



## AN EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT APPROACH IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Conflict is inseparable part of human being, and an attempt to ignore it will lead to tragedy. The history of conflict in Nigeria and its resolution dated with the birth of the country. The study did a critical analysis of modern conflict management approaches in the contemporary Nigeria. The study is historical in nature relying mainly on secondary source of data collection. The work found that conflict in Nigeria is caused by multiplicity of factors such as colonial legacy, ethnic identity, religious affiliation, land and ecology factor, worsening economic conditions, and discrimination and neglect among others. Suppression, judicial process, state creation, creation of specialized ministry, synergistic approach and interfaith peace-making among various approaches have been employed to manage the conflict in the country. The study discovered among proliferation of institutions, unclear legal and policy framework, primordial factor, financial constraints, lack of political will, and weak administration of justice as factors hindering the effectiveness of the approaches. The paper concluded by recommending combine participation, inclusion of expert in formulation of strategies, capacity building, enactment of legal frameworks and arms control. Judicial and security sectors reformed is also fundamental to the effective conflict management in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Conflict, Conflict Management, Judicial Reforms

### Introduction

The inevitability of conflict in human relation has made it a phenomenon to reckon with. It is a social relationship reality. In actuality, man lives in a socio-physical world where dependency is a constant process that frequently results in contradiction and conflict. Conflict does not exist in vacuum, it exists alongside human beings (Adedeji, 2022). However, conflict differs from one area to the other, as peculiarity of each society dictates the uniqueness of it conflict.

There is no country in the world that is immune from conflict, nonetheless Africa has the strange reputation of being the world's most violent, impoverished, and unstable continent (Midodzi & Imoro, 2011). It is not out of context to assert that the continent is a major laboratory for experimentation of diverse conflicts. The above assertion is not far from the true story of Nigeria where conflicts has taken the centre stage in the last decade. Nigeria is a nation that is composed of different groups, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society (Adedeji, 2024). The country has a history of deep-rooted conflict which poses as a threat to its socio-political development. There is no geopolitical zone that is entirely free from the shackle of conflict. As some are experiencing conflict, others are dealing with the consequences of violence conflict either through the influx of refugee or phobia of attacks from the regions in crisis.

The prevalence of conflict in Nigeria has become a major concern for the well-meaning Nigerian considering its impact on peace, security and sustainable development of the country. Conceiving this requires a



lasting solution for the sake of uneven development of the country. This has geared the efforts towards developing various mechanisms for dealing with the country's numerous conflicts.

### **Conceptual Analysis**

Conflict is inevitable and inherent in all interdependent relationships. Human beings are unique in nature, the differences in this uniqueness can be a source of potential conflict. The word conflict did not have generally acceptable definition. Fink (1968) provided examples of the wide range of conflict definitions. He found a number of broad definitions that aim to be inclusive as well as a range of definitions for particular hobbies. Conflict arises from an incompatible influence between individuals, communities, and organizations and encompasses all sorts of intolerance. Conflict can be seen as a perception, whether real or imagined, by one entity that his primary self-interest is being threatened by another entity (Uwazie et al., 2008). According to Pramila (2006), conflict arises when two or more people have incompatible interests that lead to conflict between them.

According to Lederach (1995), conflict management accurately presumes that disputes are protracted processes that frequently cannot be swiftly resolved but can manage the parties involved. Its objective is to lessen and regulate its volatility rather than address the underlying cause of the issue. This view is supported by Best (2006) who sees conflict management as "the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity, or transforming result measures and by working with and through the parties involved in the said conflict". Using managerial strategies to control the environment, put a lid on a conflict, and confine are the objectives of conflict management. The aim of conflict management, whether an outsider or an insider intervenes is to change the whole structure of a conflict situation in order to contain the destructive elements of the conflict process (such as disagreement, tension, and violence) and assist the parties with conflicting goals in finding a solution (Bercovitch, 1983; Onowu, 2008).

