

Conflict Management and Peacebuilding in Africa: the Role of State and Non-state Agencies

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Abstract

Africa has earned a negative niche as the region of civil war, lawlessness and dictatorships. Though the all-too familiar derogatory metaphors (such as Kaplan's 'the coming anarchy', [1994]) are slightly reversed, particularly since 2000s, following substantial democratic transformation, the continent continues to experience spates of intra- and inter-state wars with impact on the prospects of peace, stability and security in the continent. Presently there are about 20 active wars in the continent, and uncountable number of low intensity conflicts – ranging from resource-related, communal, and politically-motivated to ethno-religious. The paper explores Track-One, Track-Two and Multi-Track Diplomacy as a conceptual framework for understanding conflict management peacebuilding in Africa. It also seeks to provide a blueprint for conflict management and peacebuilding in Africa, using Nigeria as a case model.

Introduction

All over the world, the quest for sustainable peace and security has continued to bother the minds of all stakeholders – international organisations, Governments, Security agencies, NGOs, grassroots organisations, communities etc. This challenge has assumed higher momentum in the context of the post-Cold War period which has unleashed major transformations in global balance of power and the structures of attaining global peace. New players – particularly NGOs - have joined the race for peacebuilding and policy-making. This is not surprising because everybody is affected by conflict in its various ramifications and at all levels of society – ranging from micro- to macro-levels

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(Deutsch and Coleman, 2000). By micro-level conflict, we mean the conflict generated by personal and communal difference and clash of interest. On the other hand, macro-level conflict refers to the conflict that conflagrates to, or between, wider society/societies.

The challenge of preventing, managing, transforming and mitigating conflict is a core objective of many international, regional and sub-regional agencies – such as the United Nations (UN), Africa Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and so on. Each of these institutions has specific units and strategies for dealing with international conflict. For instance, within the UN a number of agencies have been established to manage global conflicts: the Peacebuilding Commission, the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanction Committee, the International Court of Justice etc. In addition to transnational agencies, national governments and non-governmental organisations too are interested in conflict management and peacebuilding. While all stakeholders (international, governmental and non-governmental) share core values for peace, they are divided on the strategies for achieving them. For instance, the Africa Union Conflict Prevention Mechanism is based on AU's principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of member states. This approach has been criticised, particularly by non-governmental organisations and civil liberty associations, as a state-centred formula that seeks to reinforce state sovereignty at the expense of human rights and public welfare. Indeed, given the transcendent realities that characterise most violent conflicts in Africa (e.g. Sudan since 2003; the Mano River Basin conflict of the 1990s; Rwandan Genocide of 1994), it has become clear that the effect of conflicts goes beyond the jurisdiction of a particular state: thus, a holistic approach is necessary to conflict management and peacebuilding. By holistic approach we mean the method that involves the collective participation of stakeholders – states, non-state and supra-state actors – in the management of conflict. This approach is better articulated in the context of Multi-track Diplomacy enunciated by Diamond and McDonald (1996).

A number of conflict management 'best practices' have been developed, particularly by Western scholars and policies makers. These initiatives seem to work well North-America and Europe, but are problematic to in non-Western societies (see e.g. Burton, 1987; Deutsch & Coleman, 2000). A key weakness of western approach, for instance, is that it presents a framework that assumes equality amongst stakeholders. In Africa, however, there are glaring disparities and disconnect between stakeholders: e.g. political leaders are insulated from masses. Furthermore, conflict settings differ greatly. As argued by Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun – Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General,

In all the debates on Africa, one issue stands out above others- the issue of conflict, its root causes and its self-destructive impact. Nearly a third of Africa's 53 states suffer from conflict situations and often the destabilising consequences of civil war in one country will spill across borders and affect whole regions of the continent. War in Africa eats up scarce resources and destroys development. Moreover, it contributes to a chronic loss of confidence in the continent, not least from foreign investors...(in Upeace, 2003).

The issues raised by Sahnoun may as well explain why the circle of violent conflict is persistent in Africa.³ Perhaps more importantly, it provides a precursor to why Africa

³ This grim reality corroborates the uniqueness of conflict in Africa. As one of us argued elsewhere "the dilemmas posed to Africa by such phenomena as civil wars, civil militias,

needs a customised approach to conflict management. This is not to deny that the challenge to designing and implementing strategic action for peace is today a global one. Rather, we argue that Africa presents a conflict scenario that needs to be managed using custom (rather than the so-called conventional) solutions. African countries are prone to declining economic conditions, corruption, deteriorating health situation – indeed as Graca Machel opined, during advisory meeting of University Peace at Maputo in October 2002, the three problems confronting Africa are poverty, corruption and AIDS (Upeace, 2003).

