



Peace and Conflict Management in a Post Covid-19 Nigeria: Impact and Lessons.

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Abstract: *The interdependence and mutual relationship that exist among different parts of a system determines the effectiveness of such a system and also serves as a parameter in achieving the systems predetermined goal(s) and objectives. However, there's bound to be a dysfunctional relationship when a system is faced with friction resulting from conflict. Also, without the right or proper peace management mechanism, it will degenerates into serious chaos. The chaos so generated, will diverts the system from pursuing and achieving its core goals and objectives. Since peace is a relative condition of security friendly climate that allows individuals and group relations to progressive order and stability. Therefore, presence of Peace does not mean the absence of conflict or war. It reflects that security friendly system that frees individuals and groups of people from fears and dangers of losing such inalienable human rights as life, liberty and property. This paper, therefore, focuses on exploring the structural view of peace, the historical origin of conflicts and crisis management in human development, the effect of COVID-19 on Nigerian economy, social and religious functions as well as the violation of COVID – 19 guidelines and laws. It also attempted to examine the innovations made during the pandemic. It analyzes the techniques and methods of conflict resolution adopted overtime. The paper concludes by highlighting the impact and lesson drawn from COVID – 19 pandemic.*

Keywords: *Peace, Conflict, Covid-19 and Innovations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Structural View of Peace

The structural conception peace assumes that the society is an interdependent one, and each has a role; an obligation, or indeed a function (Chand, 2012, p. 13). Thus, peace is a collaborative activity that precedes the interplay of functions by the rulers and the ruled; and institutional



structures. As part of conflict or stress reduction, each need to play its part very well and progressives too, just as the interplay of roles may be enhanced by timely and accurate flow of information and /or communication for stabilizing a system, or society. Okechukwu (2011, p.59) presents those of the structural perspectives as the instrumentalists and functionalists. Implicit in this viewpoint is that peace is an integrative process as well as an end itself. As an end itself peace is understood not only as a preferred desire for human existence and activity, but a continuous process of desire against lines of anarchy, tension, violence or war.

Historical Origin and Nature of Conflict

Conflict among human beings is a feature of societal growth and development, which dates back to the beginning of human history and human institutions. Crisis and conflict are common features of Hobbesian state of nature. Thus, in the pursuit of common goods or limited resources in society, man is bound to maneuver, undercut as well as step on the toes of others. Hence, conflict of interests resulting from the pursuit of common goods has always been a clear and express invitation for conflict and crisis in human society.

Meanwhile, a well-managed conflict gives rise to a more lasting relationship and, according to Hegelian concept of dialectical materialism, society develops from forces of contradiction, thus in the course of settling a dispute, concerned parties learn the “dos” and “don’ts” of each other. Consequently, a mutual respect for such “dos” and “don’ts” ushers in a more congenial relationship between the parties (Onwusi, 1999, p.98).

Conflict is not only as old as human beings, but is also ubiquitous. Therefore, resolution of conflict has become an enduring feature of human existence. With the growth and development of human society, it was not long before litigation established itself as the dominant and pervasive mode of dispute resolution and crisis management. For further clarification, we need to understand the term conflict.

Conflict Defined

Conflict has been defined in several ways. In spite of the differing views, a number of common themes underline most definition of conflict. Whether one is aware of it or not, conflict exist either by perception or real. The other, conflict involves two or more parties in opposition to interests, principles, practice or strategies. In other words, conflict reflects a class of interest or goal between parties, which may be individual or group of individuals, or ethnic groups or states. Another is that conflict reflects a determined action or struggle over a goal, which may be overt or subtle; manifest of imaginary (Aja, 2008. p.15). There in real conflict situation as well as psychological conflict. Either way conflict is a function of the mindset of parties in a relation. Put together, we may have a working definition of conflict as an attitude, a behavior or an action or a process that introduces strains and stresses in the relationship between two or more parties on, say, the attainment of a set of interests or goals. In conflict, parties perceive or treat each other as a stumbling block that will result in frustrating the other in attaining a set of goals, or even furthering one’s interests. Contrasting images of each party’s intentions, inactions or actions may also create a situation of conflict.