The task of managing conflicts requires consideration of both behavioural and attitude components. It is successful in reducing the disturbance caused by the disagreement and offering a satisfactory and acceptable resolution (Bercovitch, 1983). It also suggests a strategy that includes interventions by organizational consultants, who are qualified and experienced to create a successful conflict management strategy without having stake in the actual conflict. Developing conflict resolution skills, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication abilities, and creating a framework for conflict management are all part of conflict management. Information, skills, values, and circumstances all interact to determine it (Onowu, 2008). Best (2006) emphasized that the phrase is interchangeable with conflict regulation, limitation, containment, mitigation, and prevention. It allows parties to coexist peacefully and resolve their disagreements without necessarily resolving the underlying problem. By encouraging constructive behavioural adjustments in the parties involved, it seeks to reduce and prevent violence in the future.

### **Methodology**

The study examined contemporary conflict management approach in the 21st century Nigeria. The work is historical and thereby use qualitative method to carry out the task of the research. The data collection was mainly secondary source. The secondary source includes textbooks, journals, magazines, conference papers, and other related publications of renowned scholars on the theme of conflict resolution. In line with the historical nature of the study, it applied content analysis in analysing the data collected. The cogency of the subject of discussion affects the dynamics nature of conflict across the globe most especially Nigeria which has immersed in the shackle of seamless conflict, and this has been carefully examined. This study therefore drew insights from various conflict resolution approaches

### **Result and Discussion**

#### ***Prevalent Causes of Conflict in Nigeria***

Conflict has put the whole country in a state of despair and given government sleepless night. In Nigeria, conflict is caused by multiplicity of factors such as:



### ***Colonial Legacy***

The colonial master successfully planted the seed of discord in Nigeria. The amalgamation of different people with different cultural and religious background was a seed of discord first planted by the British colonialist. The second which is more pronounced has placed one ethnic group above other for their selfish interest. They engaged in divide and rule policy (Alimba, 2014). The seed planted is what is now growing with the fruit of suspicion and hatred which is breeding violent all over the country.

### ***Ethnic Identity***

The major aspect of ethnic conflict is the mobilizations of identities as a basis or factor for contesting hegemonic period which is often used in igniting the embers of negative ethnicity with accompanying violent conflict (Jega, 2002). The struggle for more equitable access to power and an attempt for the minorities to wrestle power from the majorities has become the basis of violent conflict in Nigeria which has led to mutual suspicion. The unavoidable civil war between 1967 and 1970 was precipitated as a result of mutual suspicion. The subjugation of minority groups in the Middle Belt area under the emirate systems by the colonialist is one of the major reasons for the persistent of ethno-religious conflict in the north central (Alimba, 2014).

### ***Religious Affiliation***

Religion has become one of the factors politicians use to manipulate people to get political power (Jacob, 2012). In Nigeria, the primary pillars of religious distinction have been Christianity and Islam. Nigeria makes an effort to join the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), implement sharia law at the federal level, and have as many states adopt it as their fundamental law, government policies and interventions and provocative sermon among other factors has led to violet conflict in Nigeria. Part II section 10 of the 1999 constitution states expressly that “the government of federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as a state religion” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

### ***Political Factor***

A nation's level of discontent among its population is shown by political strife. It could serve as a response of citizen against government bad policy (Osaghae, 2015). More often it arises as a protest against election malpractices as well as sharing of political offices. 1965 western election and 1983 general election were greeted with a lot of political violence and protest.

### ***Labour Induced Factor***

Long-lasting strikes by a variety of labour unions, including the medical union, have been a feature of Nigeria. The textile union has blamed the federal government's insincerity and improper reform strategy for the nation's labour unrest (Eroke, 2014). Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and other neoliberal policies of government of Gen. Babangida, including the World Bank's efforts to use its loans to gain control of the Nigerian university system, as well as prioritization greeted with violent protest which recorded a lot of lives lost. Nigeria has witnessed various industrial unrest with its adverse effects (Adedeji, 2022b).

