

## Beyond Orthodox Strategies: Managing Conflicts and Sustaining Peace Through Communal Ethics, Traditional Values and Methods in Africa

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### Abstract

The phenomenal rise in violent conflicts in Africa since the end of the Cold War has been an obstacle to peace and sustainable development. This paper observed that in spite of the proportionately high rate of resources expended on defence, internal strife and ethno-religious conflicts constitute features of most states in contemporary Africa. Much of the success of resolving and managing conflicts in Africa has been due in large part to the involvement of the international community. Through a variety of measures, from mediation, through sanctions to military interventions, many states in Africa have taken measures to bring an end to violence. Although this progress is laudable, the reality is that communal conflicts continue to ravage the continent. Despite the concerns surrounding international involvement in peace processes, this paper posits that the community of nations remains a necessary actor in managing conflicts and sustaining peace. Every African community has its own cultural strategies, institutions and values for monitoring, preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. The paper concludes that a homegrown peace approach within the context of communal ethics and traditional mechanisms should be incorporated in the methods of resolving conflicts and sustaining peace in contemporary Africa.

**Key words:** Conflicts; Peace; Communal ethics; Traditional values

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### INTRODUCTION

Conflict has been identified as one of the factors militating against the development of Africa (Adedeji, 1999; Adetula, 2006). The end of the Cold War sparked deep rooted and protracted intra-state wars in many African countries alongside the democratization process. Intra-state wars have wreaked devastating consequences on Africa in terms of considerable loss of human life and suffering, state collapse and societal fragmentation, disruption of economic and agricultural activities, the destruction of infrastructural facilities, and the regionalization of these domestic civil wars have affected regional peace and security (Francis, 2006, p.16). As much as the phenomenon of armed conflicts is not entirely new on the continent cognizant of the nationalist struggles and the support provided to divergent ideological camps on the continent while the Cold War lasted, its current manifestation in the form of ethnic and religious militancy on the continent differs in content and posture (Animasawun, 2013). The reality on the ground suggests that large parts of the continent (Central African Republic, Rwanda, Somalia, Libya, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan etc.) are still caught up in ongoing cycle of deep-rooted social conflict.

Essentially, the need to establish a more effective framework for managing and resolving conflicts in Africa has been on the front burner of international socio-political and economic discourses. Despite the efforts by the international community in managing and resolving conflicts in Africa, the continent is still facing conventional challenges of insurgencies, resource and identity conflicts and ethno-religious conflicts. The challenge faced by conflict-prone, war-torn and post-conflict societies in preventing large scale violence and armed conflict, consolidate fragile peace, maintain security and stability, and establish the durable foundation for sustainable peace, has led to a huge demand for knowledge and capacity building in peace

and conflict studies and the education for peace (Francis, 2006).

This paper attempts to establish the fact that communal ethics and traditional values have not been applied for the purpose of managing and resolving conflicts in contemporary Africa. The paper is divided into six sections. The first section is the conceptual analysis of the subject matter. The second section discusses the factors fuelling violent conflicts in Africa. The third section focuses on modern strategies to conflict management and resolution in Africa. The fourth section examines communal ethics and traditional values for conflict management and resolution in selected African countries. The fifth section emphasizes on the need to integrate traditional and modern strategies for conflict management and resolution in Africa. The sixth section is conclusive.

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## 1. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

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The term “conflict” could be very problematic to be defined. Conflict can be described as a condition in which are identifiable group of human beings whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic, cultural or otherwise is in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable human group because those groups are pursuing what could be incompatible goals (Quincy, 1971). In the same vein, conflict arises not necessarily when there is a physical manifestation of misunderstanding, but also when such understanding is marked by strong psychological disposition. From this perspective, conflict becomes a manifestation of what Martin and Nakayama (2000, p.290) refer to as “perceived or real incompatibility of goals, values, expectations, processes, or outcomes”. Otite (2000) views conflict as a natural announcement of an impending re-classification of a society with changed characteristics and goals with new circumstances of survival and continuity, and this entails struggle, competition, rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach value, which could be material or non-material.

Albert (2001) argued that there is nothing wrong with conflict. For him, it is a critical mechanism by which goals and aspirations of individuals and groups are articulated. Thus, conflict from Albert’s perspective is a channel for a definition of creative solutions to human problems and means to the development of a collective identity (Albert, 2001, p.3).

