Readings
in Peace & Conflict
Studies

Edited by:

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Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and deeply appreciate the progressive and proactive stance of the Chancellor, Dr. David Oyedepo on research and development. His very disposition to academic excellence and human capacity development berthed the conception and construction of the University platform on which we operate and on which we have been able to put this text together. We owe God all the debt and accord Him all the glory for giving us a person like our Chancellor.

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This book has passed through important phases, first of which was the conception by a team of the lecturers that anchored GST 222 (Peace and Conflict Studies), a university-wide course for which the text is primarily published. These teachers from the host Department of Political Science and International Relations, and other departments, including Sociology, Psychology and Mass Communication, have tirelessly handled the course for over six years. It was their idea to commit the taught course into writing so as to produce a reliable source-material for the course. We thank God for His Exceeding Grace and Unspeakable Gifts as the Department leap-frogs into realizing the objectives of *Visibility, Relevance and Distinction*, which give it a direction in meeting the Vision of 1 of 10 in 10 of the University.

We are also grateful to the publishers and the entire crew that worked to see to the final production of the text. Without them, the book would have remained a concept in the minds of men.

About The Editors

Professor Kayode Soremekun is a seasoned expert in Oil Politics, Foreign Policy and Conflict Studies. He was the immediate past Dean of the College of Development Studies at Covenant University. Professor Soremekun's experience as a university teacher began at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, from where he proceeded to chair the Department of Political Science at the University of Lagos) and has spanned over 30 years.

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Chapter Four:
Life Cycle of Conflict

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and

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Introduction
A painstaking analysis of human history brings to the fore the fact that conflict has been unending affliction of humanity (Nwolise, 2004). Scholars like Nnoli (1998) see conflict as an integral aspect of social existence and progress. This is not unconnected with the fact that conflict is ubiquitous in social life and also serves as a pedestal for understanding

social existence which is why the Marxist oriented scholars claimed that to understand society is to understand social conflict as history of a society cannot be conceived outside conflict resolution. Nnoli (1998) opines that, there cannot be progress without conflict resolution because most societal problems are contradictions and conflicts that impede social progress which when resolved can push society forward towards increased humanity.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that conflict is inescapable in the affairs of human, conflict only becomes problematic when it is not well managed (i.e eliminating its negative effects and maximising its positive aspects) and its explosion degenerates into violence. Although analysis on the positive and negative effects of conflict is not within the scope of this chapter, however it is necessary to state that conflict has both good and bad sides. This chapter explains the life cycle of conflict, purposes, typologies and causes.

Conceptualising Conflict
According to Chafe (1994), the primary requirement for discussing a thing is to first understand the actual thing being talked about. From this

premise, it is germane to first conceptualise conflict. It is necessary to understand that like other social science concepts, conflict is an omnibus term that does not lend itself to a universally acceptable definition. Thus, there are plethora of definitions of the concept. However, only few of them will be considered. Before looking at the concept of conflict, it is important to state that the word conflict has a Latin origin from the word *conflictus* meaning "struck together". Conflict simply means clash, confrontation, a battle or struggle, controversy or quarrel (Nwolise, 1997). Animaswaun, (2008:2) sees conflict "as an adversarial relationship involving at least two individuals or collective actors over a range of issues such as resources, power, status, values, goals, relations or interests". To Coser, 1968 (quoted in Otite, 2001:2);

> Social conflict may be defined as a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals. Such conflicts may take place between individuals, between collectivities, or between individuals and collectivities. Intergroup as well as intragroup conflicts are perennial features of social life.

In the same vein, the concept of conflict is explained as a situation in which incompatible goals develop between persons, groups or nations (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000). Lund (1997:2) gave a comprehensive definition of conflict. According to him:

> conflict is present when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or ... pursue their interests through actions that damage the other parties. These parties may be individuals, small or large groups and countries.