### ***Worsening Economic Conditions***

Since independence, the case of Nigeria has been backward ever, the economic situation is getting worse every day and this has adversely affect the employment of labour. Higher institutions of learning are turning out thousands of students on yearly basis with no hope of secured employment (Jacob, 2012). The unemployed youth thereby become a tool in the hand of devil to foment trouble.

### ***Culture of Violence***

Militarism and militarisation has link with the culture of violence. The Nigerian people's mentality toward a culture of violence and militarization has been profoundly impacted by the experience of military intrusion into Nigerian politics. The long stayed of the “Khaki Boys” in Nigerian politics gave birth to dictatorial approach, hence consistent conflict between the government and the citizens. Government always resulting to suppression and clamp down on the subject (Otedola, 1982). This has led to attitudinal change given birth to a new subculture



of violence among the Nigerian populace. The people has adopted a militaristic mind-set and attitude. Violence and force have therefore characterized every aspect of our national life.

### ***Land and Ecological Factors***

Land scarcity, territorial disputes, encroachment, farming and pastoral issues, deforestation, flooding, soil erosion, bush burning, and competition are all contributing factors to a fair number of communal conflicts in Nigeria (Alimba, 2014). Competition for lands and territory is the primary cause of most citizen-settler disputes. According to Dunmoye (2003) referenced in Oji, Eme, and Nwoba (2014), conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt region can be linked to land scarcity and border disputes, which are caused by population pressure, alienation, and concentration. A numbers of instances include the Ife/Modakeke citizen/settler conflict in Osun State, the Tiv-Jukun communal conflicts in Taraba State, and the Aguleri-Umuleri conflict in Anambra State. Climate change is another area of land and climate issues. This type of conflict becomes almost inevitable for survival sake as herdsmen move from one place to another in search of livelihood.

### ***Ethnocentrism***

This is the belief in superiority of one's own culture to others and hence be used as standard. Due to the multi-ethnic tendency of Nigeria society, there arose the perception of seeing others as less civilised and thereby legitimate targets for attack (Udezo, 2009). This devalue view of other tends to destroy empathy and severe the human bond between different group. The ethnocentrism tendency has damage social relation in the country thereby giving way to undue conflict. The result of this wrong assertion is the aggressive response to things that have led to the death of many innocent Nigeria.

### ***Inept Leadership***

Nigeria has consistently suffered from the problem of incapable leadership which has retarded the political and economic development of the giant of African (Adedeji, 2022c). The situation has revealed that majority of Nigerian leaders are weak, corrupt and unpatriotic but not all. This is credence to the fact that Nigerian past and present leaders have failed to forge national unity and development. The country resources have been mismanaged over the year and the masses are fed up with their leaders. This has sparked off widespread bloody violence and provoked militancy against Nigeria leaders. The result of this is the unending conflict across Nigeria state.

### ***Discrimination and Neglect of the Masses***

Neglect, oppression, dominance, exploitation, victimization, prejudice, marginalization, nepotism, and bigotry are carried out against the masses by those in the position of power. The distribution of wealth, power, and status is not entirely agreed upon. Most of the political elites in Nigeria do not have any welfare for their teaming population instead they embezzle and this irritate the generality of masses which results in violence as a way of protest.

### **Contemporary Conflict Management Approaches in Nigeria**

Any society's ability to develop depends on its ability to resolve conflicts effectively. There are series of conflict management strategies employed in one time or the other. The most salient of these strategies are discussed below:

#### ***Suppression***

Coercion (force) is the main official conflict management approach used by the Nigerian government (Adedeji, 2023). Numerous conflict cases in Nigeria have been suppressed by Nigerian mobile police and military forces. Abacha suppressed the Ife/Modakeke crises in 1997 by using the military and police. In 1999, the Obasanjo administration also employed soldiers to suppress the Arogbo-Ijaw and Ugbo-Ulaje crises. The same administration also used military Joint Task Force (JTF) to quell insurrection at Odi in Bayelsa State in 1999 (Okoli & Orinya, 2013). Soldier has also been drafted to quench most religious and tribal clashes, after which temporary peace was restored (Albert, 2003). All the coercive strategies employed only quenches the violent activity, while the conflict latter escalated.