This paper proposes that the seemingly increasing wave of violent conflicts in Africa is not an indication of the lack of structure or human agency to address them. There are both governmental and non-governmental organisations and networks that are responding to the conflict issues, even though there is a lack of synergy between government and NGOs. In the context of Nigeria, this disconnect partly in government's suspicion of, and adversarial approach towards, an increasingly proactive and vibrant NGO sector. The objectives of the paper include the following. First, it will examine the key concepts of track- one, track-two and multi-track diplomacies within the context of strategic planning process as it relates to the development of strategic action for peace. Second, it will review the strategies for peace by the state actors and the non-State actors in Nigeria, as a case model for Africa. Third, it will examine the challenges for designing and implementing a strategic plan for peace, and offer some constructive solutions.

Conflict Management & Peacebuilding: Conceptual Issues

This section reviews alternative frameworks for conflict management and peacebuilding by engaging the concepts on “Track One”, “Track Two” and “Multi-track” Diplomacy. The section also explores the concept of “Strategic planning for peace” as a framework for a synergetic management of conflict that involves both state and non-state actors in achieving “positive peace” (Galtung, 1996: 70-114). At the core of each framework of conflict management is agency of actors. To be sure, certain actors are critical to the attainment, management, enforcement, and nurturing of peace in a socio-political setting. These actors have been variously identified and classified based on their features and functions. Until recently, the core actor in every state, particularly in the global South, has been the state itself (the focus of Track One Diplomacy). However, non-state actors too have a stake in conflict and its management (the focus of Track Two Diplomacy). The relevance and implication these latter actors have for both conflict and peacebuilding are enormous; therefore, they cannot be left out of any effort to resolve conflict and/or build peace.

Track One Diplomacy

Track-one diplomacy is the term used to describe the traditional or official diplomatic processes of international conflict resolution through government to government negotiation among official actors of the state. It is the official government diplomacy or “a technique of state action” (Nan, 2003) as practiced by foreign offices, ambassadors,

‘warlordism’, (counter)insurgencies, child soldiers, and violence against non-combatants – especially vulnerable social categories (elderly, children, disabled and women) – are perhaps comparable to the on-going ‘global’ *war on terror*” (Tar, 2005: 137)

special envoys and other officials representing governments, (EPCPT, 2006) and other governmental departments, agencies and ministries. The actors in this field include governmental officials, representatives of inter-governmental organisations (such as UN and its agencies and Regional Inter-governmental Organisations (RIOs). The operation may take place at the bilateral level between states, or multilaterally when several states interact together, regionally or globally through Inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) (Nan, 2003)

This official track is thus state-centred. State actors, also referred to as “First-Track actors” have dominated occupy a privileged position conflict management – necessitated by virtue of states’ monopoly of sovereignty, territorial integrity, defense and security. One of the strengths of state actors is that it is endowed with awesome power occasioned by its sovereign constitutional prerogatives which allow them to the use of official resources, force and institutions to manage and enforce peace. The import of this for peace and conflict management is that there could be adequate structure and resources for managing and sustaining of peace. Following from this, peace-making efforts initiated or supported by state actors would be better sanctioned and funded than unofficial initiatives. Track-one diplomacy is, however, not without its encumbrance: it is beset with the problems of bureaucracy and the possibility of partisanship from political interests, particularly of office holders. This problem is described by Susan Allen Nan (2003) in the following words:

Track-One Diplomacy brings both strength and weaknesses to conflict resolution. Official diplomatic efforts are often better funded... However; official diplomatic efforts are tied to the official policies of state...and thus may be constrained in their flexibility.

The other part of the problem is the nature of most intra-state conflicts which are usually characterized by primordial and sectarian factors, and regional divide. Such conflicts normally take the form of “Protracted Social Conflicts” (Azar, 1990). Here, track-two (non-state) actors are best suited to handle them.

