

ARMED CONFLICTS AND PEACE-KEEPING: Psychosocial Challenges for Democracy and Political Governance in Africa

By

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The topic: “Armed Conflicts and Peace-keeping: Psychosocial Challenges for Democracy and Political Governance in Africa” is apt in relation to the challenges of armed Boko Haram insurgency that Nigeria has been experiencing and indeed, in other African countries.

The term “**conflict**” is derived from the Latin word “**conflictus**” which means struck together. It can be used in two senses. In the first sense, conflict refers to an incompatibility in a multi-party or multi-issue situation; in other words, a state of affairs in which two or more irreconcilable views or options are posited towards the solution of a particular problem; (**Reychler, 1994:4**).

In its second sense and usage, conflict refers to the violent expression of this incompatibility or irreconcilability. It is in this latter sense, which is the violent expression of incompatibility otherwise known as armed conflict or war, that the term is used in this academic exercise.

Weeks (1994) conceives conflict as a relationship between parties that disagree over matters that they value and thus,

perceive that their power to attain that which they value is threatened by the other party's values, goals, perceptions, behaviour, and or degree of power.

This goes on to show that, in all interactions between humans and individuals, groups or states, there is bound to be some areas of disagreement. When such disagreement impinge or infringe on the vital interests of the individuals, group or states, they may lead to clash, contention, confrontation, a battle or struggle, controversy or even quarrel.

As an essential part of social interaction, therefore, conflict should not be regarded as being abnormal, infrequent or even unthinkable. Furthermore, conflicts could be positive and desirable as it performs such positive functions as “promoting social solidarity, clarifying values, stimulating thinking and creativity and encouraging learning, which if managed properly, are constructive to human progress”; ***(Kegley and Wittkopf, 1989)***.

From the foregoing definitions, it is apparent that conflict is an inevitable consequence of human interaction which, if not well managed, could lead to violence or in the extreme, war or armed conflict. It must be emphasised here that, war or armed conflict cannot be equated or considered as a mere conflict.

NATURE OF ARMED CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

Africa has had more than its fair share of violent conflicts ever since colonial independence from Western European countries in the 1960s. Indeed, some of the most complex conflicts currently in the world are in Africa, for example the conflict in the Sudan and the prolonged conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The northern region of the DRC, Southern Sudan, Rwanda and Northern Uganda could be regarded as one conflict in view of open borders. However, these clashes are actually a cluster of different conflicts. Border regions are central to African conflicts, since

conflicts start in particular countries and mostly spill over at least one border.

One of such was the Mano River Conflict which occurred within the ECOWAS sub-region in the late 80s to early 2000s and engulfed Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire. An important reason for this is the permeability of African state borders and the weakness of African states themselves; (Cilliers 1999:138).

However, almost all internal conflicts have regional dimensions since neighbouring countries involve themselves in the internal affairs of others and allow their territory to be used by rebel groups.

The nature of most of these conflicts can be said to be irregular and unconventional, indeed they can be termed to be asymmetric. The underlying historical causes for these conflicts can be traced to a variety of circumstances or grievances some of which include:

- Closed political systems where democratic transition has failed and restrictions on human rights deprive people of the opportunity to elect a government democratically. Non-state organisations and rebels do not recognize their governments as legitimate; **(Botha 2007:4)**.
- Weak and failed African states providing favourable conditions for warring factions to plan, train and launch attacks on governments and the local population. The absence of local authority can bring about the growth of safe havens for powerful non-state elements, such as organized crime, human and drug traffickers and violent extremists. As a result of these fertile circumstances, irregular warfare can be expected to grow and develop into widespread conflicts; **(Plant 2008:7)**.

