

STRATEGIZING FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND SECURITY MODEL IN AFRICA: RETHINKING HYBRIDIZATION

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing concern over the reckless marginalization of traditional African indigenous peace mechanisms by Africans for Western models, and its consequent liability for the upsurge of intractable conflict and insecurity in contemporary Africa. This write-up is concerned with strategizing a way out of these contemporary peace and security challenges confronting our societies. It is specifically poised to forging formidable security management and conflict resolution models capable of mitigating these conflicts and insecurity challenges to the barest minimum.

Keywords: Peace, Security, Africa, Conquest

Introduction

A peep into *the African world* in Encarta Encyclopedia (2009) would leave an African as transfixed as he is shocked to learn, the more, how Blackman was ingloriously conquered by Europe and the West. Interestingly, Encarta is a Western site, which offers varieties of academic histories and miscellaneous information. Resources from the site are useful for research and projects and also provide vital data, for socio-economic, cultural and political programmes of institutions, governments, organizations and individuals. Readers should be conscious of the possibility of mixing undue idio-centric antagonisms with this pure academic data. The essence of knowledge is to imbue in an individual the relevant experience to handle issues around him and his environment to the best possible outcome. It could provoke an implicit or explicit urge in individuals and entities to either preserve or innovate on their existing local and international intercourse models. Successful outcomes will usually validate methodologies.

Scramble for Africa therefore, has serious implications for national peace and security challenges worldwide. For Africa, the irredentist legacies imparted in the colonies were instrumental to the present approach of 'nation statist' where confederated minds are lumped into pseudo federalism. The result is abject ethnicity, insincerity and unhealthy adversaries which devices include conflicts, violence, criminalities, terrorism and all forms of insecurity. Culturally speaking, an average African person, including Nigerians is bi-cultural: depicting both indigenous traditional and western lifestyles. But this is not unexpected of us since we are emergent of Post-Colonial intercourse.

Before we embark on further academic journey and for proper understanding of our focus, there is the need for me to clarify the background for Africa's current peace and security predicament.

Understanding the Inglorious Conquest over Africa

The inglorious conquest is a phrase adopted by this writer to describe the various forms of invasion of Africa, by Europe, the West and some Asian states or the so branded developed nations. This began with exciting explorations by the Arabs and Europeans; moved through imperialism and consolidated in the contemporary neo-colonialism in Africa. It also took the colourations of political, cultural, social and economic underpins. This piece however, examines the conquest from the implicative perspectives of peace and security in Africa.

Encarta Encyclopedia, 2012 offers a rundown of Africa's pickle. *Scramble for Africa* is an axiom used to express the once frenzied annexing of African territory by half a dozen European countries that resulted in nearly all of Africa becoming part of Europe's colonial empires. The Scramble began slowly in the 1870s, reached its peak in the late 1880s and 1890s, and tapered off over the first decade of the 20th century. Between 1885 and 1900, European powers were, at times, racing each other to stake claims in Africa. Most Africans resisted being taken over and ruled by foreigners. Thus, much of the latter part of the Scramble involved European armies using modern weapons to crush opposition and install authority over the continent's inhabitants.

The Inglorious Conquest

The conquest which today neither glorifies Africans nor the imperialists began with slow territorial acquisition through the early 1880s, followed by a competitive rush to claim African lands after the Berlin West Africa Conference (1884-1885). The ultimate stage of the Scramble was characterized by slower occupation of territories and overcoming of African resistance through the first decade of the 20th century. Ohajanwa (2006:61) citing Isichie (1976:34) posits that a good percentage of the violent confrontations between Igbo communities and the British imperialists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were part of the scramble. For instance, there were numerous clashes beginning from 1830- lower Niger violent conflicts: Aboh (1860), Ndoni (1876), Onitsha in (1876), Atani (1880) and Obosi, Asaba and Aguleri in (1892). From 1901 to 1902, most Southern Igbo Communities were involved in conflicts with the British during the Aro expedition. Obowu and Mbaise followed in 1903, and then Ezra, Ikwo and some other Northern Igbos in 1905; Etche war again in 1918 and Aba women's riots of 1929. By 1912 all of Africa was in European hands except Liberia and Ethiopia. The era of colonial rule that followed brought social, political, and economic change across the continent. Most of the African colonies were only able to gain their independence between 1955 and 1965. Some did not achieve self-rule or majority rule until the 1980s or 1990s.

