, as it is today, from global to local terrains, has no fool-proof solution to societal conflicts and crisis. In fact, it has considerably failed, for want of morality and divinity in its legislation, application and enforcement. The failure of contemporary law in resolving conflicts and controlling crimes is worse in Africa.

The failure is more glaring in the area of crime control and prevention, as well as in the restitution/restoration of crime victims to *status quo ante*.

Similarly, conflicts among individuals and nations are beyond science and technological (education) therapy alone, where the scientists making scientific discoveries and technological inventions, and deploying them for mankind's use are bereft of the centrality of God in their individual lives. Hence, Albert Einstein in 1941, said: *I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: Science without religion is lame.*³

The stark reality is that the above reference is observed only in the breach, whereas God's guidance is the only true and beneficial guidance for mankind. The further truth is that, because most contemporary scientists, inventors and the elite (leaders) are bereft of the emphasized profound faith, mankind is today in the midst of one of the greatest crises in its history. Hence the need for the world to Pause, Ponder and Pally.

In his award-winning literature; "The future without a past" in which he wrote on the decline on humanities, John Paul Russo states: *The transformation of a man at the hands of technological imperatives such as rationalization, universalism, monism, and autonomy; the relation between ourselves and nature has altered to such a degree that we no longer live in a natural environment but in a technological ones. Technological values have actually eroded human values instead of being humanized by them.*⁴

Altruistically, mankind's contemporary problems are due to lack of moral and religious adjustments with which to guide and put in check the startling developments in law, science and technology. Hence, all growths and developments are marked by pains, added pains, conflicts and tragedies, instead of enduring comfort, relief and harmony. Consequently, the transition that the entire world needs to effect today, if we are to positively survive and have true universal peace and harmony, is a genuine and concerted moral and spiritual transition, which should embrace the whole world, and which of course should be led by the United States of America. The US should lead in that regard, for its capability.

According to Mr. Jimmy Carter, the late 39th President of United States of America; *with leadership from the United States, the universal declaration of human rights was adopted in 1948 as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This was bold and clear commitment that power would no longer serve as a cover to oppress or injure people, and it established equal rights of all people to life, liberty, security of persons, equal protection of the law and freedom from torture, arbitrary detention or forced exile.*⁵

The import of Mr. Carter's treatise in the view of the paper, is that, in order to secure and sustain universal peace, harmony and security, America, as the ubiquitous world super-power and leader should shed-off her excesses and adjust her strategic economic and foreign policies, more in favor of other nations than itself. Thus, 'America First', policy isolates, while equitable inclusive America integrates and harmonizes.

As a retractional pathway, by way of recommendation and solution, since God created man in His own image and placed him on earth, and since God is exceedingly good, the world needs peace not war; security not violence; unity not disharmony; love not hate. However, the path to all these is telling truth to leaderships by those in requisite positions to do so. It also entails upholding the truth, doing justice and equity to all and sundry and above all an enduring fear of God. The fact remains that, virtually at many levels of contemporary leaderships across the world, these essential elements for a peaceful, progressive and humane humanity are lacking, even as they are essential possibilities.

While the world, led by United States of America needs to introspect and adjust, this paper is concluded on the poignant words of Mahatma K. Gandhi of India, thus: *I have nothing new to teach the world, truth and non-violence are as old as the hills.*⁶

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