The concept of peace is very controversial in academic discourse. A number of definitions have emerged in the analysis and understanding of the concept. Ibeanu (2006, p.3) contends that conceiving peace as the converse of conflict though attractive is inadequate for understanding the ontology of peace. However, peace is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means (Francis, 2006). Galtung (1990) in his contribution to the

debate broadened the definition of peace by introducing negative and positive peace. The former according to him entails the absence of direct violent, war, fear, conflict at individual, national, regional and international levels. The latter suggests the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice, etc. In sum, peace is very essential to any sustainable development.

Traditional values have developed independently in the context of pre-modern societal structures in African states. Conceptualizing traditional values is at best problematic. This is as a result of the wide epistemological scope and dimensions of the reality. In its narrow, but by popular understanding, traditional values are relationships, selflessness, hospitality and a spirit of inclusiveness (Emiola, 2005). These traditional values are based on societal respect for all human race. As observed by Afisi (2008, p.9) the concern of African parents was to give radiant home training to their children from adolescent age to maturity; often regarded as good character building and confidence orientation to desire all that was to promote mutual understanding and good communal living devoid of rancor and acrimony.

According to Brock-Utne (2001) the concept of “warp and weft” is interwoven elements for understanding traditional values in Africa. The concept is evident in the conflict transformation system of Africa. The warp is the tradition of family or neighbourhood negotiation, which is normally facilitated by elders. The other basic element, the weft is the attitude of togetherness in the spirit of humanhood (Parapo). Parapo is a Yoruba word for humanhood, Ubuntu in the Zulu language of South Africa, Ujamaa in Kiswahili (denoting—a family feeling of togetherness). This concept points to the committedness in the community, as men and women of all ages are allowed to participate meaningfully in co-operation. The concept emphasizes association and relationships, as well as a collective goal, which is peace (Brock-Utne, 2001, p.8). Thus, there exists a commonality of core traditional values and world views among the diverse people of Africa, which makes it easier for them to understand their perception on the concept of peace. Home training also imparted more social values such as respect for the sanctity of human blood, sacredness of human life, justice, dialogue, early prevention of crisis and calamity, etc..

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## 2. FACTORS FUELLING VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

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There are several factors which triggered violent conflicts in Africa. Many contemporary large-scale violent conflicts are hybrid socio-political exchanges in which modern state-centric as well as pre-modern traditional and post-modern factors mix and overlap (Boege, 2006, p.3).

Firstly, the concept of “nationalism” which is common ideology in western societies is alien and unsuitable for Africa. In a political system where peoples are subject to economic exploitation, social and political inequalities, and denigrating racial prejudice, the struggle for statehood has often rife. This has often manifested in the emergence of nationalist or liberation movements, fighting against colonialism and imperialism for their independence. In the same vein, the character of the commercial relations instituted by colonialism also created long-term distortion in the political economy of Africa. The consequences of this pattern of production and exchange spilled over into the post-independence state (Bujra, 2000; Adedeji, 1999). As political competition was not rooted in viable national economic systems, in many instances the prevailing structure of incentives favoured capturing the institutional remnants of the colonial economy for functional advantage.

Typologies of conflicts in Africa as observed by (Adetula, 2006) show there are conflicts of secession, ethnic sub-nationalism, self-determination, military intervention and political legitimacy, religion, and over territory or boundaries. Foreign military intervention in inter-state relations has been one of the major factors fuelling violent conflicts in Africa. The overt military involvement of foreign powers in intra-African disputes, have been rife for no other reasons than economic and geo-political interests. In most cases, what is essentially an internal crisis has often been exacerbated, and the tempo escalated to a regional or continental conflict with the military support to the conflicting parties by some colonial powers. The cases of Angola, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo), Mozambique and some East African countries supported this point.

Also, ethnic identity as opposed to citizenship identity determines who gets what, when, how, and much in post-colonial states in Africa. Issues of employment, public appointments, education, grants, scholarships, etc., are subjected to ethnic arithmetic by the central state. In this context, this practice places ethnic identity as the primary identity for state entitlements and social rights. The result is that the central state becomes an arena of ethnic contest with the more powerful ethnic groups excluding and submerging the lesser ones and denying their people the benefits of citizenship. This tendency undermines the integrity and cohesion of the fragile African state and supplements the principle of territorial loyalty and citizenship with that of ethnic and communal loyalty (Adejumobi, 2005). Experience has shown in Rwanda, Burundi and Nigeria. Thus, ethnic identity-based conflicts hold the potential to undermine the new democratic experiment and the nation-state project in Africa.