Thus, to Lund, interests can contrast in many ways:
- Over resources- territory, money energy sources, food- and how they can be
    distributed,
- Over power- how control and participation in political decision-making are
    allocated,

- Over identity- concerning the cultural, social and political communities to
  which people feel tied, and
- Over status- particularly those embodied in systems of governance, religion
  or ideology.

It can be deduced from the various definitions above and from extant literature that conflict may be generated as a result of two individuals or actors or groups pursuing compatible goals; i.e. two individuals or groups struggling for the possession or control of a resource which cannot be shared (e.g. the position of the president of the nation) thereby making the contest to assume a zero-sum game.

Conversely, conflict may be brewed when two actors or groups pursue incompatible goals. That is to say two actors strive to achieve goals that are at variance with each other. E.g. the conflict between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Nigerian Labour Congress (N.L.C.) on the increase of fuel pump price in 2012. The Federal Government of Nigeria wanted to increase fuel pump price to around #140, while the N.L.C. wanted to maintain status quo (that is the price should remain as it was before). This incompatible goals invariably generated conflict which was eventually resolved through dialogue after reaching a saddle point in which no side was worst off. It is pertinent to state that perception is very central to the subject of conflict. This is because opponent's intentions are often dictated by their subjective perceptions. There could be a means of resolving a dispute before it degenerate to open confrontation, but if the disputants perceived the dispute as impossible to resolve or fail to trust opponent in reaching a truce, then resolution of conflict becomes a tall order.

Having looked at the meaning of conflict, it is pertinent to state that conflict varies in causes, intensity and as well as the result. To this end, it will be worthwhile to briefly consider some typologies of conflict.

Types of Conflict
This section is a discussion on types of conflict as extrapolated from the works of McGinnis (1999) and Alonge, (2005):

Communal Conflict: this type of conflict is limited to a people within a community. At other times, it could be conflict between two groups of people living within the same community like the Ife-Modakeke or conflict between two communities sharing boundaries together.

Inter-Ethnic or Ethnic Conflict: this happens when differences among different ethnic groups serve as a basis for competition for resources, thereby, resulting in conflict.

Internal Conflict: this simply refers to conflict within a country e.g the Nigeria civil war, Sudan conflict that eventually paved way for the creation of the South Sudan as an independent country, Rwanda conflict {between Hutus majority and the Tutsi minority etc}

International Conflict: this type of conflict involves so many countries at the same time. The First and Second World War are good examples.

Political Conflicts: the conflict motivated by competition for political offices, or inspired by public policies or other political related issues can be classified as political conflict.

Economic based Conflict: are often propelled by violent contest for economic resources.

Religious Conflicts: this happens when people of different religious persuasion disrespect what each other stand for.
It is necessary to stress that the above typologies should not be seen as a straight jacket explanations as there can be combination of two or more of them in a particular conflict.

Causes of Conflict
Animasawun (2008) opines that conflicts do not occur without reasons and causes. Albeit, while some may not be known immediately, however, careful and skilful analyses of causes of conflict will be of immense help in transforming conflict. The above brings to the fore the necessity of looking at some of the causes of conflict briefly. In

Omoluabi (2001:4), fundamental causes of conflict include the follow:

a Control over Scarce Resources: it is a well known fact that resources are very essential to survival. Different parties often struggle to appropriate perceived scarce resources to themselves or their groups so as to guarantee self/groups survival which quite frequently engenders conflict. The scarcity is perceived because individual/groups get far less than what they need. Thus, in the process of appropriating more resources to themselves to the detriment of others, conflict often ensures.

b. Incompatibility of Values: when social groups exhibit different and incompatible values and ideas on the same issue in their interaction, conflict often result because each party regards its values and ideas to be superior.

c. Belief System: Differences in belief system often make people within the social system unable to rationally appreciate the good in other people's belief systems. This often precipitate conflict.

d. Preferences: Differences in preferences in interpersonal and intergroup interactions may jeopardize harmonies, social interaction, thereby, providing a leeway for conflict.