### **Judicial Process**

This process is a third party means called litigation. Successive Nigeria government has employed court means to settle grievances. Lagos State under Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu engaged in a long time civil case with Federal Government under President Olusegun Obasanjo on the issue of arbitrary creation of local government, subsequent withheld of monthly arrears and the demand of reversal of the decision (Oladiran et al., 2015). Many occasions, the three arms of government especially legislative and executive arms have engaged in court action to settle constitutional disputes (Ekpu & Iweoha, 2017). On several occasions, court action has been instituted by either of the government or the organized labour to settle labour conflict (Industrial Arbitration Panel, 2010). This approach has occasionally produced partial resolution.

### **Dialogues (Diplomacy/Negotiation)**

Nigerian successive governments have been employing the use of diplomacy or negotiation to settle grievance in the polity. Many of the strike action planned by the organized labour were either settled through diplomatic action or negotiation. At the heat of Niger Delta crises, Federal Government under Late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua negotiated with the Niger Delta on the way forward to end the crisis (Alabi, 2010). The outcome of this lead to the amnesty granted to the Niger Delta militant. This approach has been tested to be effective in resolving conflict if handled with open mind devoid of political motive.

### **Ad-hoc Commission**

This is the setting up of a temporary committee for a specific assignment in the state which will be dissolved after the completion of the task. In 1999, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo set up Truth Commission under the leadership of Justice Chukwudifu Oputa and Fr. Mathew Hassan Kukah as the chairman and secretary respectively. Their responsibility was to look into all alleged irregularity between January 15, 1966 and May 28, 1999 (Kukah, 2011). A judicial commission led by Emmanuel Abisoye was established by the Federal Government to look into the approximately 380 fatalities and property damage that occurred in Jos during November 28 and 29, 2008. Additionally, Prince Bola Ajibola chaired a parallel judicial panel of inquiry established by the Plateau State governor (Eya, 2009). The emergence of the two panels signalled failure of government at the central and the state. This generated controversies in the country as popular opinions were divided on the issue. The problem of most of such ad-hoc committee in Nigeria is that the recommendation dies a natural death immediately the report is submitted.

### **State Creation**

Creation of states by successive military government in Nigeria has been a response to marginalization issue from the minority groups in the country. States were also created as a panacea to Civil War or Biafra War. In 1967, twelve states were created out of the four existing regions as a tactics to stop the civil war, it is more of political motive than a response to grass root development or easy administration as claimed by the military government of Gen. Yakubu Gowon. The creation of states have not been able to manage any conflict but rather escalate it. In response to a state creation, Otite (2000) commented thus:

*“these new developments, which were responses to ethnic-sectional demands for new identities or consolidations of old ones, also created new basis for contested territorial and other claims, as well as competition for access or succession to high political and other offices. They were also responses to protests against perceived sectional marginalisation in respect of participation in, and the dividends derived from the political and economic development of Nigeria under democratic process”.*

### **Creation of Specialized Commission / Ministry**

The perceived marginalization carried out against Niger Delta by the Federal government since the discovery of oil resulted to militant activities across the region (Adedeji, 2021). In an attempt to address the socio-political conflict, the federal government of Nigeria made the following impressionistic efforts as conflict management mechanisms to the region as chronicled by several researchers (Adeyemo & Olu-Adeyemi, 2010;



Alabi, 2010; Asif et al., 2021; Oviasuyi & Uwadiae, 2010).

1. 1961: Establishment of Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB);
2. 1970: River Basin Development Authority;
3. 1993: Establishment of Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC);
4. 2000: Establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC); and
5. 2008: Reconstruction of NDDC;

North East Development Commission was also established in 2017 to rebuild the region after destroyed by Boko Haram insurgency (Ekpo & Mavalla, 2017). As commendable as these federal government initiatives, it can be inferred that the agencies were not really established to bring succour or development to the regions, but mere impressionistic or cosmetic efforts. The programmes were also alleged to be politicized.

