

AN ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNANCE DYNAMICS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON
CONFLICT IN AFRICA

BY

FEMI RAPHAEL KOLAWOLE

AND

SALEH DAUDA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FACULTY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

YAKUBU GOWON UNIVERSITY, ABUJA

NIGERIA

Email: femirkolawole@gmail.com

0806 260 8242

Abstract

The study carried out a critical assessment of Governance dynamics and their effect on Conflict in Africa. The paper was informed by the prevalent and unending conflict situations in Africa. The objective of this paper is to examine how governance in Africa contribute to the prevalence of conflict in the continent. The study was carried using basically secondary source of data. The Human Needs theory was adopted as the study theoretical framework. Findings from the study revealed that historical issues such as colonial legacies, colonial fragmentation of African states and lack of social contract between the independent ethnic groups to coexist lead to ethnic chauvinism that resulted in continuous agitation for resources control and political power sharing. The study also discovered that corruption on the part of African leaders lead to their inability to meet human needs. Premise on the findings from the study, it is established that failure of governance to meet human needs has been responsible for the conflict situation in Africa. It is on these findings that the following recommendations are proposed/ All African states should go back to have a round table dialogue on their coexistence, to determine if truly the sub national ethnic groups that made up each country following colonial legacy really want to live together. That social contract on resources control and political power distribution must be signed between sub national ethnic groups to coexist as a country. Also, all African leaders should declare emergence on corruption, there should be capital punishment for corrupt leaders and individuals. And most importantly governance in Africa should be structured in a manner that services the people and not the leaders alone to ensure that human needs are met to ease the tensed African environment.

Key words: Conflict. Corruption, Development, Governance and Human-needs

Introduction

Conflict has inadvertently become a second face of African countries, the perennial, continuous and unending nature of conflict in Africa has continue to generate concern to both individual and academy scholars. Readings from history and contemporary time revealed that virtually all African countries have had her own share of one conflict or the other ranging from inter border conflict to intra countries conflict and most prevalent in the contemporary time is the intra nations conflict. The majority of the previous and ongoing conflicts are conflict within a country and they are commonly referred to as civil war. These are conflict arising from colonial legacy, ethnic rivalry, ethnic or group perception of marginalisation, structure of government, political differences, leadership tussle, sit tight syndromes, bad governance which birthed, high unemployment rate, high poverty, lack of social amenities, corruption, all which culminated into systemic failure. These has made many scholars to argue that Conflicts in Africa are often rooted in a complex interplay of factors, such as social, economic, and political inequalities, as well as historical grievances. As many countries in Africa face challenges related to historical legacies, such as colonial governance structures and authoritarian rule, the effectiveness of governance systems becomes a key determinant in mitigating conflict and fostering sustainable development. (Kish 2015)

Almost all African countries have experienced some form of conflict. The fragile circumstances and transitions they have experienced, from independence struggles to post-independence conflict, to the search for stability and state building processes, have left scars and unaddressed issues that have created the sources of conflict (Gluhbegovic 2016). In this regard and to mention a few among the previous and ongoing conflicts in African region from the west African countries is the Nigeria Civil war between 1967 and 1970, the Ijaw and Ogoni peoples protest in the Niger Delta region, followed by the militant group, the farmer herders crises and the Boko Haram insurgency have all heated the Nigeria society. the Liberian civil war between the opposing forces and Charles Taylor's government, the Sierra Leone government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the opposition group in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and the eventual military taken over the government of the country. From the northern side is the Libya Civil between the opposing forces against the government of Muammar Gaddafi's government, the Polisario front and the Morocco government, the Egyptian crisis arising from protests, riots, and change of government, the Tunisia protest that led to Arab spring. To the East and southern Africa with the Somalia Civil war since 1991 till date, the Sudan and South Sudan since 2013 till date, the Ethiopian civil war, the Rwanda Genocide

The Burundi Conflict, the Mozambique civil war, the South Sudan conflict, the Kenya post election crises and to the central Africa like Angola civil war, the Democratic of Republic of Congo the Central African Republic conflict and others (Kish 2015).

The revelation that the nature of conflict in African countries shared similar or totally the same cause and causes, outlook and effect, poses serious concern and most worrisomely is the fact that most of these conflicts are post-independence conflict, that is these conflict springs up immediately after the colonial leaders handed over the leadership of these counties to the citizens of for self-rule. And since the exit of colonial rule till date most leaders of African countries have demonstrated shared incompetence, inability and spill over effect of failure to provide leadership and governance that brings about development and or transform to human capital development which has resulted to continuous agitation and conflict in almost all the African countries. (Vasquez 2019).