e. Nature of Relationship between Parties: psychological differences in form of differences in socio-economic, cultural, backgrounds, expectation, etc. among parties are often noticeable during interaction and may serve as veritable sources of conflict.

f. Status Struggle: Need for self-esteem is basic to most human beings. This is why people struggle for positions of high status and prestige. Members of a given group do find themselves at different levels in a status hierarchy: those who are not satisfied with their levels often cause conflict in their bid to dethrone others from their ascribed or achieved levels/position on the hierarchy.

g. Power Influence: it has been observed that human beings often crave for power especially in group settings. (to be the leader of a group). Be it as it may, one of the members of a group will eventually become the group leader. The process leading to the emergence of a leader in a group at times may be occasioned with conflicts which may or may not be violent. In the same vein, conflict can equally arise when members of a group perceived their leader to be abusing his/her power.

Having looked at some of the causes of conflict, it is necessary to now focus our attention on the nucleus of this paper which is the "Life Cycle of Conflict".

Life Cycle of Conflict
It is important to pay attention to the origins, development, and life cycle of conflict as well as the factors that could lead to escalation and de-escalation, attitudes, behaviours, situations, goals and values that influence individuals' interaction and intervention styles (Byrne and Senehi, 2009). That is why Swanstron and Weissmann (2005:9) agree that:

> A conflict is not a static situation, but a dynamic one- the intensity level changes over a conflicts' life cycle. An understanding of the conflict life cycle is essential for an understanding of how, where and when to apply different strategies and measures of conflict prevention and management.

Having seen the relevance of the life cycle of conflict to conflict resolution, it can be explicated that the life cycle of conflict denotes the process of gradual and continuous changes of conflict from its emergence to escalation, de-escalation and terminates at its successful transformation. It is a loop joining the different phases of conflict together. Put differently, life cycle of conflict gives a purview of distinct stages through which a conflict passes through, at times repeatedly before resolution. Thus, the life cycle of conflict is often represented by a "wave-like timeline" (Lederach, 2005:43), or a "smoothly curving bell" (Lund, 1996:40) or takes the form of U shape or an upside-down U (Swanstrom and Weisman, 2005).
It is essential to state at this juncture that there are different models of life cycle of conflict; (Dudouet, 2006); United States Institute of Peace USIP (n.d); Swanstrom and Weissmann (2005); Oyeshola (2005). A comprehensive model that encompasses the ideas of the aforementioned authors is however given in this chapter. It uses the diagram of the United State Institute of Peace. Figure 1 below details the diagram of the life cycle of conflict.

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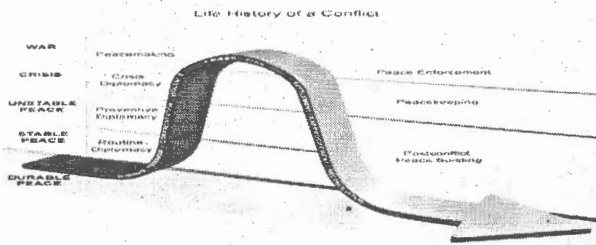
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Life History of a Conflict

Source: United States Institute of Peace (n.d) http://www.usip.org

The first stage in conflict cycle is christened *Durable Peace*. At this level, there is a high level of trust, reciprocity and cooperation within or between groups or nations as the case may be. This stage is characterised by free flow of communication channels, cooperation on a wide range of issues, misunderstanding or dispute are prevented, managed or resolved through institutionalised mechanism. Thus, the possibility of violent breaking out at this stage ranges from minimal to non-existent. Examples of this stage include; the relationship between the United States and Canada, Nigeria and Ghana.