### ***Development Policy and Programme***

The state noticed that her unity and territorial integrity were threatened after the Nigerian civil war. In attempt for the government to act as a peacebuilder, Nigeria state immediately made a giant move in rebuilding the nation through policies and programmes that can resolve the conflict and thereby restore the unity of diversity in Nigeria. The federal government undertook some action plans to cushion the effects of the war and total restoration of nationalism syndrome amongst:

1. Establishment of National Youth Service scheme for young graduate of not older than thirty (30) years to promote peaceful coexistence through cross cultural knowledge;
2. Establishment of Federal Unity College in an attempt to promote national integration and cross cultural orientation amongst Nigerian young students;
3. Introduction of state quotas for admission into Federal Universities;
4. Introduction of geopolitical quota system and federal character criteria for government employment and appointment to create room for fair representation;
5. Establishment of Federal Ministries in all state capitals to promote cultural pluralism among different ethnic and cultural groups;
6. Spreading of federal establishments such as federal universities, federal civil service offices, military barracks, etc., across Nigerian states; and
7. Establishment of peace and security committees at federal, state and local government levels (Abdulrahman & Tar, 2008).

The programmes are commendable, however it can be concluded that it is a formulation of superficial short time steps to stop conflict without any long term steps to guide against future occurrence.

### ***Interfaith Peace-making***

The two leading religious groups (Christian and Islam) in Nigeria have been found using the vehicle of religion to preach love and peace to their adherent to shun violence. The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) which comprises of clerics from Christian and Muslim leaders is a platform religious group's meet to discuss promotion of peace among diverse religions groups in Nigeria. The beliefs and peace-oriented statements, statues, and activities of spiritual and religious institutions and societies are all part of this approach. Joint religious groups advocate for humanism, non-violence, and fraternity (Best, 2006).

Presently there is an inter faith mediation centre based in Kaduna founded by Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammed Ashafa after a bloody religious conflict involving the duo. Religious peace movement has performed creditably by reducing conflict in Nigeria to some extent. However, the group has been rendered ineffective by the party politics. Both Christian and Islamic religions were also fractionalized through denomination affiliation and this has also rendered them ineffective.

### ***Traditional Institutions***

These are norms meant to heal wound, reconciling disputants and appease the spiritual beings (God, gods



and ancestral spirits). In many Nigerian communities, traditional social control techniques like community solidarity, rewards, checks and balances, decentralization, oaths, vigilantes, effective communication, informal settlements, and good governance, among others are effective and are informally used to manage conflicts. With the trust in the system and its guiding principles, conflicts have been resolved amicably in Nigeria through the traditional means. The processes place emphasis on truth, norms, values, and continuity and all the parties involved, be the third party and the disputants abide with all these as the god of the land and the spirits of ancestors are been involved during the process (Abdul-Rafiu, 2015).

Kings, chiefs or clan heads, elders, priests, priestesses constitute the tribunal or institutions for resolution of dispute in Africa traditional setting. Each of Nigerian ethnic group inbuilt for peace and this manifests in concept of peace across ethnic groups. The Yoruba concept of peace is 'omoluabi', the Hausa is mutumkirki, while the Igbo is 'ezigbu-nwa'. The government has not fully utilized the traditional peace-making skills in its peacebuilding efforts (Akinwale, 2010). This is coupled with the influence of western education, the growth of foreign religion, involvement of the royal/traditional leaders in politics among others erode traditional institution. There has been clarion call to use African solution to African conflict.

### ***Intervention of Eminent Personalities***

The term eminent persons denote a group of distinguished and impartial mediators in conflict management. The term has been since 1980s (Albert, 2014). These distinguished and impartial persons are often called or voluntary show up when the need arises to intervene or mediate conflict. Their credibility stems from their expertise, experience and official position. Other are political power, past actions and personal qualities. It could as well be a combination of the above characteristics.