- Control over territories associated with border control: Weak states do not have the human and technological resources and capacity to monitor borders, which then become permeable to illegal trafficking of small arms, light weapons and a host of cross border crimes.
- Ethnic motivations where heterogeneous groups, such as the Tutsi and the Hutu of Rwanda, clash over superiority and self-determination and the current government does not adequately represent the specific ethnic group. Feelings of marginalization led to conflicts as well as genocide in Rwanda in 1994.
- Conflict over natural resources, e.g. in the DRC, Angola, Sudan, Nigeria and Liberia, which causes instability. Minerals such as diamonds, oil and uranium, as well as hardwood are sometimes used as profitable “grey trade” to prolong the conflict unnecessarily.
- Religion used as a political tool for mobilising irregular warfare. This extends over national borders and rallies support, e.g. in Sudan and Somalia, where Muslims and Christians are involved in conflict. In combination with poverty, marginalization and political ideologies, this is an important motivation for irregular or asymmetric armed conflict.
- Economic circumstances where the local population is unemployed and extremely poor. Sometimes the population is involved in smuggling and “grey trade” to sustain themselves and so prolong the conflict. Widespread conflict creates a breeding ground for alienation. In other cases, prolonging conflict holds benefits for social groups or segments of society; **(Botha 2007:5)**.

Armed conflict or war is an organized and often prolonged conflict that is carried out by states or non-state actors. It is generally characterized by extreme violence, social disruption and economic

destruction. War should be understood as an actual, intentional and widespread armed conflict between political communities, and therefore is defined as a form of (collective) political violence or intervention. War causes long term physical, cultural, economic and psychosocial harm.

Warfare also refers to the conduct of conflict between opponents, and usually involves escalation of aggression from the proverbial "war of words" between politicians and diplomats to full-scale armed conflicts, waged until one side accepts defeat or peace terms are agreed upon. Warfare refers also to the set of techniques used by a group to carry out war.

In recent past, warfare does not always necessarily have to be armed confrontations. Ever since the 20th century a new form of warfare has developed. It involves a given society inflicting damage on the opponent society's standard of living and its motivation for resistance. This is usually done by affecting the economy of the opponent society. A tool that has been used to accomplish this has been economic sanctions.

Types of Warfare

Warfare can be differentiated by categories; it can either be conventional or unconventional. Conventional warfare involves well-identified, armed forces fighting one another in a relatively open and straightforward way without weapons of mass destruction.

"Unconventional" refers to other types of war which can involve raiding, guerrilla, kidnapping, armed insurgency and terrorist tactics such as those being conducted by Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria or alternatively can include nuclear, chemical, biological warfare or using propaganda with pressure groups to invoke certain feelings.

It could be limited as in interstate war or general as in the case of the two world wars. These armed conflicts can be grouped into two

broad categories: High intensity and low intensity warfare. High intensity warfare can be described as warfare between two superpowers or large countries while low intensity warfare involves counterinsurgency, guerilla warfare and specialized types of troops fighting revolutionaries.

PEACE-KEEPING

Peacekeeping is more difficult than warfare. Troops train for war where there is a concrete enemy. In peacekeeping, there is no concrete enemy instead there are militias and criminals spoiling peace agreements.

Peacekeeping refers to activities that tend to create conditions that favour lasting peace. Peace-keeping is an adaptation of the provisions of Chapter 2 of the United Nations Charter which the UN Organisation has the jurisdiction to work towards a conflict-free world. The United Nations therefore defines peace-keeping operation as:

“As an operation involving military personnel but without enforcement powers established by the UN Organization to help maintain or restore peace in areas of conflict”; (***UN: the Blue Helmets, 1991:3***)

While the above definition may have served UN in its early days and throughout the Cold War Era, the mandates and character of such operations in recent times have clearly transcended that restrictive formulation. More appropriate, therefore, is the broader definition advanced by the International Peace Academy (IPA) which sees peace-keeping as:

“The prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities through the medium of a peaceful third party intervention organized and directed internationally using

multinational forces of soldiers, police and civilians to restore and maintain order” (*IPA, 1974:11*).

However, it may be defined that, the major aim of peace-keeping, according to Vogt (1992), has always been to create the appropriate security environment within which the conflict under dispute can be negotiated “because it was believed that parties to a conflict are not likely to be conciliatory for as long as their forces are in active combat”. The option of mounting peacekeeping operations has always been applied on ad-hoc basis to meet specific emergency situations. Forces involved in such operations are usually drawn from several countries under the auspices of either the UN or a regional body (such as the OAU mission to Chad in 1981) or a sub-regional organisation such as ECOWAS led ECOMOG missions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Ivory Coast).