This study therefore noted that governance issue remains the cataclysm for the perpetual conflict situation in the African region and thus the study is poised to investigate why African countries shared same nature, examine the nature and impact of governance in militating against conflict in Africa. To identify the features of governance and evaluate how governance has contributed to the unending conflict in the African region and in the long run proffer workable recommendations to improve governance in other to militate against continuous conflict in Africa region.

Literature Review

The literature review for the study shall be divided into three segment which include conceptual clarification, empirical review and theoretical framework.

Conceptual Clarification

Governance

Governance could be basically defined as the act of governing presiding or and leading people of a society or a country. It is the process and processes, the composition, structure and practices through which decisions are made and enforced within an organisation or society that include the exercise of political power towards development. According to Lea et al (2020:686) is the activities of governing a country or controlling a company or an organisation. In the view of Menkhaus (2007). governance means the process of decision-making and implementation by which societies manage their resources and make decisions that affect the well-being of their citizens. While according to African Governance Architecture (2019:21) the concept of governance is traditionally linked to ruling and control, specifically the manner of exercise of power. Governance refers to the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels.

“Good governance” has the following major characteristics: legitimacy, where the government has the consent of the governed usually through periodic election (Ameen, 2021), accountability that ensures transparency and answerability for actions, respect for law and protection of human rights, and competence, which consists of effective policy making, policy implementation and service delivery. Conceptual clarification of the concept of governance to this study provides understanding of the meaning, the features and the expectation of the people as they are being governed. Governance therefore explained to be a system operating on a structured set of rules, tradition, norms and institutions that shapes and regulates the behaviour of both the citizens and government in policy formulations and implementation. The concept of governance is divided into two broad terms good and bad governance.

Good Governance: is the positive and beneficial means of governing a country in a way that transform to growth and development of the people and the country at large. Good governance could also mean the process of measuring how state institutions conduct public affairs and manage national resources for the benefit of all and sundry and ensure the actualisation of social and economic growth that transform to development, with the administration of rule of law, human right and supremacy of the constitution, improve standard of living, high employment rate and free of abuse and low corruption index. According to Mbaku (2020) Good governance addresses the underlying causes of conflict by promoting social, political, and economic justice, empowering civil society, and ensuring that different groups and interests are accommodated. This definition of good governance is missing in the African setting and this is responsible for the prevalence of agitation and conflict across the continent. He also submitted that effective governance, characterized by transparency, accountability, and inclusivity, is crucial for preventing and managing conflicts. (Mbaku 2020).

Bad/Poor Governance

Bad governance according to Yagbiyaju and Akinola (2019) is conceived to mean a condition in which the state lacks the capacity and effectiveness in regulatory quality for the eradication of societal challenges such as impoverishment, infrastructural development, corruption, insurgency and terrorism among others. This basically means that the situation refers to as bad governance explain complete systemic failure where government as a machinery of state has failed to address societal needs and lead the state on track of development. While in the view of Dan-Woniwei (2020) the term bad governance is an extreme end condition of failure and collapse of governmental institutions and structures.

Basically, bad governance is the opposite of good governance which explains poor output of governance towards the people and the state at large. Some indicators of bad governance include failure of the system to uphold the rule of law, poor standard of living, poor infrastructures, lack of basic social amenities, high rate of unemployment, corruption, favouritism and nepotism insecurity and low life expectancy. All these indicators are common to virtually all African countries thus created a tensed environment that usually result into conflict. This informed, Ibaba (2020) to express the fact that bad governance is the hallmark of many African countries.

Conflict

The term conflict basically referred to a situation of discord, disagreement and incompatibility of interest by two individuals, groups or states. Conflict as a concept, is ambiguous in nature and devoid of a monolithic or singular definition. That is why Ogunleye (2022) cited in Sheriff and Chubado (2022:100-101) opined that conflict is difficult to define as it occurs in many different settings and in various ways. She therefore posited that the essence of conflict seems to be disagreement, contradiction, or incompatibility. Conflict as used in the study therefore, means the situation arising from tension or disagreement between two or more parties, often resulting from competing interests and struggle over values, resources, status and power distribution.