Few of the eminent persons in Nigeria which were in the good record of government, were called to intercede in the Niger Delta crises and the north-eastern insurgency. To some extent, the Niger Delta crisis is mitigated through their efforts while that of north-eastern insurgency was a mess because of insincerity of federal government and indifference of some northern elites (Albert, 2014). Sadden to say, the opportunity to harness the potential of eminent personalities' contributions for peacebuilding in Nigeria have been missed. Important bodies and their recommendations were side-lined by the selective implementation. The government has likewise overlooked their possible opportunities for dialogue.

### ***Public Enlightenment***

The government of Nigeria from time immemorial has been engaging the public through enlightenment process. Messages are passed to the public about an imminent conflict and how to guide against such. Nigeria government makes use of the service of National Orientation Agency (NOA), a body tasked with communicating or enlightening public on government policy, analysing public opinion, promoting patriotism, national unity, and development of Nigeria society (National Orientation Agency, nd). Among many other things, the agency fulfils the role of a peace initiator by creating social institutions and a framework for purposefully exposing Nigerians to democratic norms and principles for a robust, peaceful, cohesive, progressive, and orderly society.

### ***Media***

The potential of the media is to promote peaceful conflict management especially in times of crisis. Documentaries about the history of a conflict or light entertainment about everyday peaceful coexistence could be examples of more direct media contributions. Ropers and Klingebiel (2002) states that criteria for the promotion of peaceful conflict management by media during crisis include: includes integration into the local cultural tradition; use of target group languages; cooperation with national media; a high proportion of "participatory media"; independence from the security apparatus; and networking with youth and community work. This strategy has reduced conflict to a certain degree.

### ***Peace Constituency***

A peace constituency is made up of local and regional networks of people, organizations, and institutions



that are committed to preventing and resolving conflicts amicably (Ropers & Klingebiel, 2002). The coming together of various organizations with peace related objectives will lead to an excellent performance than performing individually. Unity of purpose and direction will be of great concern. Government should also take it as a matter of fact to identify and carefully support the existing potentials with those organizations.

### ***National Conference***

It is an avenue to discuss and resolve all lingering conflicts in the country. People have been calling for “sovereign national conference”. The problem is with the “sovereign” which is in conflict with the existing national legislature, and since the outcome needs to be subjected to the approval of both national legislative organs. In response to the call, successive governments in Nigeria seems to have demonstrated a great deal of interest and made significant investments to bring about peace, security, and stability in the nation. To buttress this, several national conferences have been organised which includes:

1. The Constitutional Conference of 1957 in London by Sir James Wilson Robertson;
2. The Constituent Assembly in 1978 by Gen Olusegun Obasanjo;
3. The 1994/1995 Constitutional Conference by Gen. Sani Abacha;
4. The 2005 National Political Reform Conference by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo; and
5. The 2014 National Conference by Dr. Goodluck Jonathan

The goal was to provide suggestions for a constitutional review that would re-evaluate and reshape Nigeria's political destiny and fortify the country's unity (International Crisis Group, 2006). Through this development, an avenue will be created for Nigerians to discuss how to coexist as a people and live together as a nation. However, the genuineness of such actions cannot be ascertained. The over politicisation of almost every issue has done great damage to the unity and stability of the country.

### ***Global and Regional Intervention***

This is intervention of global/regional institutions like United Nations Organization (UNO), Africa Union (AU), and Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS). The African Union brought the two opposing leaders in person of Gen. Yakubu Gowon and Conel Odumegwu Ojukwu together in Ghana termed “Aburi Accord” for possible resolution during the Nigeria Civil War of 1967-1970 (Williams, 2022).

The United Nations (UN) Former Secretary General Koffi Annan mediated in the border conflict between Nigeria and her neighbour Cameroon (Bakassi Conflict). This was after the court judgment which the implementation posed a threat to the peace and stability in the two countries (Check, 2011). In 2015 presidential general election, the leading contestants were invited to sign agreement of cooperation before some notable world leaders in USA (The White House, 2015). The approach has been result oriented, however most of the intervention has been coming too late, while political motive is attached.