Peacekeeping is the technique designed to preserve the peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted, and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers.

Over the years, Peacekeeping has evolved from a primary military model of observing cease-fires and the separation of forces after inter-state wars, to incorporate a complex model of many elements of military, police and civilian- working together to help lay the foundations for sustainable peace.

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (PKOs)

Peace keeping operations (PKOs) have been an instrument of foreign and security policy since the early 19th century but have gained real importance, legitimacy and institutional basis with the end of the Second World War, after the establishment of the United Nations. From modern perspective, the history of peacekeeping began over 69 years ago. The first peacekeeping operation was conducted by the United Nations in June 1948 in the form of military observer

mission. It was called United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine (UNTSO) and was originally mandated to supervise the truce ordered by the Security Council to end the first Arab-Israeli war. Later, similar missions were set up in Kashmir and other conflict areas.

It is necessary to notice that a concept of peacekeeping is not clearly defined in the UN Charter. Peacekeeping operations are practical mechanism devised to contain armed conflicts and facilitate their resolution by peaceful means. This mechanism was developed by the UN at the initial stage of the Cold War, because its original collective security and peace enforcement system, based on the authority of the Security Council and major power consensus, became unworkable as a result of the increasing disagreement between the two superpowers. It was developed progressively.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF TRADITIONAL PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (PKOs)

Up until 1988, what we now call “traditional peacekeeping” had prevailed. The traditional function of PKOs was to “support peacemaking efforts by helping to create conditions in which political negotiations can proceed”. Obvious examples are the monitoring of cease-fires, the controlling of buffer-zones, etc. There are at least two sub-types of traditional PKOs: unarmed military observer groups, such as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in the Middle East, and armed infantry-based forces with the task of controlling territory in order to achieve effects conducive and conductive to peacemaking, e.g. the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and UNEF II with regard to the Suez Canal and Sinai.

The principles applied to the early UN peacekeeping operations may be summarized under three headings:

Consent: Peacekeeping operations are based on consent of the parties to the conflict. Their deployment in an area of conflict required the consent of the host government and the other opposing or main parties concerned. The principle of consent also applied to the troop-contributing governments, which have been supplying the required military personnel on a voluntary basis;

Neutrality and Impartiality: The peace-keepers are generally expected to be neutral and impartial in the discharge of their given mandate. These essential elements of neutrality and impartiality are underscored by *Kitzon (1971:4)*, who observed that:

“The peace-keeping force acts on behalf of and at the invitation of both sides to a dispute and it is supposed to prevent violence without recourse to war-like actions against either of them”.

In essence, whenever the neutrality and impartiality of a peace-keeping force becomes questionable, the force forfeits the confidence of the warring parties, which could then jeopardise its legitimacy and effectiveness.

Non-use of Force: The UN peacekeepers were not authorized to use force except in self-defense. They had to act with restraint at all times and seek to carry out their mission by negotiation and suasion and not by coercion;

SECOND GENERATION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (PKOs)

With the end of the Cold War, the international situation changed dramatically. The turning point was the December 1987 summit between the presidents of the former Soviet Union and the USA in Washington, D.C. At that meeting, the two leaders signed the historic treaty on the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear

missiles. They also agreed to undertake joint efforts to contain regional conflicts.

This led to the revitalization of the Security Council and a revival of the United Nations peacekeeping activities. Within the next two years, in 1988 and 1989, five new peacekeeping operations were initiated by the Security Council:

In Afghanistan (to verify the withdrawal of Soviet forces), in Iran-Iraq (to supervise the cease-fire that ended their eight-year-old war), in Angola (to verify the withdrawal of troops), in Namibia (to supervise the cease-fire and the elections that lined the way for the country's peaceful accession to independence), and in Central America (to monitor the peace agreement concluded by the five republics of the region).

All these operations dealt with international conflicts on the basis of agreements negotiated by the parties concerned, under UN auspices with support of the two superpowers and all of them were successful.

By early 1990, there was a general euphoria at the United Nations. Many believed that freed from the Cold War constraints, the United Nations could from now on effectively ensure the maintenance of international peace and security through enhanced peace-making and peace-keeping efforts. But this euphoria was short-lived. True, the Security Council has been revitalized and could set up peace-keeping operations almost at will to contain various types of armed conflicts, both internal and international.