Track-Two Diplomacy

The term Track-Two diplomacy was first coined by Joseph V. Montville in 1981 as an “umbrella term” referring to a broad range of unofficial contacts and interactions aimed at resolving conflicts, both internationally and within states (see Notter and McDonald, 1996; McDonald, 1991). Over the years, the term has come to be used to refer to not only the actors alone but the processes and methods used by all actors outside the official state actors. They include the civil society, NGOs, media, academia, businesses, experts and CBOs. These unofficial actors draw their legitimacy from the nature of services and the strategy employed for their implementation.

The non-state actors have often developed and used different strategic action plans for peace in their various intervention projects. For instance, in Nigeria civil society and, particularly, the professional experts working in the non-state sector have designed and implemented different strategic plans for peace, employing their knowledge of the environment and its intricacies. Most of the action plans are modified using some of the principles of existing models from developed western democracies. Intervention projects by the civil society involve the use of research in finding out facts about the conflicts; parties, their relationships, needs and fears. NGOs often carry out policy-relevant

conflict analysis. However, there are often concerns regarding the recalcitrance, even resistance, on the part of state institutions to accept the input of NGOs in “good faith”, let alone implementing them. Nevertheless, stakeholders in conflict, including NGOs, do have influence in managing and/or ending conflicts: the sticking point is the capacity of these stakeholders to ensure greater inclusion and participation in ending conflict.

Track-two diplomacy also has a greater scope for mediation by through the participation of actors – such as religious leaders, traditional rulers, and pinion leaders – as third parties and peace-makers, particularly where these actors are not parties to the conflict. NGOs act as a catalyst for such third party intervention, not least because they are disposed to media campaigns, the engagement of youths, community and traditional leaders and state in intervention capacity workshop – as exemplified in Nigeria’s Ife/Modakeke crisis (see Albert, 2001). It is important to state that in the context of Nigeria, until recently, the substantial strategies of NGOs have neither been recognised nor documented. However, donor support for NGOs and their conflict intervention projects have sought to highlight the role of track-two actors: key examples include *Searching for Peace in Africa- An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Management Activities*, by the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation in collaboration with the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, and the USAID-OTI assisted publication titled *Building Peace, Advancing Democracy: Experience with Third –Party Interventions in Nigeria* edited by Albert (2001). This development is not unconnected with the fact that professional conflict management practice has now become apparent in Nigeria within the last ten years.

Some of the problems that limit the effectiveness of the NGOs, particularly in Nigeria, are lack of coordination among non-state actors and conflict management practitioners. Efforts are not harnessed to build synergies that would yield maximum positive impact. Documentation of activities is scarcely done, and where this is done, outputs are rarely circulated to state actors or shared amongst conflict management NGOs and practitioners. There is no effective networking in the country to provide the platform for sharing experience and knowledge/skills pool. There have been efforts to overcome this problems: for instance, the formation of CRESNET in 2000 to provide a common platform for professionals and NGOs. Many years after its inauguration, CRESNET is still to achieve its aims. It is at the moment more of an *organisation* carrying out its *own* projects than a *network* of like-minded organisations. It is important to stress that a great deal of opportunities remain untapped because of the poor coordination of many networks. Energies are often wasted, and efforts multiplied in few issues often at the expense of other important matters of conflict.

Multi-track Diplomacy

The principle of Multi-track diplomacy is developed as a multi-actor, multi-disciplinary and all-inclusive approach of peacebuilding. It assumes that individuals and organisations are more effective working together than separately, and that conflict situations involve a large and intricate web of parties and factors that require a systemic approach. According to the proponents of this approach (Diamond and McDonald, 1996), each track in the system brings with it its own perspective, approach and resources, all of which must be called on in the peacebuilding process. The key tracks include: (1) Government, including state institutions and officials (2) Professional Conflict Resolution (3) Business (4) Private citizens, including associations and networks (5) Research, training and education (6) Activism (7) Religion (8) Funding and (9) Public opinion/communication.

Lewer and Ramsbotham (1993) suggest multi-track diplomacy as a way to “connect” the levels and an effective way to tackle “ethnic and regional conflict” whose complexity requires a ‘systems approach’. Similarly, Lederack (1997) argues on the need for multi-track as tripartite approach towards a Multi-track Diplomacy that recognises both top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding, with the grassroots actively involved the peace process.