Development

Development basically means the qualitative increase in growth and transformation of a country through effective governance. In the view of Todaro & Smith (2020) development is defined as “a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty.” Therefore, the term development as used in this study is multidimensional as it encompasses all spheres of human lives from economic, social, and political well as human well-being and capabilities with a sustainable structural transformation and poverty reduction.

The Nature of Governance in Africa

Going through African history, the issue of Governance has become a multifaceted one, and has continued to generate concerns and debates among various scholars and schools of thought. African governance history according to Vasquez (2019) is noted to have been characterized by challenges rooted in historical contexts and contemporary political dynamics. The concept of governance fundamentally relates to the processes, institutions, and interactions through which authority is exercised and public resources are managed, with the

aim of delivering tangible outcomes for society. Adetoye and Omilusi (2016) posited that governance landscape in African countries plays a pivotal role in conflict dynamics. She noted further that absence of 'good governance' practices often correlates with different conflict types, particularly those rooted in deprivation and inequality.

Discussing the root of governance in Africa, Adetoye and Omilusi (2016) submitted that African countries governance landscape has been significantly influenced by historical precedents, particularly the colonial legacy and style of governance that remains with the continent till today. She stressed further that leadership in these nations often mirrors authoritarian models reminiscent of military rule, resulting in governance that lacks genuine democratic engagement despite the existence of parliamentary structures. This explains that fact that there exists wide gap between the leaders and the people of the countries, that is the governance structure is model in a manner that distinguished political office holder from the people outside government. This attested to Walter Rodney argument in his book "How Europe underdeveloped Africa" the structure of governance under the colonial rule was designed in a lords and serfs or better described as kings and slaves' manner. Unfortunately, almost all African countries went through colonialism except for few ones like Liberia and Ethiopia. Worsening the situation was the fact that most of these countries after gaining independence from colonial rule slipped into military rule and those that did not have military rule entered into tight situation where the leader held on to power for as long as they are alive or be removed by a military coup. Some leaders have remained in power since some country's independence, notable ones include Teodoro Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea with 43years in office, Paul Biya of Cameroon has been in office since 1982 making it 42 years in office, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda has spent 29years in office since 1996 just to mention a few and those that held to office until their death and replaced by their sons such as Faure of Togo who succeeded his father in 2005 and has remained in office (Voice of Africa 2022).

Buttressing the above position was Adetula (2015) when he argued that the legacy of colonial governance structures remains significant in many African countries, where authoritarian rule often replicates the military-style governance of the colonial era. This has resulted in political systems that, while nominally democratic, are frequently dominated by presidential decrees and limited parliamentary power. By this, it is of note that, the nature of governance in Africa remains a complex situation as it shared similar outlook and still varies significantly across the continent. the African governance nature is obviously shaped by historical legacies (like colonialism), post-independence state formation, global economic pressures, and local socio-political dynamics. However recent findings revealed a mix of progress and persistent challenges, which include democratization, corruption, state capacity, and the role of

informal institutions. In Meagher's (2018) view he argued that the nature of governance in Africa could be described as Hybrid Governance and Informality where informal institutions, such as customary authorities, monarchy and local networks, play a central role in African governance. Rather than being outside the state, they often intertwine with it to deliver services and maintain order. He noted that

"Governance in Africa is shaped by an informal institutional fabric that sometimes supports but also sometimes undermines state authority" (Meagher's 2018).

Drawing from the above analysis on the structure of governance in African, the traditional monarchical setting of governance is merged with the democratic system thereby making African governance system to operate on hybrid system. Despite the conduct of election under democracy, political offices like the President and Governor are exalted like the king of those days. It is also of note that there exists a wide gap between the people in government (Leaders) and the citizens (followers) the leaders enjoy luxury lives while in office, take advantage of their position to gather wealth for themselves and their generation unborn. The structure of governance in Africa depicts a situation where the leaders are like god and the followers are like slaves, the lifestyles of African leaders do not reflect the true situation of their country. Unfortunately, this same colonial legacy of governance structure is replicated under democratic government. The luxury lifestyle of the leaders has perpetuated the continent to remain under developed, the people have been denied of their rights and privilege, there is high level of poverty, low standard of living, high rate of unemployment and poor infrastructural development.