But along with these positive developments, there had been a downside. Several regional conflicts remained unresolved and became more serious with the end of Cold War. Ambitious local leaders were no longer tightly controlled by the superpowers and many ancient ethnic conflicts, long contained during the Cold War era, re-emerged with savage violence in Eastern Europe, Caucasus,

Central Asia and Africa. Of a special consideration is a case of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990.

On the basis of the Security Council's authorization, a coalition force led by the United States took intensive military action against Iraq in January 1991 and after a brief war, expelled the Iraqi forces from Kuwait. While the Gulf War effectively redressed an act of aggression, it raised a number of questions. It was not carried out in strict accordance with the provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, for it involved not a UN force under UN command, but a coalition force under US command, acting with the authorization of the Security Council. Like the operation in Korea, the coalition force was a pragmatic application of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (PKOs)

Some of the challenges to effective peacekeeping are considered largely conceptual. In the past, peacekeepers were merely expected to separate hostile forces and observe cease-fire or truces. For the operation to be successful, it was essential that the parties to the conflict offer collaboration and support. However, in recent conflicts involving ethnic-based disputes, intervention without the clear consent of the parties to the conflict, the result is that the environment for peacekeeping is no longer benign.

Peace-keepers increasingly work in a climate of continuing armed conflict, sometimes in places where there are poorly defined borders or cease-fire lines and there are no guarantees for their lives and safety or even respect for the role they play. This new and complex environment, together with the ambitious objectives of the UN and ever-growing pressure on scarce resources, has made it more imperative than ever, to think clearly about "How and When" the UN should become involved in peacekeeping operations. After

considering the interplay of variables in PSOs, here are some of the current challenges in the environment of peace-keeping operations.

Political will: The lack of political will of Western nations to engage in peacekeeping missions especially under the auspices of the United Nations has been identified as one of the challenges facing PKOs in the current context. However, this unwillingness has been attributed to their involvement in other theatres like the Balkans in the 90s, Afghanistan and Iraq. Russia and China are showing a new willingness to cooperate and the US is learning the inadequacy of unilateralism.

In the light of the weakening political will on the part of developed countries, developing countries have stepped up and are now assuming the burden by contributing the majority of peacekeepers. This new dimension of developing countries embarking on PKOs has been their desire to assume greater responsibility in the area of peace and security. The monetary incentives going to UN troop contributing countries, which can add up to a significant windfall for a developing economy has also been identified as one reason for this increased interest in peace keeping missions.

Troop and Financial Constraints: Closely related to political will are the challenges posed by troop and financial constraints. Troop and financial support are crucial elements of a peacekeeping deployment, without which a peace-keeping mission cannot assume its full range of capabilities. The risk of assigning developing countries an increasing role in PKOs stem from their lack of capacities and capabilities. While there have been many good contingents from developing countries of the world, many of these contingents are under-funded, lack training and/or equipment. This is evident in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where less efficient troops from developing countries are deployed. Instances abound where troops with little preparation (e.g. lacking a driver's license) and with limited knowledge of the local culture and language are deployed to PKOs with attendant consequences. More

challenging peace-keeping operation mandates does not only require more money but also more specialized capacities (i.e. army engineers and logisticians, heavy-lift aircraft, proper command-and-control, intelligence gathering, etc.

PKOs rely on the command and control, logistics, as well as leadership strategies offered by western militaries and in the absence of this expertise, peacekeeping becomes much more challenging. This is an operational challenge which must be addressed, as specialized armies and capacities are in short supply while that capacity exists mostly in western countries with established militaries.

UN requires each member state to voluntarily contribute because demand for peacekeepers is in the increase putting more pressure on member states. The annual budget is currently in the range of 7-10 billion US\$. With the worldwide recession, monetary constraints are one of the current challenges to Peace Keeping Operations.

Rapid Deployment and Standing Capacity: Rapid response to crises and post-conflict areas remain difficult to achieve, and as such constitute a considerable obstacle to the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping. It is increasingly recognized that to respond to the challenges posed by contemporary conflicts, forces must be mobile, flexible, effective, and sustainable. As the UN does not have a standing peacekeeping capacity, it must rely on voluntary contributions from member countries, causing the process of planning, authorizing and deployment of a peacekeeping operation to be extremely complex.