### ***Strengths of the Strategies***

After a critical discussion of some identified conflict management mechanisms, it is worthwhile to look at the strengths of the methods. The following are therefore some of the identified strengths of the conflict management strategies in Nigeria.

Most of the identified conflict management styles in Nigeria have been able to restore hope, social harmony and social bonds. Social harmony cannot be found by taken law into our hand. It can be sought and found through intervention at appropriate and adequate time. Through state intervention and traditional rulers’ cooperation, the long aged conflict between Ife and Modakeke was nib in the bud (Elugbaju, 2016). Most of the approaches are suitable for the present endemic problem; “State failure and fragile peace in Nigeria”. The intervention of eminent personalities saved Nigeria from alarming war during 2015 election (The White House, 2015). The situation then was tense but through the intervention of eminent persons within and outside, peace prevailed over the already tense atmosphere. Most of the strategies are not state centric; they are all legitimately created and thereby result oriented. The credence in them is that they are mostly out of government control except





litigation and few others, while others are open to people and thereby criticised if they deviate from the purpose.

Few of the strategies provide for comprehensive inclusion and participation. Parties are fully participated in the settlement except in litigation and few others that are limited. Most of the strategies give room for the parties to decide their own case under the supervision of third person. Invariably, the outcome is usually a consensus and accepted by both parties. With the exception of litigation, the majority of conflict management techniques in Nigeria concentrate on the psycho-social and spiritual aspects of conflict transformation. Emotional and spiritual healing are more important aspects of conflict management than political solutions, negotiations, and material rehabilitation. The methods take into account the fact that peacebuilding and conflict transformation are matters of logic and reason. It also has an impact on the spirit, imagination, and emotions.

All the methods can be incorporated as a whole while each of the strategies stands as a unit. They are also systematic in nature. The strength of the approach is that the failure of one approach can lead to another, and the probability of getting one of the strategies to work is high. Also, each of the strategies is unique and can be applied to a specific conflict situation after critical analysis.

### **Challenges of the Conflict Management Approaches in Nigeria**

The study has identified some of the conflict management styles in Nigeria, however there are several factors that hinder the effectiveness of the approaches amongst:

#### ***Internal Force***

Based on poor leadership and administration, internal forces pose one of Nigeria's biggest conflict management challenges. Nigeria inherited a dishonest government based on divide and rule tactics and marginalization (Chinwokwu, 2013). Consequently, a failed state brought on by poor governance has engendered a lack of trust and confidence in the government's ability to manage the nation's conflict. Conflict management in Nigeria has been significantly impacted by the government's unwillingness to listen to and address early warning and early reaction systems.

#### ***Contradictory Interest***

There is also proliferation of contrary interest. When diverse institutions that command public opinion such as traditional institutions, religious groups, political elites, and eminent persons to mention a few, have contrary view to one another, this will definitely work against peace plan and could frustrate peace implementation.

#### ***Unclear Legal and Policy Framework***

The unclear legal and policy framework extends to conflict management in Nigeria is a threat to the approaches. It is difficult to implement the outcome of any of the strategies unless all parties agree with the decision (Pkalya et al., 2004). The framework extends to the matter of 'appeal' makes all the approaches to depend on the litigation or the goodwill of the parties to survive. This development will amount to waste of time and resources if any of the parties decide to appeal the decision in the court of law.

#### ***Primordial Factor***

Ethnic and religion affiliation is a factor detrimental to nationalism. Instead of people to formulate conflict management that will be all encompassing, it carries ethnic and religious logo in forefront thereby becomes a contestant issue between or among various ethnic and religious groups.

#### ***Culture of Corruption***

The wanton culture of corruption in state actors is a deficiency to the effectiveness of conflict management strategies in Nigeria. Corrupt practices have led to the fraction of the supposed formidable group which renders them ineffective. NGOs are also accused of lack of transparency, and unable to account for the grants by foreign donor (Abdulrahman & Tar, 2008).