In addition, issues surrounding the land, poverty, inequality and unemployment also contributed to violent

conflicts in Africa. To be sure, land resource is very crucial in any production within a society whereby equitable and secure access to land is a critical factor for development. However, land has posed many challenges and become a source of conflict in Africa. It is a fact that competition for resources typically lies at the heart of conflict. This accounts for the intensity for the struggle for political power in many African countries (Adedeji, 1999, p.10). This argument was supported by Ndebele (as cited in ACCORD, 2014) when he noted that the democratization agenda and the rapid introduction of polarizing forms of multi-party politics into systems that are not prepared to manage the resulting competition also exacerbate levels of tension. The heightened politicization of all spheres of society that accompanies polarized party politics as observed by Ndebele is often compounded when the private sector is weak and the state dominates most forms of economic activity. Escalated tensions and conflicts related to economic control, as well as in the relationship between the state and organized labor, and within relations among the state, the private sector and industry also appear to be on the rise (ACCORD, 2014, p.11).

More importantly, the forces of globalization and its inherent contradictions have often led to violent conflicts in most parts of African continent. Globalization, with the imposition of neo-liberal macroeconomic reform policies which began with the Structural Adjustment Program in the mid-1980s reduced the capacity of the African state to deal with the challenges of development and welfare. The consequences were the mounting unemployment problem, inflation, and widespread poverty in the continent. Indeed, the declining state capacity is the tendency to constitute ethnic and religious identities into rallying points in the struggle for all kinds of space (Egwu, 2006). Quite obviously, the content and character of globalization promote social fragmentation and has pushed many individuals into sectarian identities, reinforced their potency in society and made them alternative sites of political expression and struggles fuelling tension and conflict in many countries in Africa (Adejumobi, 2005).

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### **3. MODERN STRATEGIES TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA**

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In the post-Cold War era, African states witnessed series of mechanisms and strategies for conflict management and resolution. However, the modern forms of Euro-American structures, institutions, processes, and strategies which were introduced into post-colonial African nations through the United Nations Organization (UNO) and allied multinational political organization such as the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) have been

employed to bring lasting peace to the continent. The vast majority of nation states are members of the UN and signatories to any number of international protocols and resolutions. The UN and other international and regional organizations and interested foreign powers responded to the explosion of internal violence by employing diplomacy, mediation, negotiation, the deployment of peacekeeping forces, and other measures; that had been used with some success to resolve conflicts during the Cold War period (Volman, 1997, p.1).

The UN is a necessary actor in resolving conflicts because it serves as an agent of accountability. Beyond providing accountability, the UN and other multilateral and international and regional organizations are also indispensable mediators. Given that stakeholders in a particular conflict have resorted to violence, it becomes clear that there has been a breakdown in trust between the warring factions and there is little hope that they will arrive at an amicable solution on their own. The community of nations, whether through multilateral organizations, coalitions or unilateral efforts, has at times been successful in facilitating negotiations when internal actors could not (Amposah, 2008).

In seeking resolutions to conflict situations in Africa, the UN has been involved in peace support operations. Peace support operations are multi-functional operations involving military forces, diplomatic and humanitarian agencies. They are designed to achieve humanitarian goals or a long term political settlement and are conducted impartially in support of United Nations and these include peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace making, conflict prevention and humanitarian operations. Demurenko and Niktin as cited in Osimen (2012, p.45) emphasized on three categories of peace support operations which are:

- i. Those which employ primarily non-forceful methods of armed forces action such as observing and monitoring in order to fortify political and diplomatic efforts to halt and settle a conflict;
- ii. Those which combine political methods with active operations by an armed peacekeeping force that does not, however conduct any combat operations;
- iii. Those which involve the use of force, including combat actions, to compel peace, in concert with political efforts.

The use of modern strategies to conflict resolution in Africa raises a number of issues and challenges. Part of the challenges is that the persistence of violent conflicts in Africa indicates that modern methods are defective in resolving and managing violent conflict in the continent. Despite the increased attention and improved knowledge of the international community about conflict management in the post-cold war era, the conflicts have continued to soar high. Hence, the clamour for a homegrown strategies for conflict resolution and management.