The State and Conflict Management

The state, including state institutions and officials, plays a strategic role in the management of domestic conflict – be it as *mediator* and *peacekeeper* or as *participant* depending on the dynamics of the conflict. There are variations on the degree to which the state is a conflict participant or conflict manager – this is largely dependent on the evolution and make-up of each state. As Alan and Newcombe (1970) argue,

Historically, many (perhaps most) nation-states arose by conquest (e.g., by victory of the most powerful feudal lord over weaker neighbouring feudal lords), and therefore were born as conflict participants rather than as conflict managers. Some states were formed as a result of voluntary association or federation (Switzerland, United States, Canada), in which the federal authority was founded for the purpose, among others, of managing conflict among member units (cartons, states, provinces).

In the case of Africa, colonialism played an important role in wielding together peoples from a welter of ethnicities, polities, cultures and regions under a single nation-state. Colonial had bequeathed conflict between peoples of different background, particularly with regard to power and resource. The Nigerian experience is quite revealing. The British colonialist first conquered the different nations and groups as spheres of influence. Initially these groups were ruled with different kinds of structures: direct rule for stateless communities and indirect rule for organised ones. In 1914, these regions were amalgamated by Lord Lugard for ease of administration. The territory was named *Nigeria*, a foisted artificial creation at the behest of colonial interest. At independence, the colonial authorities bequeathed power to a loose coalition of political class, dominated by the Northern elites. The state lost its legitimacy particularly from Southern regions who perceived the state as “a mere geographic expression” serving the interest of certain groups. The first Republic (1960-66) was soon fraught with contest over power. In 1966, southern military officers staged a coup in which many politicians mainly from the North were assassinated. A counter-coup staged by northern officers soon led to sectarian bloodbath, particularly against Igbos who were perceived to be behind the first coup. The unity of the state was challenged by the three year Biafran civil war (1967- 1970). Throughout the war, the state led by a northern military officer – General Yakubu Gowon – participated actively in fighting the secessionists. The war was brought to an end following peace deals brokered by regional and external powers, as well as defeat of the secessionists. After the war, the state participated in peacebuilding through the so-called triple Rs: reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation. The state “exploited Nigeria’s huge oil revenues to consolidate its post-war peacebuilding programme” (Tar, 2009: 101).

The foregoing account shows that the state acts as either conflict participant or peacebuilder, and this depends on the nature, stage and dynamics of the conflict. In the

case of Nigeria, where the state's unity and territorial integrity were threatened by the Biafran secessionists, the state participated in the conflict as a means of subduing the threats to the state. At the end of the conflict, the state participated actively in rebuilding the nation. Though the state actors are primarily charged with the responsibility of maintaining peace and security, the irony is that in Nigeria there is no sound national policy for managing conflicts after nearly five decades of independence!. The state is often seen as using the so-called "Fire Brigade Approach" in which the state turns its attention to resolving conflict after the damages have been done. The common strategies employed by the state in the past varied from declaring state of emergencies, deploying the military and security agencies to enforce, the setting up of panels of enquiries to investigate conflicts as well as the provision of relief materials to victims of violent conflicts (See IPCR March 2003; AbdulRahman, 2001). Nevertheless, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), a parastatal under Nigeria's Federal Ministry of External Affairs, has been engaged in developing a national peacebuilding and conflict management policy as part of its Strategic Conflict Assessment Project for the federal government's consideration.

Irrespective of the process of state formation, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure the maintenance of law and order in society. In managing the diversity of human needs and putting in place mechanism for managing disputes, the state function as a conflict manager. Aside from governance structures, the state also formulates policies and programmes aimed at facilitating peaceful coexistence among its diverse citizens. In situation of violent conflict, the state responsibility goes beyond just the stoppage of violence, to executing initiatives aimed at the resolution of the conflict issue(s) among the disputants. In practice, this is often not the case in most developing states like Nigeria where governments take superficial short-terms steps to stop conflict without any long term steps to avoid future occurrence. Further, state officials and the dominant political interests that they represent often conspire to compound and/or prolong conflict. In a study of Jos crisis of 2001, Best and AbdulRahman (2004) did recognise that the conflict was politically motivated, and that ethnicity and religion were employed to further fuel the conflict. To prove this point, the former Governor of Plateau State, Mr Joshua C. Dariye confirmed, during a courtesy call on him by the Senate Committee on Assessment Tour of Namu Conflict of 2006, that state elites were behind the protracted conflicts in the state (NTA, 2006). Paradoxically, Dariye himself was indicted of taking part in the conflict, and for using state resources to support a particular party to the conflict.