This situation has led to continuous agitation by the people demanding to change the status quo, tension on the rise and which has resulted into conflict and even military taking over the system of governance in county such as Niger Republic, Mali and Burkina Faso. At every country in Africa people have continue to display their displeasure and frustration towards the nature of governance, this has led to protest and fight in every part of the country, for example the ENDSARS protest in Nigeria, the post-election conflict in Kenya, the Somalia conflict, the ongoing DR Congo just to mention a few.

Impact of Governance on Conflict in Africa

Having established the fact that the nature of the structure of governance in Africa remains the primary root cause of conflict in the region, however, this situation has birthed other factors that have worsening Africa situation. These factors have contributed in perpetuating conflict in Africa, ranges from the inability of successive African leaders to break the dichotomy created by the colonial master, the colonial master employed divide and rule style

to administer most African countries, by harmonising independent regions to ease their administration. This harmonisation or amalgamation as it is fondly called saw the colonial masters harmonising the lands and territory without the people. There is hardly any country in Africa where the different independent ethnic group had a social contract to coexist, they were forced to be together for ease of colonial administration this situation therefore resulted into perpetual regional and ethnic agitation, perennial feeling of marginalisation and feeling of unequal representation in the seat of government always generate tension and eventual conflict between the government and opposing ethnic group, such is the Nigerian civil war (Biafra war), the Rwanda genocide, the Liberia civil war Sudan and South Sudan civil war, the Central Africa republic war, the Somalia conflict and several others.

This has made Adetoye and Omilusi (2016) to submit that conflicts in Africa are often categorized into intra-state and inter-state conflicts, with underlying issues including inter-ethnic strife over issues or marginalisation, unequal representation in political offices, resource control, infrastructural distribution political transitions, and struggles for civil rights. She noted that most importantly, the historical context of colonialism plays a crucial role in shaping these conflicts, as artificial borders and ethnic divisions persistently ignite tensions (Adetoye and Omilusi 2016).

Scholars from similar and varied school of thought have put forth several arguments on the cross relationship between governance and conflict in Africa. In the words of Kish (2015), he posited that the intricate relationship between governance practices and the prevalence of various forms of conflict across Africa continent. Governance, which encompasses the processes and institutions through which authority is exercised and public resources are managed, is essential to understanding socio-political stability in African nations. He noted further that many African countries face challenges associated with historical legacies, such as colonial governance structures, ethnic rivalry and authoritarian rule. It is against this backdrop that effectiveness of governance systems in Africa remains a key determinant in mitigating these perennial conflicts and fostering sustainable development (Kish 2015).

While in his own view Gilpin (2015:21) argued that among the factors that perpetuate conflict in Africa are Weak governance, historical animosities, exclusionary politics, contested legitimacy, resource competition, external factors, globalized conflicts and extremist ideologies have all combined to create various episodes and layers of conflict across the African continent since most countries gained independence in the 1960s. These unending wars has resulted to loss of millions of lives and violence has cost African countries billions as a result of wanton destruction and foregone economic gains, in spite of numerous

attempts to foster sustainable peace and have retarded the continent development. This position was shared by Vasques (2019) when he submitted that weak governance, characterized by corruption, lack of accountability, and insufficient citizen participation, as a significant factor contributing to political exclusion and economic marginalization, which in turn exacerbate social tensions and conflict risks in the African region.

Douglas (2021) in his own view stated that a closer examination of the nature of conflicts in Africa occurs in two major categories which include intra-state and inter-state conflicts. He buttressed further that these categories of conflict could be divided into six specific folds such as inter-ethnic conflicts, inter-state conflicts, liberation conflicts, civil rights conflicts, annexationist conflicts, and political transition conflicts. Douglas (2021) this explains that, conflicts in Africa are deeply rooted in both historical and contemporary issues, with a significant emphasis on the colonial legacy that has shaped many of the continent's challenges. While some scholars argue that the primary drivers of conflict stem from crises of national governance and the failures of governmental institutions to mediate disputes effectively

Above therefore revealed the fact that Governance and conflict in Africa are closely associated, knitted and combined, with prevalence of bad governance in the region, which often exacerbate or even cause violent conflict. Scholars have examined the relationship between and conflict in Africa from various but related perspectives, including historical lineage, colonial legacy, weak institutions, ethnic politics, corruption, and resource control.