Africa on the eve of World War I (1914-1918) was nothing like the Africa of 40 years earlier. What had been a largely independent continent with some foreign control of its coasts was now almost entirely in European hands. Britain and France held the lion's share. The British had almost fulfilled Cecil Rhodes's dream of an unbroken line of colonies from the Cape to Cairo. Their colonies held promising economic potential, with gold in South Africa and cash crops in East and West Africa. The French controlled huge amounts of territory in North and West Africa, but much was desert and only a few colonies were productive. Germany would lose its African colonies in losing World War I, as would Italy in World War II (1939-1945). Britain and France would give up most of their colonies in the 1950s and 1960s. Spain would remain longer but be a less-significant participant in the colonial picture. Portugal would entrench itself and become, in the mid-1970s, the last European power to begin to relinquish its claims.

The Scramble and its aftermath held great irony. While the conquest was going on, events in Africa were of the greatest importance throughout Europe. European competition for African territory dominated headlines, brought down governments, and nearly drove nations to war. But once the conquest was complete, Africa was largely forgotten and not considered again until the movement for African independence of the 1950s and 1960s.

Indigenous African Peace and Security Ideals

Unfortunately, most of the effective proven indigenous peace and security management utilities have been relegated to the background by Africans themselves in pursuit of the contemporary western models. The following strategies were utilized by traditional Africans in resolving conflict in the communities long before the Scramble for Africa.

Family Head

The family as conceptualized in Africa is minimally equated to the western conception of the extended family. Usually, a family in Africa is characterized by the use of a common surname and spans on to three generations within the total household.

African societies are generally patriarchal and patrilocal - vesting leadership roles in males. Consequent upon this, conflict resolution roles become the onus of the men and of course, the oldest man in the family takes the lead. Every intra and inter-family conflict that defiles the jurisdiction of immediate nuclear fathers is presided over by him without recourse to the outside council. He may however, form a decision from caucusing with individual family heads or oldest brother in the case of a deceased father.

Cases resolved here include domestic fights, pilfering, insult, assault, land encroachment, etc. More serious cases are referred to as Kindred heads or higher councils.

Similarly, security was everybody's responsibility, with the family head also overseeing major insecurity cases. Every member of the family watched over themselves and their properties and reported any distrusted move promptly to the older family folks. Food was secured (i.e. provided) by both men and women for the families.

Clan or Kindred Head

A clan or kindred comprises of families or extended families and connotes "closer relatives". It was the general duty of clan members to ensure human and material securities. When a member was in danger by enemies or in need for resources, especially when he had ceremonies, such as in the marriage of his children, the entire clan had a duty to complement his efforts in reasonable volume.

Similarly, when conflicts could not be resolved at the family council, it was referred to as Clan or Kindred Head. The oldest man in a clan or kindred takes the mantle as clan head and consequent Arbiter or Facilitator in conflict transformation. Cases treated here are issues which family heads could not resolve and cases that bother on the clan in general such as substantial stages in marriages involving clan or kindred members. Decisions at clans' sessions are arrived at usually by consensus of family heads - after due consultations.

Council of Elders

This is also known as village council as it is constituted by elders of the village. The elders are always a standing group waiting for matters that could not be handled at clans or kindred councils. At this level, security was the top agenda and classified. No council joked with the security of their community. Funds and human resources were invested from the entire communal treasure. Security was treated with both physical and spiritual dispatch. Human endeavors were interfaced with those of ancestors, deities and God almighty in the prosecution of security matters. Here, traditions, customs, mores and values constituted the tenets of justice delivery.