According to the Brahimi report, soldiers should be on ground within six weeks for most Peace-Keeping missions to be timely. The report described organizations that study the UN structure as well as those conducting country background studies as absolutely invaluable for the mission's success. An understanding for the multifaceted approaches to peace-keeping and having command

and control headquarters that possess regional knowledge is very valuable for mission success.

It also suggested that there is a need for more multinational regional headquarters around the world if the UN is to create the ability for rapid deployment. There is a need for greater flexibility in UN deployment requirements instead of reinventing the wheel for every mission and counting countries. It is advocated to work with set peace-keeping “packages” that can be deployed much faster. Examples of such “force packages” include SHIRBRIG, the NATO Response Force (NRF), the EU Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF), the UN Battle-groups, and the American Standby Force (ASF).

Rules of engagement and the use of force: The fundamental principles of UN peace-keeping of consent, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence have in specific cases, become obstacles to the deployment and success of UN peace-keeping missions. In particular, respect for the non-use of force has, in many cases, proven to be impractical in the face of large-scale massacre which has become detrimental to peace-keeping missions both morally and physically.

Rwanda, Bosnia, Somalia, and East Timor are stark examples of the consequences of the non-use of force. In response to the new strategic environment, today’s missions are for the most part deployed under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, authorizing peacekeeping missions to use “all necessary means” to protect themselves and threatened civilians. For example, the missions in the DRC, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire and Haiti, as part of their mandate; have the explicit authorization to use force to protect civilians.

However, this use of force raises a number of questions, such as the level of force at which it becomes too much and the extent to which peace-keepers should protect civilians if such protection can

jeopardize a mission's objective. It is absolutely necessary for military peace-keepers to have clear rules of engagement that are suited to the particular mission to avoid repeating situations where peacekeepers lacked in both capacity and mandate. Indeed, it is crucial that when a force is deployed, the mandate under which it will operate matches the needs on the ground.

Experts have even argued for the UN to create a fourth principles of "credibility of force" to compliment the three principles already in place. One respect of this credibility would be to force the UN to be clear about the consequences of violating cease-fire. In order to address the issue of civilians in most mandates of late and the increasing need to use force with regards to Rwanda where the international community failed to see the aggressor, failed to authorize resistance, and ultimately failed to protect citizens at risk.

Thus, there has been a paradigm shift from the security of state to human security that sometimes necessitates application of forces by the international community.

In UN forces abiding by the principles of consent and impartiality, both the Government and rebel groups become partners in peace.

If on the other hand, UN forces are forced into combat with members from either group in order to protect the civilian population, they run the risk of driving a partner in peace out of peace process. When defining rules of engagement, the UN must therefore strike a balance between an ad-hoc approach (specific to each mission) and a general framework allowing for consistent and timely deployments.

IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT AND PEACE-KEEPING IN AFRICA

Countries suffer from many different consequences as a result of war. Armed conflict affects every single sphere of a country's economy. Some of these spheres include:

Loss of structures of Governance

Degradation of Infrastructure

Depreciation of the rule of law

Famine: During armed conflicts, agriculture and other farming activities are brought to a halt and this inevitably results to famine. Starvation is the greatest killer of non combatants during war. An example is the second civil war that occurred in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) between 1998 and 2002. It is estimated that about 5.4 million people died with over 4 million people lost due to starvation as a result of famine.¹

Lawlessness: Conflicts tend to lead to the preponderance of small arms in the hands of individuals, coupled with poverty, brought about by the war. This leads to violent crimes such as armed robberies, kidnappings, rape etc.

Healthcare: Devastated by warfare, the post conflict government will have insufficient resources to spend on the health sector which faces enormous health demands. At the same time, donors are often reluctant to release funds for improvements in the health sector before peace can be sustained. Affliction rates of diseases tend to rise with the advent of war. A case study is HIV/AIDS, a disease which affects Africa irrationally.