#### **4. COMMUNAL ETHICS AND TRADITIONAL VALUES FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA: SELECTED CASES**

The inadequacies of modern strategies in managing and resolving conflicts in contemporary African society called for employing homegrown mechanisms. Thus, African communal ethics and traditional cultural values create conducive environment for the facilitation of peace and the enhancement of harmony (Olaoba, 2010). Malam (1997) emphasized that experience embedded in wisdom of Africa might be very useful in conflict resolution processes. For Malan, the tradition of life relatedness must have been inherent in African education from its earliest beginnings. Many traditional institutions for conflict resolution existed in African society which were instrumental in the facilitation of peace and ennoblement of harmony. These institutions included political institutions (family and palace, economic institutions (market), social institutions and religious institutions (deities, ancestors and sanctuaries). These institutions for conflict resolution also foregrounded the constitutional framework for the workability of the peaceful customs and norms (Olaoba, 2010, p.15). Although these institutions were very significant in resolving conflicts in pre-colonial Africa, they are nevertheless been used in the present day. Traditional processes are relatively informal and thus, less intimidating. Those who use them are also more at ease in a familiar environment. The role of chiefs, elders, family heads, and others is not only to resolve conflicts but also to anticipate and stop/or intercept conflicts. Group relationships and rights are as important as individual ones as the emphasis is on restoring relationships and reconciling groups (Choudree, 1999). The importance of using traditional African method of conflict resolution according to Nwolise (2005) was:

- i. To remove the root causes of the conflict.
- ii. To reconcile the conflicting parties genuinely.
- iii. To preserve and ensure enduring peace in the society.
- iv. To restore peace, remove fear, restore social harmony, and make everybody involved in the resolved conflict happy and at peace with each other again and required getting at the truth.
- v. To establish the truth which engenders remorsefulness, and forgiveness.
- vi. To promote good governance, law and order, security of lives and properties.

#### **5. SELECTED CASES FROM AFRICA**

##### **5.1 Nigeria**

The traditional values of resolving and managing conflicts are common among different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Among the Yoruba, there is the cultural instrument which discourages conflict among communities. In the event of war, it is customary for a belligerent community to challenge another community to a fight. This they do by sending an emissary with a piece of red cloth and/or war weapons to such a community. If the community that is challenged desires peace, it would in turn send a piece of white cloth back to indicate that it is not ready to fight. This amounts to offering an olive branch in order to pacify the bellicose community. Once the peace overture is embraced, dialogue will be initiated, and peace will prevail among the people of the two communities (Osborn and Motley, 2001, p.10).

Similarly, the *Omoluabi* philosophy of the Yoruba has been used in resolving conflicts. *Omoluabi* is a Yoruba word meaning a person of good character, or good behavior. Yoruba people believe that every person is an *Omoluabi* by instinct and that in a dispute, settlement can only be achieved by appealing to the *Omoluabi* of both parties, which is believed to lie in the conscience/mind of everybody. Thus any appeal to *Omoluabi* is an appeal to conscience (*eri okan*) intricately interwoven with the concept of the family (*ebi*) to which every person belongs, and of a higher being, *Olodumare* (God) to whom every person is accountable (Albert et al., 1995, p.8). In this regard, strong commitment by the Yoruba people to the concept of *Omoluabi* makes them see one another as person of good behaviour. Thus, in any conflict this moral and spiritual element is invoked in the disputants, as well as in any persons willing to resolve such conflicts. The disputants must behave responsibly by respecting the judicial opinion of the elders that choose to mediate in the conflict. In the same manner, the mediators are expected to justify their position of respect by ensuring that their verdict is not partial (Albert et al., 1995, p.9).

Among the Igbo of South East Nigeria, the efficacy of traditional institutions for conflict resolution cannot be underestimated. The Igbo traditional institutions for conflict resolution include: the family, Amala (council of elders), Okpara system (eldest male), Umunna (clan), Umuada (female born in a town but married out), age grades, Ohanaeze (assembly of the people and king), Hunters' Association, and agbara (local deities or oracles).

However, oath-taking is a traditional formula employed by the Igbo in resolving the conflict peacefully. Communities involved in the conflict will come with their respective representatives, as well as local deities (oracles) to be sworn to in the presence of gods and all people in the community to be present. The oath which is binding on every indigene of the participating communities will be taken to the effect that the contracting parties accept peace and there would be no more conflict. Violators of this oath face the wrath of the deities present, and the ancestors, who in the presence of God constitutes the source of moral sanctions and peace guarantors. This oath taking process will relax tension in the conflict town area and

will pave the way for the process of peaceful settlement of the conflict (Ajayi & Busari, 2014).