Very serious conflicts such as manslaughter and murder were also referred to the council of elders for a first hearing. Members are respected for their age, experience, integrity and link with ancestors. Corruption was not tolerated as they represented the final conscience of the community. Conflicts which could not be resolved here were reluctantly retried with elders' councils of neighbouring villages.

Oath - Taking

This is an act of swearing to a statement of claims hold to be truthful, before a shrine or deity or with an instrument that is attributable to a deity. Oath-taking is

utilized in criminology as an effective determination of truth in crimes and conflicts involving obstinate parties in the pre-colonial era.

Oath-taking is an effective approach for bursting and resolving, especially intractable crimes and conflicts. A criminal or conflict party, who is unyielding to divulge information and confession necessary for fair justice delivery or resolution of conflict, is presented with the option of oath-taking. This option has the potency to endear him to honesty.

Some African cosmologists believe that our leaders should be made to take oaths of office with instruments from our shrines. This, in their opinions, will ensure democracy, good governance and accountability. Oath taking was an effective conflict prevention element, as it served as a deterrent to actions which could lead to conflicts. More so, it provided an effective term for final conflict resolution.

Traditional Palaces

Many African communities had well-structured socio-political institutions even before the advent of western frameworks. This is corroborated by Kouassi (NOUN PCR 102, 2008). For instance, in Nigeria, we have the Sarki in charge of the Hausa states; the Mai (king) is the highest authority in the political structure of Kanem Bornu; Etsu Nupe was known as the head of Nupe Kingdom; Aka Uka headed the Jukun state as Igala Mela headed Igala territory.

Oyo Empire was headed by Alaafin but, whose powers were checked by Oyomesi (Council of Chiefs, which in turn, is headed by Bashorun – the Prime Minister). The Oba of Benin had a record of presiding over a kingdom, great and socio-politically well organized. Hodgkin, who visited Benin kingdom in 1604 confessed that: *“the town seems to be very great; when you enter into it, you go into a great broad street, not paved, which seems to be seven to eight times broader than the Warmoes Street in Amsterdam...”*

In the Igbo non-centralized, fragmentary or acephalous socio-political structure, ‘Amaala’ (Council of Elders), which was previously treated here, was the highest decision-making body.

These political personalities and institutions resided in the most conducive environments available, known as palaces. These palaces were authoritative venues where conflicts of diverse levels were resolved. Conflicts brought before Palaces were essentially resolved as the venues constituted the last authority for judicial, political and administrative issues.

Professional Associations

Most traditional Africans were farmers, artisans, traders, craft people, cattle tenders, hunters and spatial workers. In a bid to address common issues for the mutual benefit of themselves and their trades, they formed associations and groups.

Since conflict is basic in all social interactions, one of the crucial responsibilities of the associations was usually intra-group dispute settlements (between members of a group) and intergroup conflicts.

Title Holders

Among various societies in Africa were men who were awarded or decorated with different titles or honours for achieving celebrated exploits. Some of them were people who excelled very flamboyantly or exceptionally in their fields of profession and were honoured with 'Eze Ji', 'Mogaji Doya' (king of yam), while others achieved extraordinary feats such as 'Ogbu Ehi', 'Ogbu Agu', (saved the lives of his people from the threat of wild animals like lions and elephants), etc. Some were great warriors in their communities and territories.

Title holders were highly respected and therefore wielded great influences in the affairs of their communities. They were known for their interventions in people's conflicts and conflicts beyond their communities. They flaunted practical wisdom and knowledge gathered through experiences and extensive interactions with personalities far and wide. They were known for their intelligent conflict resolution skills.