#### ***Lack of Political Will***

Nigerian government is found in the habit of not implementing the report of committee or commission set



up to look into a case of conflict. There is also outright neglect when they do not have interest in the subject matter or the party involved. Conflict management approach is generally short-lived, crisis-driven and prone to weakness when it is needed the most. The concerned people are tired on the unending intervention without any action toward addressing the issues involved.

### ***Exclusion***

Government of Nigeria has made conflict management issue of exclusive right. Most non state actors are not been involved in the work of peace and this has really affected the quality of the outcome. The Former General Secretary of UN Kofi Annan emphasised on the importance of partnership of both state actors and non-state actors thus “the work for peace is far too important to be left only to decision makers, politicians and bureaucrats.

### ***Apathy and Failure of Security Agencies***

Another issue is the inability of intelligence and security agencies to meet expectations when it comes to handling the problem of conflict. Although the activities of security personnel are unacceptable, the political elite in our nation has continuously failed to recognize the need of bolstering institutions to provide security, which is why there are few reforms in the justice sector, among other areas.

### ***Weak Administration of Justice***

It is difficult to establish the tight linkages between conflict and stable deterrence in a weak legal system. Nigerian conflict is recurrent because of this non-deterrence, which may have fostered a culture of impunity and a cycle of violence. Another angle to the weak administration of justice is lack of progressive reform in the judicial sector. Osasona (2015) revealed that no major reforms was carried out in the judicial sector that includes our criminal laws, both substantive and procedural, the police, the courts, and prisons. Since then, only Lagos State out of Nigeria’s thirty-six (36) states, has completely reformed its criminal justice laws (Osasona, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

The occurrence of conflict in Nigeria has become a threat to the social-economic development of the country. The giant of Africa position of the country has not help it to be immune from incessant conflict. The study noted that all the geopolitical zones in the country engaged in one conflict or the other. The well-meaning Nigerians are becoming increasingly concerned about the country's high rate of conflict. This has given birth to various programmes aimed at facilitating peaceful resolution of such conflicts.

### **Recommendations**

In order for Nigerian conflict management trends to keep up with the dynamics of conflict in the 21st century. The following recommendations are made:

1. Combine participation of state actors, non-state actors, stakeholders and non-stockholders, local security personnel, Nigerian home and in diaspora are required in decision making and peace efforts. Experts in conflict resolution must also be included in the development and application of conflict management norms and strategies.
2. Government should make it as an obligation to provide adequate resources appropriately to the institution established to manage conflict, while mechanism to guide against corrupt practices should be made available.
3. Creating a safe environment and achieving political stability should always be the top priorities for state actors. Effective conflict management necessitates the use of early warning and early response mechanisms. This will enable proactive and prompt resolution of conflicts.
4. Judicial and Security sectors reformed is also recommended. The objective is to establish suitable judicial and security sectors that are subject to democratic oversight, and have a clear mandate. Reformed aid will aid establishment of deterrence, hence the sectors will be able to make significant contributions to the management of conflicts.
5. It is crucial to establish a framework for the acceptable use of force. There is need to stimulate dialogue



on discussion of the constitutional process on the use of force by armed forces and other paramilitary during conflict. Any attempt for government to result to use of force should be the last result after all attempts have failed.

6. Management of relations with states that have all it takes to manage conflict effectively is essential. Partnering with them will definitely lead to a new consensus as well provide a platform for progress in revitalizing existing conflict management processes. It will also lead to the future growth of conflict management mechanism.
7. In addition, the Nigerian government need to implement national, state, and local legal frameworks that emphasise engagement and participation in conflict prevention, management, and resolution.
8. All hopes for future progress in conflict management in Nigeria rest ultimately in arms control. The reduction and elimination of deadliest arms will by no means offer positive dividends in reducing the scope and effect of conflict, and reduce the risk of its reoccurrence.

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