The discussion of why Africa is more severely affected than any other region focuses on two explanations: war and poverty. Wars are conducive to the rapid spread of HIV. Combatants and non-

¹ wikipedia

combatants face the risk of losing their lives due to battle and are also at risk of contracting HIV due to the stressful situations and dangers related to war.

Civilians are often subjected to human rights abuses, including sexual violence. In Rwanda in 1995, the prevalence of HIV in pregnant women from rural areas was 24 percent which was attributed to rape during the genocide. In general, displacement during war weakens social cohesion and relationships which may lead to promiscuity and commercial sex which in turn leads to increase in the HIV/AIDS rate.

Another well documented example of armed conflict being a major obstacle to the eradication of endemic diseases is the case of dracunculiasis or Guinea worm disease². The worldwide campaign to eradicate the Guinea worm disease began at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1980. At this time, there were an estimated 3.5 million cases in over 20 African countries.

Due to the regional eradication programme, the incidence was reduced by 98 percent. Most of the remaining patients are in southern Sudan and the campaign cannot be completed until Sudan's war ends. In 2001 about 78 percent of all cases of Guinea worm disease were in southern Sudan.

Welfare: The welfare of a country's population is further reduced because of increased military spending during and after the war. It is estimated that military spending increases by about 1.8 percent during the war, and only falls back by 0.5 percent once the conflict has ended. Assuming that this higher level of spending lasts for only ten years after the conflict, the additional cost (expressed again

² Hopkins, D.R. and P.C. Withers. 2002. Sudan's war and eradication of dracunculiasis. *The Lancet* 360: 21-22.

as present value when the conflict started) is 18 percent of GDP 2006.³

Depreciation of Economic Structures: Using a panel data estimate, one year of conflict reduces a country's growth rate by 2.2 percent. Since, on average, each civil conflict lasts for about seven years, the economy will be 15 percent smaller at the end of the war than if the war had not taken place. During the post-war recovery, even though the economy on average grows at an annual rate of more than 1 percent above the norm, it will take roughly ten years to return to its pre-war growth rates (that is, 17 years after the conflict started).

21 years after the start of the original war, the GDP has returned to the level it would have achieved if no war had occurred. The total economic cost, expressed as a present value at the start of the war (using a 5 percent discount rate), is 105 percent of the GDP at that point.

Psychological Effects of Armed Conflict on Civilians

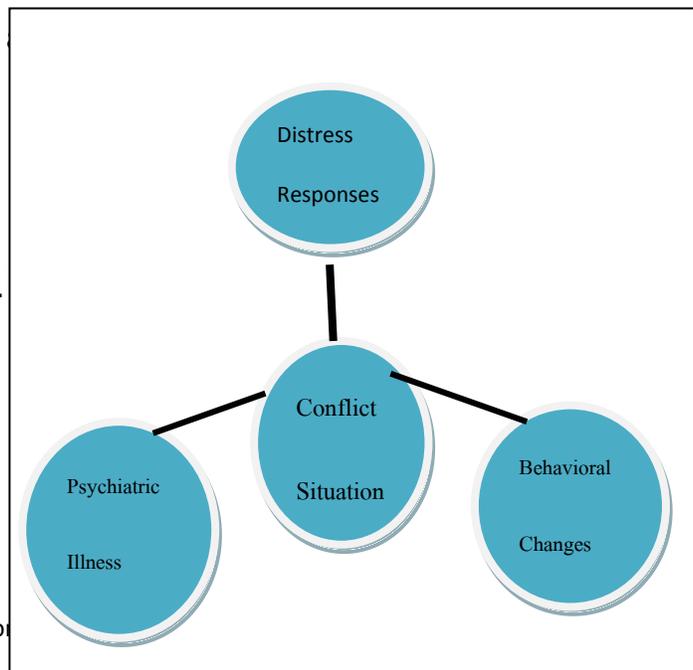
According to the World Health Organization (WHO), civilians in conflict zones or who have experienced conflict tend to experience the following psychological consequences:

Distress Responses expressed

- Insomnia
- Sense of Vulnerability
- Emotional liability

Behavioral Changes expressed

- Domestic Violence
- Increased health care use
- Smoking
- Alcohol Consumption
- Drug addiction