More importantly, it has been observed that Umunna is very efficacious in the management and resolution of conflicts in contemporary Igboland. Iwu (2015) argued that every member of the community is a member of Umunna institution within the community. The Umunna is also known as kindred assembly, and there could be more than one Umunna in most villages. Individuals in the communities are socialized to eschew behavioral dispositions that might bring disrepute to their fellow members. The blood relations emphasized in the socialization process are to a large extent a constant reminder that when any of their members are in conflict the other members are largely affected. Some members of Umunna may feel that they did not get justice on the issue on dispute, but Umunna has always ensured that the bond of oneness is preserved. Because some members may disagree with the resolution of some issue in dispute, Umunna have other mechanisms or instruments which can be used as a proof or to authenticate any claims before final resolution over any claim by the parties in the disputes. These instruments include: Ndi-Mmanwu (masquerades), Ihu Arusi (shrine), Ndi-Mgbafa (Diviners), Ofo, Inu-Iyi (Oath-taking) Mpu-Iwu (Ostracization), and Iri-Iwu (fine) (Iwu, 2015, p.206). The central theme in Igbo traditional institutions in conflict resolution is that the people themselves cannot rely on any other institutions than what they are able to put in place by themselves. It is instructive to note that these traditional values, institutions and methods among the Igbo society have been employed to resolved the recent conflict between the Aguleri-Umuleri-Umuoba communities in year 2000 (Iwu, 2015; Ajayi, 2012; Nwolise, 2005). When two communities want to terminate incessant warring between them, they engage in oat taking or more effectively blood covenant. This involves cooking goat or fowl meat with little blood of one or two representatives of the two groups, and eating the meat. There will never be war again between them, but there will also be no marriage between them again.

## 5.2 Tanzania

Emanuel and Ndimbwa (2013) argued that traditional mechanisms for conflict resolutions in Tanzania have been playing, a major significant role to bring harmony and peace among members of the society. Drawing their analysis from Gorowa community, Emanuel and Ndimbwa observed that land conflicts have been major threats to the community. However, to resolve such a conflict, a traditional mechanism is very crucial. The elders meeting termed *kwatmar barise* will be conveyed and led by the experts for the procedure of conflict resolution called *bariser kwatlema*. The accused person will be called and asked about his decision and be directed by the elders to withdraw his decision where necessary. However, some greedy people may refuse the advice given

to them. In such situation, another step will be taken as a punishment; in which the wife of the concerned individual will be asked to go to her parents. She will be asked to send her children to her inlaws since in Gorowa tribe children belong to father's clan. Subsequently, collective decision will be taken against the individual by strictly prohibiting any member of the community to go to the house of such an individual (Ostracization). This action is called *bayinisa* in Gorowa's vernacular language (Emanuel and Ndimbwa (2013). Upon such an action, a punished individual who wanted to resume the good relationship with the members of his community will solely find out elders and ask for the meeting in which he will ask for the forgiveness for his wrong doing. In some circumstances, an individual will be freely forgiven, or will be asked to prepare the local alcohol called *bura* which will be shared by all members of the community who attended the meeting of resolving such conflict. In a circumstance which was serious, a wrong doer will be asked to provide the bull (*awu*) that will be killed and the meat will be shared by all during the meeting as an indication that a person has been forgiven.

In the same vein, Emanuel and Ndimbwa (2013, p.222) emphasized that in case that a conflict is between ethnic groups such as an inter-ethnic war, there were traditional symbols such as waving leaves of special trees indicating that one or both sides had an intention of making peace. The parties could engage in direct talks or could seek the assistance of a respected wise elder. Very often when they agreed to end the conflict, a ceremony will be organized which involved feasting with traditional brew and slaughtering a cow or cows and or goats (Emanuel & Ndimbwa, 2013). Although, this practice is predominantly a pre-colonial and colonial experience it is very useful in resolving conflicts in contemporary African society within the context of traditional conventions and customs.

### 5.3 Ghana

In Ghana, traditional leaders play a vital role in local and grassroots communities in relation to socio-economic development and the administrative justice in the modern political system. Also, the institution of traditional leadership play critical roles in promoting and sustaining social cohesion, peace and order in societies (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2008, p.30).