In line with this development, a number of programmes and policy were developed by the Nigerian government with a view to managing potential conflict amongst groups seeking access to the state resources and power. The following are some of the government action plans for peace being used over the years since the end of the civil war in Nigeria:

- Administrative units were created after the civil war by splitting the four regions in Nigeria (North, East, West and Mid-Western regions) into twelve states to make administration closer to the people. Since then, the government employs that as a strategy for peace by creating more states, local governments, districts and wards. This strategy has tended to be negative in a number of cases where such a decision turned to cause conflict within or between communities.
- The introduction of the National Youth Service Scheme for young graduates not older than 30years is a programme that was well intended to promote peaceful

coexistence through cross cultural knowledge and appreciation of the geographical dynamics of the country. Corps members are posted to states for service other than their native states. This programme in some cases has led to corps members having to live in other parts of the country to work and marry from other ethnic groups. Through this programme a number of beneficiaries have modified their biases against other ethnics groups.

- The establishment of Federal Unity Colleges with a view to promoting national integration and cross-cultural orientation amongst young Nigerians.
- The execution of state quotas for admission to Federal Universities. In addition to merit, students are to be admitted into Universities on the basis of whether or not they are from the so-called “Educationally Disadvantaged Areas”.
- The introduction of geopolitical quota system and federal character criteria for government employment to reduce the risk of domination and create room for representation. Rather than reduce conflict, it is argued that this policy has given undue advantage to some groups who were placed on a very senior cadre simply on quota representation. This development has tended to promote internal conflict in governmental organisations. It is argued that this approach “creates resentment among qualified candidates who fall outside the quota. It can also reduce the quality of governance by not prioritising merit.” (IPCR, 2003).
- The Establishment of Federal Ministries in all state capitals to promote a mix grill of ethnic and cultural groups. Staffs from salary grade level seven are employed from any part of the country.
- The representational spread of Federal establishments – such as federal universities, federal civil service offices, military barracks etc – with a view to bringing government and its services close to the people.
- Peace and security committees are established at the Federal, State and local government levels.

The State as Peacekeeper

The primary duty of a nation-state is to ensure the maintenance of law and order. In a situation of violent conflict, the government has the primary non-partisan function of ensuring the return of peace and normalcy. This may require *enforcement* of law and order through the use of force but more importantly too, is to ensure the maintenance of peace through *diplomatic* and *persuasive* means. A number of empirical examples exist in Nigeria where the government has had to be engaged in peacekeeping activity to avoid a relapse into violence again after a stoppage of a violent conflict. In doing this, the police as the peace enforcement unit for internal security are often deployed to contain the violence; this has been the case in a number of religious and communal conflicts since the advent of the civilian regime in May 1999. In a number of instances, the military had to be deployed to either take over the operation or provide a back-up towards restoring law and order. These developments have often witnessed a gross abuse of human rights and the use of excessive force.

Reflecting on Nigeria's experience of violent conflict since 1999, many scholars and commentators have rated Niger Delta Region as the most volatile zone in the country (e.g. Watts, 2008; Omeje 2007). Here, almost a permanent peace enforcement force has been stationed for years. The justification for this continuous military operation in the Niger Delta is not unconnected with the fact that many groups in the region have taken arms against the state; they have also been engaged in such nefarious activities as hostage taking, oil bunkering, destruction of government and corporate facilities leading to tremendous loss. The new wave of kidnapping in exchange for ransom has gone beyond the normal practice of taking hostage to make political statement and/or negotiate a better condition of living for the region.

In the other parts of the country where violent conflicts have taken place – such as the Northern states of Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna, Borno and Taraba – the state has often employed military and security agents as peacekeepers and enforcers. In Kaduna religious crisis, for instance, military tanks were stationed in strategic positions to disallow the reoccurrence of violence, or to stop disgruntled armed elements from regrouping to re-start conflict..

In the discharge of these peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations, there have however been a lot of reports of human rights abuses, police brutality, arbitrary killing, and sexual violence and in some instances the government has been alleged to be active participants in violent conflicts. This puts into question the state's role as an efficient peacekeeper. Apparently, state agents – particularly the military – are known to compound conflict by taking side or engaging on wanton destruction of life and property.