Age Grade Associations

Besides the primary agenda to promote the economic and social welfare of their members, age groups also espouse activities that ensure peaceful relationships among themselves. To the entire community, they serve as avenues for legislation relays and execution as members accept and obey the conveyed rules with enthusiasm. They also constitute the labour force of the community. But, more importantly, is perhaps, their astuteness in treating intra- and inter-group disputes among the age grades. They are schooled in the skills of arbitration, mediation and conciliation. Decisions are easily abided by as they are arrived at by simple consensus of the general house.

Married Daughters and Women

Traditionally, women in general, lacked formal political or judicial mandate in African public affairs, except perhaps, under defined regulation in matters affecting their groups. As explained by Ejiofor (1981), they were to a great extent, limited to their businesses strictly under the regulation of the men who retained exclusive mandate to restructure or even disperse their meetings as the case may demand. In judicial affairs, women precisely, are known to possess diminutive status in the traditional communities. It is ironic however, that when disputes defied all settlement initiatives including those of Council of Elders, it was Married Daughters or Wives who stepped in and achieved positive resolutions in the communities. They are neither famous for legal learning nor compelling logic, but they entreated with convincing sentiments and advice in the interest of the community. They neither exalted nor apportioned blames even though their ameliorative words of wisdom could imply any. Such was the powers of married

women in traditional African conflict resolution endeavour. Their intervention became more significant in disputes between villages of their birth and those of their marriages. They procure peace and establish bridges of reconciliation among warring parties.

Effect of the Conquest on Africa's Peace and Security Utilities

Encarta further reveals that the effects of European takeover on Africans were considerable. In the short term, the Scramble led to Africans' loss of control of their own affairs. By implication, Africans lost their peace and security management skills. But it also brought enormous hardship to most Africans resulting from conflicts and insecurity challenges in the long run. In addition to the deaths caused by the conquest itself, many Africans died as a result of disrupted lifestyles and movement of people and animals among different disease environments. Africa's population did not begin to recover from the devastation caused by the Scramble and its aftermath until well into the 20th century. In the long term also, the Scramble was part of a larger process of bringing non-Western peoples into the world economy—in most cases as exporters of agricultural products or minerals and importers of manufactured or processed goods. Colonial governments taxed their African subjects and used the revenues to improve the colony's infrastructure: building roads, bridges, railways, and ports that connected distant interiors to the outside world. Meanwhile, institutions to improve people's lives, such as hospitals and schools, appeared more slowly. The colonial rule also brought elements of Western culture. Prominent among them include the Christian religion and western Education.

Also from the French and English languages were products of colonialism and Western political models to automobiles. Perhaps, the greatest implication of this is the fact that an average African cannot boast of a floorless capacity or skill in either the western or traditional strategies for peace and security management. Obviously, this proves that, since post-colonial Africans are currently bi-cultural, it will definitely take the interface of relevant models from both cultures to formulate a sustainable peace and security system. It was in reaction to European rule and attendant frustrations that Africans developed a sense of nationalism that would help them gain independence in the second half of the 20th century. But some questions are still looming on all Africans: are Africans actually independent in the real sense of it today? Well, your answer might be as good as mine.

Possible Therapies

Africa has been maneuvered into a puzzling state of dilemma; neither retreat nor surrender could single-handedly restore or redefine Africa's peace and security state and status with precision. This can bring about serious debate, but not in the contemporary posture of the continent's heterogeneous socio-culture, economy and politics. Africa today is a 'Mongol', displaying the rainbow colours and personalities of

several other continents. This is largely because she was violated, raped and conquered by several imperialists and war-lords from all these continents. She is like the Polyandrists, a woman betrothed to several men at the same time. Consequently, she manifests heterogeneous (traditional African and Western) conflict and insecurity problems all at the same time.

A marriage of Western and African Indigenous peace and security models; a sort of hybrid model hence, becomes the seemingly inescapable therapy. After all, both her Afro and Euro sick predispositions and mal-alignments must be treated before she could be confirmed fit for discharge. That is my humble submission

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