³ Military Expenditure in Post-Conflict Societies. Econo

Psychiatric illness expressed as:

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Major Depression

Armed conflicts or warfare tends to affect children even more than adults. Children who experience armed conflicts carry the heavy emotional, social, and spiritual burdens associated with death, separation from and loss of parents, attack and victimization, destruction of homes and communities, economic ruin and disruption of the normal patterns of living; a case study is that of the children of Gaza who due to the conflict that has occurred in the region have developed the following psychological conditions:

- Increasing level of violence.
- Sleeping problems, with feelings of fear and anxiety.
- Changes in attachment to family and community.
- Various emotional and cognitive problems such as inability to concentrate.
- Decreasing hope in the future

Psychosocial effects on Soldiers

It is pertinent to note that all soldiers have a breaking point however well trained and motivated, this was recognized by the early 1950s. Apart from the link between physical and psychological casualties, it was also established that factors such as morale, leadership, regular sleep and confidence in equipment could mediate the size of the association but not the association itself

Soldiers suffer from the effects of armed conflict both during and after the conflict. During the mission, soldiers experience anxiety, monotony, boredom, limited recreation opportunities, Lack of recreation and entertainment amongst others. These stressors increase as the mission progresses hence the need to constantly rotate troops so as to avoid lethargy. When they leave the combat zone, they tend to experience or have difficulty to sleep as well as

vivid flashbacks, which is known as ***Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)***.

PTSD is the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically distressing event. It usually begins with an event in which the individual is threatened with his or her own death or the destruction of a body part, to such humiliation that their personal identity may be lost.

War veterans who experience PTSD have a feeling of helplessness, worthlessness, dejection, anger, depression, insomnia, and a tendency to react to tense situations by using survival tactics.

A case study can be seen in the case of US soldiers who fought in Vietnam. Combat experience is the variable most often linked to PTSD among Vietnam veterans. The frequency of PTSD is usually a lot higher among those with high levels of exposure to combat compared to the noncombatants.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT IN AFRICA

Armed conflicts in Africa have affected the way Governments run and the way diplomacy is conducted. Most times, these conflicts lead to the introduction of the Military in governance with its own attendant psychological change in the psyche of a Nation. As a result of the depreciation of structures, the impact on the people as signified by the varying traumatic and psychological inflictions, the governments are correspondingly afflicted in the way they carry out business of governance. This tends to lead to the following psychological challenges amongst others;

- 1. Impunity:** Democratic Governments tend to act with impunity (exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action) when they transit from Military Government or Armed Conflict. This is usually seen in the way they treat the rights of the populace. The term “human rights” can be separated into two categories: the first includes the right to life, liberty, personal security and freedom from torture and slavery, (the most basic, inalienable human rights).

The other category includes secondary rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of association. Even the most basic and inalienable rights are usually abused in Democracies that have experienced armed conflicts, as the people and the government tend to believe that torture and physical abuse is the norm.

- 2. Lack of due process:** There tends to be a tendency for the “civil populace” to have a “right now and/or magic mentality”, that is a penchant for wanting things to happen with “automatic response and immediate effect”. This mentality is created during the years of armed conflict when the gun achieves what is needed as at when wanted. This mentality is reinforced during the period of Military rule where laws are made by fiat and even in some cases retrogressively.

With the advent of democratic rule, the people find it difficult to believe that the process by which laws are made can take years and begin to express displeasure in the government, most times, criticizing it for being “too slow”. This results in Governments breaking laws in order to please the populace and avoid being voted out.

- 3. Disregard for International Norms:** International agreements and treaties are mostly broken or disregarded as a result of the armed conflict.
- 4. Thriving in mediocrity as against meritocracy:** This occurs due to the dearth of skilled manpower as a result of deaths, migration and displacement of skilled manpower, a consequence of armed conflict also known as war and finally

- 5. Government wallowing in self-denial.**

In conclusion, I humbly submit that psychosocially, wars or armed conflicts in Africa have negatively impacted on democracy and

political governance in the African continent. This is exemplified in the conduct of many governments and regional organizations in Africa. There is also an urgent need for the following to be implemented:

- 1.** Need for psychological assessment for would be leaders in Africa.
- 2.** No State Policies without psychological input.