The State as a Conflict Participant

There are many ways in which the state, including its officials and institutions, become involved and/or implicated in conflict. First is *participation by default*. This occurs where state policies or decisions trigger or exacerbate conflict. In the context of Nigeria and many African states, the government has sometimes been seen as conflict participants, by virtue of their actions or inactions and direct role in the conflict. There are instances where government policies have been responsible for the cause of the conflict. A good example is the Warri/Itsekiri conflict over the location of Local Government Council Headquarters – this was the result of government's decision to locate a new local government council headquarters in a new location. The government refusal to reverse its decision through a participatory process with the community could portray it as having interest in the conflict. The case of Ife/Modakeke conflict, like the Warri/Itsekiri crisis, was also triggered by competing claims over the location of Local Government Council Headquarters.

Second is *participation by design*. This occurs where the state, particularly its ruling officials, take side in the conflict and use state resources to support a particular faction. The state become conflict participant is a situation where agencies of the government are seen to be actively involved in the perpetuation of violent conflict. An example is the Plateau State protracted conflict which started in September 7, 2001 and culminated into the declaration of State of Emergency on May 18, 2004. Apparently, the state government was accused of playing an active role in the conflict, and the Governor Mr Jashua Dariye was indicted for playing a partisan role. It was noted that “ at every point the Governor

of Plateau State either made himself unavailable on the ground to take appropriate action to stem the tide of violence or when he was available he was simply incompetent to take action. His personal conduct and unguarded utterances have inflamed passions” (Plateau State Government, 2004:1). This led to the declaration of a state of emergency by the then Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Non-State Actors and Conflict Management

Non-state actors are competing for space in the conflict management and peacebuilding realms. According to Debiel and Sticht (2005: 133f), there are four central explanations for the increasing number and significance of NGOs. These include:

1. The UN World conferences of the 1990s have offered major incentives for the establishment of new NGOs and the expansion of existing organisations engaged in development and environmental issues at the international level.
2. The increasing power of mass media and the globalisation of communication by electronic information technologies which supports transnational networking activities of non-state actors.
3. International civil society organisations function as substitutes for former state-driven welfare services (health, education and social policy). This is a consequence of the neo-liberal project of decreasing state activities in the market and public sphere field. Leftist criticism of the authoritarian state meets conservative arguments of criticism against the welfare state.
4. In many developing countries, NGOs function as substitutes for formerly state-run activities in social provisioning (e.g. in health and education), especially as international programmes for economic reforms, like IMF programmes, forced states to reduce public services.

NGOs also have been increasingly active in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peace building activities (Barnes 200). For example, they are engaged in early warning activities, preventive diplomacy through third-party intervention, facilitation of dialogue workshops and mediation, negotiations (peacemaking), networking and initiatives for cross-cultural understanding and relationship building. Each of these activities is explained in turn below.

As argued earlier, non-state actors reside in the domain of Track-Two Diplomacy – seen as complementary to Track-One Diplomacy executed by the state and its officials and institutions. Diamond and McDonald (1996) note that professional NGOs in conflict resolution play both ancillary and supportive role, and do not compete in managing conflict. Track two diplomacy encompasses peace efforts embarked upon by unofficial, non-governmental organisations and individuals who specialize in conflict management. To further capture this concept as it relates to the Nigerian context it would be instructive to include networks and coalitions as a part of the Track-two actors and classify international agencies and donors as Track-three (see IPCR, 2003). This is important within context of Africa as international agencies interact with both the state and the other local non-state actors.

In the various conflicts (e.g. the Nigerian case explored), NGOs have not been left out in efforts of resolution and management. As a matter of fact they have contributed in complementing state actors both at the conflict and post conflict stages. A lot of them have also played quite a significant role in conflict prevention at the pre-conflict stage. The approaches the NGOs have utilized in intervention or engagement in conflict situations have included consultation, dialogue, and training in conflict resolution for people on all sides of an ethnic conflict, third party mediation, early warning and response, sensitization via the media, workshops, advocacy visits, and other informational/ communicative activities. Without prejudice to realities of power and class contradiction between state actors (the governing elites, politicians etc) and non-state actors (NGO activists), it is reasonable to view NGOs as partners of state actors and institutions in conflict intervention, particularly by seeking local and international support (the latter exemplified by donor funding). In the context of Nigeria, a good instance of the former includes the Plateau Peace Summit of 2001 where CEPID acted as the technical member of the committee for the summit instituted by the government. For the later, copious projects are available, and in fact, this is what NGOs are basically known for. To state but a few, AAPW intervention in the Niger Delta, CEPID's intervention in 2001 in the Bassa/Egbira conflict sponsored by USAID.