Peace and Conflict Management

Peace and conflict resolution have occupied the minds of policy makers, statesmen and defense



intellectuals in world politics. It is the other peace phase of strategic studies. It is concerned about peace strategy or the use of strategic diplomacy in the management of issues and conflicts between states. It has become very critical due to pervasiveness of war, conflict and terrorism on the world stage. Moreso, there is a general concern for making the world around us more flexible, tolerant and better governable. Peace does not mean an absolute phenomenon. It is not the opposite of war or conflict. Rather, it is an expression of relative atmosphere of security friendliness that encourages a tolerable and manageable level of order and stability in a system. As a result, peace and security are correlates. They are twin-like, they move together. Peace and security is not just good for one country, it is good and desirable for every country in the world system. Security in itself is a multinational concept that involves an ordered human existence, free from threats or fears of danger, or harm to life, liberty and property. Security is not about what gun can do but the place of the other non-military variables in the promotion and preservation of tolerant and governable system. As a corollary, conflict resolution is both a principle and a practice in the promotion of capacity building towards bargaining, negotiation, mediation, conciliation and arbitration. It is derived from the strong belief that conflicts or wars need not be left alone. There is need to manage war or conflict by bringing parties into the appreciation of human and economic costs as well as the mutual benefits of returning to order and stability (Aja 2007, pp.31-32). Generally, Nigerians were thrown in a dilemmasituation; it was a period that could otherwise be known as a cold war era. There was psychological and emotional crisis that occurred as a result of the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic will resulted in a total lockdown of the entire country. Mechanism were not put in place to manage the above crisis which the outcome didn't depict an atmosphere of peace, friendliness and harmony. It becomes imperative that this paper explore Nigeria Covid-19 experience and see the point of departure between peace and conflict management as well as creative innovations that took place during the pandemic.

Covid-19 and the Nigeria Experience

COVID-19 is caused by a new strain of coronavirus. The disease known as „2019 novel coronavirus“ or „2019-nCoV.“is a member of viruses - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold. The signs are fever, flu (influenza) or the common cold, cough and shortness of breath, in severe cases; it may cause pneumonia or difficulties in breathing. For somebody to pronounced COVID - 19 patients, a test is needed. Individuals are infected by direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person who coughs and sneezes), touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face. The most vulnerable to this pandemic are older people and people with chronic medical conditions (such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms). Presently, there are relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. There are several clinical trials that are being conducted to evaluate potential therapeutics for COVID-19 To prevent the spread, preventive actions include: staying at home; covering mouth and nose with mask when coughing or sneezing and dispose of used mask immediately; hand washing with soap and water; use of hand sanitizer, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects, and social distancing (IASC, 2020). The pandemic was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (Huang, 2020). On the 11th March, 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak pandemic (WHO,2020). The first official case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was pronounced on the February 27, 2020. This was traced to an Italian who came into Nigeria and a Nigerian from Ogun State who contacted the virus from the Italian. Since then, the situation became worse in the



country.

Enforcement of Safety Measures

To curb the further spread of the virus, the FGN and each state government directed the simple use of face mask, hand-washing and sanitizing, and social distance. It is unfortunate that those (security agents and task force on COVID-19) who supposed to enforce the measures did not because of their highhandedness in the enforcement of lockdown order.

Effect on Economy

To prevent further spread of the virus, the federal and state governments put up preventive measures by locking down the entire federation. All schools, religious centers, markets, and transporters were barred from their activities, and social gatherings, essential services (banks, hospitals, para military, and others) were allowed easy movements to discharge their duties. To cushion the effects of this lockdown, the federal and state governments distributed foods and other materials to the lucky ones who were able to be available during distributions. Many people were not happy with the distributions because it did not cut across the citizens. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), organizations, philanthropists, religious institutions, and private individuals also contributed their quotas. Among the palliatives were hospital equipment, nose masts and sanitizers, food stuffs, vehicles, cash donations, and other useful materials. According to Eludini (2020), Kelechi Anuna a member of Nigeria's national basketball team, donated COVID-19 relief materials to some residents in his home town, Mbieri, in Imo State. Also, John Obi Mikel donated 1800 crates of eggs to residents located near his farm. It is on note that the military hospital, Abuja assisted residents with free hand- sanitizers (Ukwu, 2020). All was done to reduce the impact of the pressure on the economy.