Governance as a Driver of Conflict

Governance as conceptualised above remains the fulcrum that determines the situation of a particular country, good or bad governance will explain the level of stability or instability that such country or region experiences. African countries are known to be experiencing bad governance which attests to the tensed and conflict situation of the countries in the region. This made Fukuyama (2004) opined that Governance deficits or bad governance remains the root cause of conflict in Africa, he expressed that bad governance has long been cited as a foundational cause of conflict in Africa. According to him, state weakness characterized by limited institutional capacity and legitimacy clause renders African states vulnerable to violent conflict. He emphasizes that in many African countries, the state has failed to provide basic services and uphold the rule of law, thus creating space for insurgent movements and civil unrest. His assertion above explains the situation of most African countries the civil unrest in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, Central African Republic, Burundi, Mozambique, DR Congo or the military coup in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger republic alleging democratic

institutions of misleading the country on the path of development. Among the causes of conflict in Africa as a result of governance deficiency include the following.

Identity-Based Governance and Ethnic Politics:

Most African countries are confronted with the problem of national identity; there exist ethnic chauvinist and clan-based identity beyond national identity. The inability of the leadership of African countries post 1960 or since independent to provide good leadership that could address ethnic differences, unite and build common ground for all ethnic groups to be evenly represented in political office and thrive without any feeling of marginalisation such as the situation in Nigeria with the Niger Delta region, the clans in Somalia, the Sudan and South Sudan ethnic conflict, Cote d'ivoire's Civil War, Kenya post electoral violence, the Darfur conflict, Ethiopia ethnic conflict and others just to mention a few. Buttressing on the above, Horowitz (1985) stated these ethnic conflicts are primary stem from colonial legacy, inequitable access to state power and resources, competition for power and resources and social status. He submitted that the instrumentalization of ethnic identity in governance has contributed to conflict across the continent.

Weak Institutions and Fragile States

One of the significant causes of conflict in Africa arising from bad governance is weak institutions and fragile states. The two situations are intertwined in the sense that, weak institutions remain a driving force responsible for state fragility through bad governance and political instability. Rotberg (2002) argued that most issues with weak institutions do stem from geographical or climate situation, physical challenges and economic constraints and that weak institution is as a result of bad governance and absence of rule of law which permeates conflict prone environment across African region. He stressed further that fragile states of African countries are characterised by poor economic and social conditions, such as poverty, and unemployment making the people more susceptible to armed conflict and violence (Rotberg (2004). While Vasquez (2019) corroborated this argument by stating that the lack of good governance and effective institutions always results into tensed environment and violence conflict, that it also breeds social unrest, organise crime and human trafficking, extremism and terrorism this is as a result of economic underdevelopment, poor standard of living or social conditions of the vast majority of the people. This ugly situation exacerbates conflict situation in Africa (Vasquez 2019)

Corruption

Corruption has been identified as the bedrock of social menace and conflict situation in Africa. Corruption by definition connotes unconventional use or diversion of public funds,

office or position for one's favour or to achieve selfish interest. Virtually all African leaders are noted to be perpetuating one form of corruption and the other in their respective countries which has retarded the development of the region. Corruption according to Collier (2007) is widely acknowledged as a major driver of conflict in Africa. He submitted that corruption undermines state legitimacy, fuels grievances, distorts resource distribution, and exacerbates inequality creating fertile ground for political instability and violent conflict. Numerous scholars have explored how corruption not only hampers development but also ignites and sustains conflict across the continent. He argued further that, corrupt practices have fuelled discontent, particularly in ethnically diverse societies, poor governance, especially corruption and lack of accountability, significantly increasing the risk of civil war. This explains the fact that Corruption erodes trust in government institutions, creating widespread dissatisfaction. This disillusionment with state authority, this position was also noted in Klitgaard (1988) submission when he stated that, corruption is a precursor to civil unrest and conflict in African states, especially when citizens perceive that public resources are diverted for private gain. This attest to flamboyant life and abundance of paraphernalia of office enjoy by leaders and political office holders against the economic situation of the citizenry.

Vast majority of the citizens in Africa are in abject poverty, overrides by poor infrastructural development, high rate of unemployment, poor education and health delivery system, poor roads, wide gaps between the people and the leaders, lack of vision on the part of the leaders to provide roadmap for national growth and development and other social vices created the situation of perpetual conflict in Africa.

Further discussion on how corruption deeply contribute to conflict in Africa was offered by Ross (2004) when she argued that corruption goes beyond stealing of public fund. That. it goes with other vices like Ethnic Favoritism and Clientelism, Corruption on Resource distribution, Corruption and Electoral Violence and Corruption in Security Institutions. In this regard corruption therefore, is not merely a symptom of poor governance in Africa but rather the contemporary root and major cause of violent conflict. Corruption has become endemic to Africans it is now being practice by all and sundry and has gradually crept in to be like a way of life for everyone. By this it fosters inequality, undermines trust, delegitimizes political institutions, and incites grievance.