In spite of the foregoing, NGOs are often riven with and by a plethora of limitations. This is particularly the case with domestic NGOs, often perceived as lacking the appropriate organizational and technical skills, and resources either to perform these diverse functions adequately, or to sustain themselves. First, efforts to fund NGOs and their professional staff have been faulted for often unduly circumventing government policies, in favour of strengthening the organs of governments. Second, the engagement of NGO in political mobilization and agitation has often irritated leaders whether justifiably or not. Third, the engendered "project culture" characteristic of NGOs has been criticized for assuming naively that a mix of discrete activities can cumulatively yield significant social and political change. Conversely, civil societies can be so powerful that they destabilize and paralyze political systems, such as is happening currently in Bolivia. Moreover, some non-governmental entities are not purely "civil", as perhaps demonstrated by Lebanon's Hezbollah. Fourth, local NGOs are often personality centered and short-lived – indeed many are described as "briefcase organizations" existing only in the handbags of their founders and projected ostensibly in seeking donor funding, often with no tangible results (Tar, 2009).

Planning for Peace: Some Remedial Propositions

Given that both peace and conflict are strategic issue, in this section we some propose ideas on strategic planning for peace. By strategic planning we mean how all stakeholders can complement each other in designing a sustainable framework for conflict management and peacebuilding. It also entails relating the internal variables to the external environment with the view of evolving an action plan that will facilitate the attainment of the targeted objectives of peace. Laycock (1996) defines strategic planning as

a comprehensive organisational process of adaptation through assessment, decision making, and evaluation. Strategic planning seeks to answer the most basic questions about why the organisation exists, what it does, and how it does it.

The result of the process is a completed plan that serves as a guide for organisational action for the next 3 to 5 years.

It is important to stress that since planning generally is a process of working towards a desired goal, the attainment of the goal depends on the implementation of the plan not in a *rigid* “straightjacket” form, but by providing a certain degree of *flexibility* for the intervening variables that are uncontrollable from the environment. Strategic planning in particular is broader in scope and often relates to longer period than a short-term plan. Laycock (1996) identified four distinguished factors of strategic planning which we acronym as CFCC (see below):

1. Strategic planning is fundamentally concerned with adapting to a *changing environment*. This external orientation focuses on recognition and responding to the forces of change that exist outside the organization.
2. Strategic Planning is *future-oriented*, albeit informed by past experiences. The past is important insofar as it provides lessons for the future.
3. Strategic Planning is *comprehensive*. It is detailed and robust in terms of the resources and other factors required for achieving specific aims and objectives.
4. Strategic Planning is a *consensus-building process*. Given the diversity of the stakeholders interest in the peace and security sector, particularly the track one diplomacy (state actors) and track two diplomacy (non-state actors) which seemingly not to be cooperating, strategic planning offers a way to harness those needs and interests and to reach agreement on future direction that best serves them.

Though strategic planning helps in influencing the direction to be taken, the plan then needs to be implemented in order to achieve the desired objectives. The process of linking plan to implementation is known as *action planning*. Action planning is often considered to be the crucial link between planning and implementation. An action plan describes in details what is to be done, how it is to be done, by whom and when. Action plan requires the passionate and sustained contribution all stakeholders. As mentioned earlier, the main stakeholders in peace and security sector are the state actors and the non-state actors, respectively conceptualised in the realms of track one diplomacy and track-two diplomacy. Dialogue and strategic networking is necessary to achieve a consensual action plan. However, based on Nigerian experience, there is no effective coordination between the state actors (track one diplomacy) and non-state actors (track two diplomacy); this dilemma weakens synergy and undermines the ability of state and non-state actors to develop a strategic action plan that meets the features of the strategic planning and strategic action plan highlighted above. The problem with synergy and coordination is partly a function of internal contradictions with actors in track-one and track-two diplomacy.

Planning requires adequate information to draw up a reliable and realistic plan that can be further translated into action plan for implementation. The challenge to effective strategic planning even in business has to do with keeping track of developments within the external environment and being able to exploit the opportunities from it and respond to the threats and possibly turn them into opportunities. For us to be able to design and implement an effective strategic action plan for peace in Nigeria, the actors in track one

and track two diplomacy should address the current challenge of non complimentary and cross purpose working relationship among them.