Effect on Education

The effect of COVID - 19 on education sector is devastating because students at all levels have lost over 4 months of learning activities. No how the IQ of the students will be greatly affected. The solace is that after 2 months of non-educational activities few private institutions have resulted into the use of E-learning. Conferences, workshops, and seminars were affected. Due to the pandemic, most of these were postponed indefinitely. Few institutions saw the need to use virtual methods for their programs. The use of conferencing and webinar were made use of. The disadvantage of these is that many Nigerians are not conversant with the use of these types of virtual learning methods while the larger part of the population are not computer literate. The pandemic has compelled the academia and researchers to find the solace in presenting their international and national papers in conferences and lectures to the students. By and large, there are many disadvantages with regards to e-learning in Nigeria. For example, the electricity in Nigeria is epileptic and the cost of providing alternatives is high. It is costly to run petrol and solar powered generators, not many houses can afford it. The cost of data for the internet is high too, not all places will have an access to internet or fast internet services. Over 70% of our students do not have access to laptops and computers.

Effect on Religious Activities

Throughout the nation, religious activities were affected. Most religious centers turned „ghost centers“ (2020, Faleke). The government both state and Federal made announcements during the



lockdown that no religious activities or gathering above twenty members are allowed and each gathering must comply with the use of nose mask, washing of hands with soap and water, and the use of hand sanitizer. Some churches and mosques complied, but those that went against this rule were sanctioned, arrested, and duly punished by the task force set to monitor religious activities. There was a case in Bornu State while the restriction order was still in force, three Imams of a weekly Friday mosque went ahead and encouraged worshiper to congregate for the Friday service, the consequence was that they were arrested and sanctioned (Haruna 2020). In Lagos State, during a church service, the pastor of the church and four others were arrested for violating the COVID - 19 regulation (Alabi, 2020). The noticeable experience was that members refused to attend services for the fear of getting contacted. For example, in Bauchi State, due to COVID-19 the Governor placed major restrictions on markets and places of worship. The residents were banned from conducting the weekly Friday prayers as well as Sunday church services (Haruna, 2020). In furtherance of religious activities during the COVID - 19 pandemic, many churches resulted into live streaming of the normal church services on the cable TV.

Innovations and Creativity during the Pandemic

The COVID -19 pandemic is a blessing in disguise to Nigerians because this has brought out or showcases the talents in the citizens. If not because of this pandemic, many of the precaution methods employed now would have been ordinarily imported into the country. The hand sanitizers were produced by common people with the mixture of glycerol and methylated spirit or alcohol. Since the production was common, the price dropped drastically when the pandemic just appeared in Nigeria. In addition, the nose mask was produced too by local tailors who could afford just few yards of Ankara fabrics and rubber bands. In a related event, some of the state governors contracted the production of nose mask to the National Tailors' Association. They were given the mandate to sew the nose masks running to millions of Naira. The produced masks were distributed to the citizens of each state. Several institutions, research centers, engineering construction companies, NYSC members, and others developed and fabricated disinfection chambers and hand sanitizers with local materials. This is kudos to local indigenous engineers. The NYSC members in AkwaIbom State constructed disinfection chamber which was donated to AkwaIbom State Government (Akpan-Nsoh, 2020), The National Institute of Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD), Abuja produced hand sanitizer (The Vanguard 2020), The Federal Polytechnic, Oyo manufactured solar-powered hand washing machine (Onyeukwu, 2020), Kano University of Science and Technology(KUST), Wudil constructed a solar powered infrared temperature monitor and automated sanitizer (Adewale, 2020), A Nigerian Engineer Fabricates Foot Controlled Hand Washing system (Solohtolz, 2020), and a team of engineers from the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, Kaduna State, also fabricated an Automatic 4-in-1 Sanitizing Machine and an intensive care ventilator (PRNigeria, 2020). Ordinarily, the above stated innovations would have cushion the effect of Covid-19 but yet, the crisis continue with the activities of #Endears protested which later turned violent as a result of system failure and lack of proper peace building mechanism to address the immediate challenges of the youth at that very moment.

Theoretical Framework

When addressing post-conflict situations, peace-building initiatives must adopt a Comprehensive approach. For this reason, I recommend that a collaboration approaches theory be utilized to



develop peace- Building and reconciliation programs. This theoretical approach will allow for engagement with highly controversial issues in both an ethical and comprehensive manner. As a result, this framework has the potential to promote long-term reconciliation projects that will have the support of the people. Collaboration, this theoretical approach, involves the inclusion of community members into all stages of program planning, development and Implementation. This ensures that indigenous perspectives and needs are incorporated and addressed throughout the process. By encouraging the inclusion of local voices and experiences, this approach allows local participants to shape program development (Lassiter & Mertus 2004, p.234). As a result, these initiatives provide communities with culturally appropriate and locally relevant methods for resolving conflict and implementing peace.

Techniques and Methods of Conflict and Crisis Resolution in Post Covid-19 Nigeria.