Theoretical Framework

The Human Needs Theory

The study adopts the human needs theory; this theory is one of the social sciences theories that underscore the role of unmet basic needs such as identity, security, and participation as

root causes of conflict. The theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the relationship between governance and conflict in Africa. The theory could be traced to the works of theorists like Abraham Maslow and John Burton.

Central to this theory is the submission that human or individuals possess non-negotiable needs for survival and these needs ranging from basic physiological survival to psychological well-being and identity that must not only be met but be satisfied to prevent social unrest. (Maslow, 1943). The frontiers of this theory posits that in a situation where these fundamental human needs are persistently unmet, and so, individuals and groups are likely to resort to conflict as a means of redress and demanding for their needs to be met (Burton, 1990)

Analysing African situation through the lens of the human needs theory Azar (1990) posited that African countries represent a situation where governance deficits and ethnic divisions are prevalent. He noted that the impact of unmet needs is particularly acute. That Many African states struggle to provide equitable access to resources, political participation, and security conditions that are critical to fulfilling core human needs, he therefore submitted that, the persistent neglect often contributes to civil unrest, inter-communal violence, and state fragility (Azar, 1990). This submission explains that human needs in Africa have not been met as a result of poor or bad governance which is responsible for the unending conflict in the region.

Mkandawire (2001) on his part argued that the legitimacy of governance in Africa depends heavily on a state's ability to meet the fundamental needs of its citizens particularly those related to security, identity, and meaningful political inclusion where governments fail in this regard, grievances escalate, and violent conflict becomes more likely. Human Needs Theory therefore helps explain why inadequate service delivery, feeling of marginalization, and repression trigger deeper societal fractures in many African nations. (Mkandawire 2001) His argument posits that what determines legitimacy of government is its ability to meet human needs and this is critically missing in Africa, many of African leaders suffers legitimacy, most of them are not wholly accepted by the people because of their inability to meet human needs.

This situation is responsible for the continuous demand for change of government, protest across the continent to demand change of government policies and above all is the overthrow of democratic government in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger republic hinging on the fact that the government of these countries have failed to meet the social needs of the people. Mamdani (1996) in his own view attributed the colonial legacy as one of the major drivers of conflict in Africa that colonial fragmentation of African states further compounded

these challenges. He noted that Colonial regimes imposed artificial borders, uneven amalgamation and employed divide-and-rule strategies. This according to him entrenched ethnic rivalries and institutionalizing political exclusion. He therefore submitted that these historical injustices laid the groundwork for post-independence governance systems that often replicate authoritarian tendencies and perpetuate ethnic favouritism. As a result, access to resources and political power has become highly politicized, with ethnic groups frequently mobilizing around perceived deprivation or exclusion (Mamdani 1996)

Relevance of the Human Needs Theory

The human needs theory explains the importance of governance meeting the need of the people as crucial to legitimacy of the government and the stability of the country. Apparently African countries since independent have continued to be in one conflict or the other due to the inability of post independent government to meet the need of the people. Virtually all African countries are lacking behind in terms of real development, there is vast lack of basic human needs for survival ranging from psychological to physiological needs such as food, cloth, shelter, quality and affordable education, quality and affordable health care services, good transportation system, employment, security and other social vices. These lacks created high level of poverty which resulted into criminality and apprehension in the African countries thereby making the environment conflict prone. Part of human needs in the African countries is the eradication of colonial legacies and colonial structure of government. social justice through the rule of law, sincerity on the part of the leader to jettison the selfish interest to drive common growth for all the citizen, remove any form of ethnic marginalisation in terms of resources control and even distribution of power.

Notably according to human needs theorists, if human needs are adequately met, there would be stability and ethnic agitation will fade away. That is, it is because of these unmet needs through bad governance that permeates the unending tensed, unrest and conflict situation in Africa. This made Ayoob, (1995) to submit that Human Needs Theory underscores the importance of inclusive, participatory, and accountable governance structures. Addressing the core needs of diverse ethnic and social groups is essential not only for preventing conflict but also for fostering long-term social cohesion and sustainable development. In multi-ethnic African societies, where governance failures can rapidly escalate tensions, adopting policies that prioritize human security and equitable development is imperative for peace and stability.