The Nigerian experience under the military and even the civilian regimes, betrayed the primary responsibility of the state a conflict manager which has led to the level of trust in government as mediator/ unbiased arbiter to be on a continuous decline. The citizenry sees the government as being partial and already taking side with a party in conflict to a sort of neglect when they do not have interest in the subject matter of the conflict or the parties involved. During the Strategic Conflict Assessment field work, when our team got to Azara in Nasarawa State where they experienced a communal conflict in which the first class traditional ruler of the town and a special Adviser to the Governor was beheaded on his way to the state capital, they said they would not have responded to us as a group from the federal Government because they are fed-up with the unending government interrogations without any action toward addressing the issues involved.

A symbiotic relationship between the government and the non-state actors is the recipe required to deliver the pathway to peace to its logical end. The success of the non-state actors will be short circuited if the root cause of the conflict lies in the policy of government and on which the government is not willing to shift ground, or was not involved by the non-state actors in the process of resolution. Secretary- General Kofi Annan of the United Nation buttresses the importance of partnership in his speech of 23 March, 2001 when he said: “The work for peace is far too important to be left only to decision-makers, politicians and bureaucrats. It is the work of a partnership that must engage everyone” (UPeace Report, 2003)

Without prejudice to the above core challenge to action plan for peace above, there are other challenges to the government and non-state actors in Nigeria which include the following:

- One of the challenges to designing and implementing strategic action plan is the proliferation of institutions that command public opinion such as the traditional institutions, the religious groups and the political elites. In a situation where their interest goes contrary to the peace plan, they could frustrate its implementation.
- Most Nigerians are yet to break out of their primordial shell of identity (ethnic and religious) and regional egoism (ego promotion) to the detriment of nationalism. This development has tended to pose difficulty in developing an acceptable Nigerian dispute resolution mechanism.
- There is also the problem of donors discontinuing funding of an intervention due to change mandate or their home foreign policy focus or defining of new interest target elsewhere or in the same country or what may simply be termed donor fatigue. This is a challenge that most Nigerian NGOs are yet to overcome because most of them depends on external donors and do not have supportive investment ventures to fall back on. General Ishola Williams(rtd) describe this sought of problem in the African society as AIDS – Acute International Donor Dependency Syndrome. The situation is now more disturbing when we observe the uncoordinated huge sum of money being expended by the federal government in the external intervention in West Africa and its fire brigade approach to the provision of relief materials to victims and internally displaced persons within the country without articulate strategies for conflict prevention

and management through a coordinated policy for both internal and external interventions. The efficiency and effectiveness of such unplanned investment on the desired result and the national economy are counter productive. After the display of such a lavish spending suggesting the status of a state with affluent economy, the federal government agencies returned to competing with NGOs in seeking financial support from the external donors for internal projects. The outright negotiation of loan by the federal government at other times for capacity building projects such EMCAP (Economic Empowerment Advancement Project for the Judiciary) that can be carried out using government facilities and resources also challenges the government efficient use of its funds.

The bane of it all is the wanton cultures of corruption both in the state and non-state sectors. The occurrence of violent conflicts provides the basis for corrupt practices in the name of conflict management and seeking solutions against relapse. NGOs are also accused of lacking transparency or and outright unable to account for grants by foreign donors.

Conclusive Remarks

The field of Peace and Conflict is not only fast growing but actors are adopting a plethora of techniques in designing and managing conflicts. Like the business industry, the need for advance good practice in the field of conflict management is more relevant now than ever. Strategic planning is one of the tools that the business entrepreneurs have employed in being able to cope with the changing nature of the business environment. Today, the pathway to sustainable peace is becoming more complex; the underlining causes of conflicts are now beyond struggle for unfulfilled needs, security needs, identity, recognition, and cross-border influence to those people that can be referred to as conflict entrepreneurs – who gain by generating conflict.

In managing conflict, it is important to understand the complementary and contradictory role of, and relationships between, state and non-state actors. The challenge of designing and implementing strategic action plan for peace in Africa has a lot to do with the key actors not collaborating in the work of peace and security. Thought leadership must come from the government in providing enabling working environment for coordination and collaboration with all stakeholders, NGOs should be included as partners in progress. To achieve a sustainable plan for peace to be effective, there must be a carefully designed early warning and early response mechanism that will be comprehensive, holistic and inclusive of all actors, both state and non-state. It is important to acknowledge the support of the international communities in sustaining the efforts of the NGOs that provided the avenue for the experts to show case their expertise and experience.

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