The Akan people of Ghana for instance have a unique and well established traditional leadership and consultative structures and processes through which disputes are settled. The traditional court, the main seat of authority, among the Akans, consists of the chief, his elders, the queen mother and the linguist. The elders represent all the people in the division (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, n.d.). The Akans believe in democratic rule based on consultation, open discussion, consensus building and coalitions. The composition of the traditional authority also demonstrates the Akan notion of participatory

democracy (Okrah, 2003). The traditional process of conflict resolution is based on the notion that whatever decision is arrived at should improve the relationship between the parties and that the judgement should be wise and practical. To be sure, conflicts may be solved directly by the chief, his elders or actors selected by any of the parties. The process, according to Okrah (2003) includes arbitration and mediation. In case of arbitration, the parties formally present their cases at the chief's courts for determination. Mediation is regarded as very important to the extent that there is a chief for mediation (*dwanetoe hene*). Thus, the mediator goes to the complainant and pleads on behalf of the wrong doer. Mediators are people with status, recognition, integrity and experience in the community. The elders and mediators may use pressure, persuasion, recommendations, suggestions, and relevant norms, and rules to arrive at a solution (Brock-Utne, 2001).

Apart from cultural values of resolving conflicts in Ghana, the spiritual dimensions cannot be underestimated. Conflicts that have spiritual dimensions involving incantations, curses, witchcraft and oath-taking, among others, are brought before the traditional and spiritual leaders including the chief priests of deities, herbalists and diviners. For instance, one party may invoke a curse by using the name of a river or deity to harm another person for perceived wrong doing. Once the afflicted party realizes through divination that they have been cursed, the accused is requested to reverse or remove that curse by performing the necessary rituals at the appropriate shrine and going through the necessary cultural processes. It is also common to invoke an oath during conflicts. A litigant may swear an oath to support his/her claim. When that happens, it is expected that the other party, if innocent will also swear an oath against that claim. In that case, the contending parties having sworn the oath have to go to the paramount chief, deity etc to perform the necessary rituals and settle the dispute. However, failure to respond to an oath is perceived to be admission of guilt until reversed by the custodian of the oath (Kendie & Guri, 2006). This cultural value of oath taking is also common among the Igbo and Yoruba people of Nigeria.

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## 6. INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

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It is important to note that both traditional and modern methods of conflict resolution have been adjudged relevant to specific conflict situation and environment. However, some scholars have argued that to develop universal models and techniques on peace research and conflict resolution applicable across all social and cultural contexts is simply problematic because it neglects cultural specificity and the diverse cultural milieus that conflict is

embedded and critical to its resolution (Francis, 2006). John Paul Lederach (cited in Francis, 2006) has therefore proposed an “elicitive” process of conflict resolution as an alternative to the traditional and dominant “prescriptive” process. The elicitive process of conflict resolution is based on building and creating appropriate models from the cultural resources and implicit knowledge available in a given setting. The prescriptive process on the other hand, is based on transferring conflict resolution techniques from one setting to another, in particular, the transfer of Western methods to non-Western conflict environment (Francis, 2006, p.24).

Since the existence and influence of modern institutions are inevitable, both the traditional and modern institutions should find a common operational platform. Some African countries like Ghana have legislative and judicial decentralization programmes “as a framework for integrating aspects of the existing conflict management methods and skills of the national government and the country’s ethnic groups” (Fred-Mensah, 1999, p.951). Englebert (cited in Iwu, 2015) observed that the council of traditional leaders in Namibia, is an organ that advises the president mostly on communal lands. Ghana’s House of Chiefs is also charged with advising any authority under the constitution on matters related to chieftaincy and customary law. Zimbabwe reversed its earlier policy of dismantling chieftaincy and created a council of chiefs in 1993. The house of chiefs was restored in Zambia in 1996. In Lesotho and Malawi, Chiefs constitute 2/3 and 30 percent of the Senate respectively. South Africa’s 1996 constitution provides for the creation of provincial and National House of Traditional Rulers. Thus, general beliefs and values involving sacredness of truth, providence, proverbs, idioms, oral histories, oral narratives and altruism are important elements of the political economy of traditional societies. These beliefs and values are usually applied to ensure economic prosperity and political stability. They can still contribute towards peace building in the contemporary African society even if they are injected into the modern constitution (Akinwale, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated the importance of communal ethics and traditional values in resolving conflict and sustaining peace in contemporary African society. It is evident that people themselves cannot rely on any other institution in resolving or settling disputes. In as much as the conflict is more often culturally located, then, attempt to resolve and manage it is within the ambit of culture. In all the selected case studies, an interpretation of the cultural norms, beliefs, philosophy, tradition, customs and procedures is quite clear and feasible in the management of conflicts. Since the modern strategies of resolving and

managing conflicts in the continent are inadequate and problematic, it can be incorporated with the traditional mechanism. In this context, a homegrown strategy is an antidote for effective conflict resolution, management and sustainable peace in Africa.

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