Discussion of Findings

Colonial Legacy

One of the major findings in the course of this study is that African countries are deeply affected by colonial legacy, the colonial rule created fragmented states, amalgamated land for ease of administration without the people. Where African independent entities were merged to coexist without a social contract between them, these fragmentations continue to generate conflict on resource control, power sharing arising from prevalent ethnic favouritism and nepotism which heightens the tensed and conflict environment in the region.

Structure of Governance

Findings from this study also revealed that there exists the problem of structure of governance in the continent. The structure of government in Africa is styled in the colonial legacy manner, thereby creating a wide gap in the lifestyle of the leaders and the people. This structure has become practically unaccepted by the people and there have been continuous agitations by the people for review and overhauling of the existing structure of governance for a change.

Corruption

Also, findings revealed that corruption constitutes another major issue discovered to fuel the unending conflict situations in the African continent. It is noted that corruption on the part of the succeeding leaders since post independence has denied the people true development. Most African countries leaders are noted to have used their position to amass stupendous wealth for themselves and their family at the expense of the citizens. Corruption has become so endemic that it has disrupted the fabrics of the African states, it has contributed to the entrenched poverty, insecurity due to massive joblessness, unemployment and obvious hopelessness which has led to continue agitation for change of status quo.

Poor Leadership/Governance

Finally, findings from the study revealed that that there exists outright poor or bad leadership which culminated into poor governance in Africa. There is high level of governance deficit in the region, virtually is all African states succeeding leaders since independence of each state, those under military rule and those that have transferred to democratic government have failed to meet human needs in the region. This led to the unending agitation, tensed environment, continuous conflict over one demand and the other all round the region. Failure of governance remains a cataclysm for the spill over effect of conflict across the region. For

example, the Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and South Sudan are often cited as examples where institutional collapse has led to prolonged conflict.

Conclusion

The unending conflict situation across African region has a direct link with failure of government. The research study revealed that many African leaders have failed to provide governance that meet with human needs and that ensure national development with the assurance for hope for a better tomorrow. Many African countries are ravaging in one conflict and the other, and even military coup in places such as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger Republic and Guinea while those that are not under military rule are in perpetual tensed situation. There is conflict over resources, power sharing, failure to meet human needs such as quality education, good health care, employment, good road and other means of transportation with establishment of rule of law, supremacy of the constitution, free and fair periodical election with the manipulation of the electoral body and process. In the final analysis the study concludes that governance landscape in African countries plays a crucial role in conflict situation and dynamics. It is against this background that the study established that good governance practices often correlate with various conflict types, particularly those rooted in resources deprivation and social inequality. It is therefore of utmost importance to state that the quality of governance in each of these states remains a pivotal determinant of peace and stability in the region. The manner or style in which authority or government power is exercised and how it is viewed by the citizenry affects the legitimacy of political institutions.

Recommendation

Based on the finding that colonial legacy constitutes one of the major reasons for conflict situation in Africa. It is recommended that African leaders should embark on genuine effort to remove all phases of colonial legacy in her governance structure. Also, doing this requires each African country to reflect upon the prevalent governance deficit, challenges and engage in robust national dialogue for social contract between the combining ethnic groups on institutional reforms to enable an effective and inclusive governance system. By this, each of the African countries should come up with a self designed style of governance structure that would address all grievances and navigate each country for peaceful coexistence and economic development, reduce inequality, enhanced regional and national cooperation, as well as ensure the full and effective participation in both the economic and political systems of all groups that have historically been clamouring of being marginalized.

African leaders must be genuine about the fight against corruption, in fact corruption should be prevented and afterwards fought. There should be capital punishment for any corrupt official in a dire manner that would serve as deterrent for others.

Serving and emerging African leaders should embark on development-oriented policies that addresses and meet human needs, allow for supremacy of the constitution and the practice of rule of law, conduct regular, free and fair elections that allows for meritocracy rather than patronage. African leadership recruitment process must be revisited to ensure right candidates emerge under merit and not by patronage of political suitors. Also, corruption must be checked to the barest minimum. Youth and women should be dully involved in governance to reduce agitations for inclusion and protest here and there.