Conflict resolution has become an enduring feature of human society. Litigation or court adjudication between disputing parties has over the years come to be the most visible way of dispute resolution. With all the paraphernalia of institutional mechanisms for organizing litigation process, the resort to litigation by disputing parties came to be perceived as normal and traditional. Nevertheless, in spite of the well-developed judicial process across most nations of the world, and in spite of all the array of highly skilled lawyers and judges, traditional litigation is gradually losing steam as an effective conflict resolution mechanism. Amidst all other reasons advanced for the effectiveness of the phenomenon, Richard Salem noted that litigation as a technique for conflict resolution takes a long time, involves high cost and leaves the parties with a feeling of pain, especially the losing party, thus the faith and confidence in this mechanism has severally been affected. In view of the foregoing defect of the traditional litigation process as a mechanism, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), a new approach/mechanism, is now used and this faster and fairer without destroying an on-going relationship. The mechanism, according to Onwusi (1999), includes but is not limited to arbitration, mediation, conciliation and negotiation.

Arbitration

It is a process in which a neutral third party, after listening to parties in a relatively informal hearing, makes a binding decision resolving the dispute. The essence of arbitration is classified as an ADR, the process of its application in the resolution of disputes is judicial in nature. This entails that the parties in an arbitral proceeding may present legal arguments and call evidence in proof of their cases. Even though the proceeding may not be constrained by strict technical rules of evidence and procedure, the arbitrator, nonetheless, is expected to observe judicial principles in the determination [of the claims of the parties. It is not every dispute/conflict that should ordinarily form the subject of an arbitration process. Only conflicts that indeed justifiable or which ordinarily can be resolved by the traditional legal process may be referred to arbitration. The key characteristic of arbitration, which marks it out from traditional litigation, is that instead of a judge presiding and adjudicating in a properly constituted court, the proceeding is presided over by a person chosen by the parties, known as arbitrator who arrives at a decision known as award.

Mediation.

According to Aina, quoted in Onwusi (1999), Mediation is a negotiation carried out with the assistance of a neutral third party. It usually commences when the disputing parties are unable to



resolve their differences or dispute on their own and a third neutral party or mediator is called in to assist in finding a common ground. The mediator, unlike the arbitrator or judge, has no power to impose a solution on the parties. He is no more than an “agent of reality” whose sole function is to assist the disputing parties resolve their disputes consensually. A typical mediation session starts with the disputing parties agreement on the choice of the mediator and signing a mediation agreement which indicates the confidentiality and “without prejudice nature” of the process. An initial joint session is held with the parties during which the mediator explains the procedure to be adopted while each party makes a brief presentation orally. Subsequently, the mediator meets back and front between the parties to clarify issues and search for common ground or settlement possibilities. Such possibilities must take cognizance of the underlying interests of the parties. The moment the mediator identifies common ground or settlement options, the parties are again brought together for a joint session to continue negotiation directly, to conclude agreement or to conclude mediation. Once an agreement is reached by the parties during the joint session, the draft terms of settlement are prepared and accordingly signed by all. It thus becomes a legally binding, enforceable, contract.

2. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is necessary to restore state infrastructure following violent conflict, this cannot be the sole focus of peace-building. These types of interventions neglect the needs of individuals and of local communities, both which must also be addressed in order for society to successfully make the transition to a sustainable peace. For this reason, peace-building and reconciliation programs should implement initiatives that focus upon helping both individuals and communities to emotionally heal from the traumas experienced during armed and violent conflict. To address these emotional needs, peace-building initiatives should seek to provide culturally appropriate psychological services for individuals, methods of rebuilding interpersonal connections within communities, and techniques for reopening a dialogue between divided communities. Although post-conflict healing and reconciliation will not occur quickly, these efforts will prove worthwhile because of the sustainable results they can achieve.

Therefore, from the observations made or seen in this paper, we recommend as follows:

- i. We should strengthen our anti-crime institutions in order to deter crime.
- ii. Technology need to be encouraged in as to foster development.
- iii. COVID-19 was a very huge lesson for all Nigerians as well as our leaders across every levels of government. It exposes the need why our locally made products and industries need to be re-activated for the purpose of domestic consumption.
- iv. Strategic efforts should be made to ensure effective policing of the country.
- v. Special Forces need to be within the Nigerian Police with contemporary technology gadgets as to protect peaceful protesters.
- vi. We need strong legislation that will be able to prescribe punishment to law breakers in the country.

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