Finally, good governance is essential in militating against the agitations that continuously resulted in conflict situation in Africa. African leaders should embark of short-, medium- and long-term development plans to arrest the development deficit that has put the continent far behind in nations of the people, build infrastructure, create employment opportunities, provide maximum security, invest in massive agriculture to make the continent food sufficiency and reduce hunger, and provide a supporting system where citizens could get answers to their plight and any social constraint. Ensure that no youth is unemployed and those that may not be employed should be getting stipend from government to feed on. By this there would be drastic reduction in agitation and recruitment into conflict groups would be uneasy.

References

Adetoye, D., & Omiluisi, M. O. (2016). The Symmetrical Relationship between Good Governance and Development. *International Journal of Economics and Management*, 4, 572-581.

Adetula, V. A. O. (2015). African Conflicts, Development and Regional Organisations in the Post-Cold War International System. In *The Annual Claude Ake Memorial Lecture* (pp. 1-73). Lecture, NORDISKA AFRIKA INSTITUTE, Uppsala, Swede.

African Governance Architecture (2019). the Africa governance report Promoting African Union Shared Values.

Ameen, A. I. (2021) Securing Credible Elections in Africa through ICT: An Appraisal of Nigeria. *Acta Universitatis Danubius, Relationes Internationales*. Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 5-19. ISSN: 2065-0272.

Ayoob, M. (1995). *The Third World security predicament: State making, regional conflict, and the international system*. Lynne Rienner.

- Azar, E. E. (1990). *The management of protracted social conflict: Theory and cases*. Dartmouth Publishing.
- Burton, J. (1990). *Conflict: Resolution and prevention*. Macmillan.
- Collier, P. (2007). *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford University Press.
- Dan-Woniwei, F. (2020). The Nexus between Poor and Bad Governance, and Sub-National Conflicts in Africa. *Open Journal of Political Science*, **10**, 697-704
- Douglas, K. (2021) "The Impacts of Political Conflicts in Africa," *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies*: Vol. 4: Iss. 2, internet access on 26th April 2025 via Fukuyama, F. (2004). *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. Cornell University Press.
- Gilpin, R. (2019). *Understanding the Nature and Origins of Violent Conflict in Africa*
- Gluhbegovic, R (2016). *Types of Conflict in Africa: How do the APRM Reports Address Conflict?*EISA Occasional Paper Ap8.
- Horowitz, D. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press.
<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jacaps/vol4/iss2/4>
- Ibaba, S. I. (2020). *Rethinking the Narrative: Oil, Federalism and Development in the Niger Delta*. In 5th (Combined) Convocation Lecture (pp. 1-77). Niger Delta University (NDU) Publishing Ltd.
- Kish, R (2015) *Good Governance' and Conflict in Africa Region: the empirical analysis of the impact of governance on conflict in Africa* internet access on 26th April 2025 via <http://acleddata.com/2015/08/07/good-governance-and-conflict-in-africa/>
- Klitgaard, R. (1988). *Controlling Corruption*. University of California Press.
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton University Press.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*(4),370–396.
- Mbaku J M (2020). *Good and inclusive governance is imperative for Africa's future: Global Economy and Development Africa Growth Initiative*.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/good-and-inclusive-governance-is-imperative-for-africas-future/>
- Meagher, K. (2018). *Working with the grain? Informal institutions and the state in Africa*. *African Affairs*, *117*(469), 507–525.
- Menkhaus, K. (2007). *Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping*. International Security.

Mkandawire, T. (2001). Thinking about developmental states in Africa. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 25(3), 289–314.

Ogunleye. E.G. (2022). “Conflict in Central Asia:an analysis of distrust in international relations” in Sheriff G. I and Chubado B.T. (2022). ed. *Theories of International Relations*” in Sheriff G.I. *Theories of International Relations and Practical Realities of world Politics*: Digital Link Xtra Ltd, Abuja.

Ross, M. L. (2004). What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War?" *Journal of Peace Research*,

Rotberg, R. I. (Ed.). (2004). *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Princeton University Press

Todaro, M. P., & Smith, S. C. (2020). *Economic Development* (13th ed.). Pearson.

Vasquez E (2019). *Understanding Conflict Incidence in Africa: The Role of Governance Institutions (1998–2016)* Universidad del Pacifico, Peru - Department of Economics; Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals – IBEI

Voice of Africa (2022). African’s current longest Serving Leaders

Yagboyaju, D. A. & Akinola, A. O. (2019). *Nigerian State and the Crisis of Governance: A critical Exposition*. SAGE Open.