The Durable Peace stage is followed by the second stage the Stable Peace as indicated in diagram in figure 1. In the second stage there is still free flow of communication between the various groups, tension between the groups or parties is low and there exists different forms of connection and cooperation between them which may include economic and environmental cooperation although sensitive issue-areas are often not included. In addition, conflicts may exist but are mostly latent and are often resolved in a nonviolent way, but the point must be made that conflicts at this level are less predictable than at durable peace. Czechoslovakia Republic and Slovakia relationship is a good example of the stable peace.

The third stage of conflict is the phase of *Unstable Peace*. One of the noticeable features of this stage is the rising level of suspicion. Conflict begins to take shape as the differences between parties become clearly

management of conflict can be achieved. Although political, economic and social tools may be used to tone down on the willingness of the opponent's to fight, yet military means are often the primary tools often used at this stage. The actors have to fight things out until they reach a so-called hurting stalemate. Before reaching a hurting stalemate, both parties are often reluctant in allowing external intervention. The hurting stalemate connotes three possible situations; (a) a stage in which each side matches the other in violence (b) a surge of violence on one side (c) exhaustion of strength and resources on both sides (called the mutually hurting stalemate).

In situation (a), the spiral of violence may bring it to a halt at a particular level in which both side keep up. Situation (b) may bring about a change especially the increase in the power of one side can lead to a change in the tactics of the other opponent. This may bring to the fore the repeat of earlier stages of the conflict. If at this stage one of the warring parties decides to withdraw, since the conflict has not been addressed it may resuscitate again. However situation (c) in which both parties are now tired and fed up of the situation and there is an external intervention canvassing for political settlement, or that the parties should accept assistance of one or more third parties to drive home the need for shifting grounds on their initial demands in light of the human and material cost of warfare will automatically orchestrate the stage for the next phase of the cycle.

The next stage, though not in the diagram is referred to as *Looking for a way out*. At this stage, both parties in conflict become unhappy with the state of things. Coping with many losses, on one hand and dwindling resources on the other hand without achieving any result may eventually lead to ceasefire agreements. The situation can bring about a pause in the perpetuation of conflict, often used for resting and regrouping before relapsing to earlier stages of conflict again. Sooner or later both parties decide that ending the conflict is an issue they must both address. A third party can be introduced to mediate and negotiate. The mediator would have to talk to each side separately without bringing the leaders of the warring groups together at this level.

The next stage is *settling and resolving the conflict*. It is a phase in which parties in conflict seek to resolve their differences. Leaders of both parties are brought together by the mediating group. The primary role of a mediator is to facilitate dialogue between the two parties in a conflict so as to bring about resolution of the conflict. Settlements are often associated with compromise which may result in hot arguments over what the compromises will be. At times, settlement may not lead to permanent solution but at least establish the ways in which either side is prepared to end the conflict in the meanwhile. However, at resolution, the underlying causes of conflict are dealt with so as to forestall future occurrence. Although complete resolution of conflict may be difficult after great hostility, however, with the passage of healing time this can be attained provided everyone aimed at it

The last stage is *"working together"*. Agreements struck during settlement and mediation is put into effect. At this stage, homes are rebuilt, jobs taken away as a results of feuding between two parties are restored, fighters are disarmed, refugees return to their homes. The warring parties at this stage may embark on collaboration projects. For example if the conflict is between two communities at this stage they may share community schools, health centres, markets, build bridges and culverts as well as other social utilities together. To reach this stage there is need for courage and patience.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the life cycle of conflict. In doing so, attempt is also made to examine the concept, typologies and causes of conflict. It is necessary to emphasise as pointed out during the discussion on the various stages of conflict that conflict may deviate from the cycle by repeating phases, depending on the nature of the conflict and disposition of the parties in conflict. In addition, conflict may stay at a particular stage or stages for an extended period of time. It is also important to state that it is possible for conflict to end before reaching the last stage after a long period of low violence. On a concluding note however, while conflict is an integral part of social existence, its effective management could have positive impact on the society.

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About the Book

The book represents another attempt to enrich the literature of peace and conflict studies. It attempts this by the thematic approach, which will aid the teaching and learning of basic concepts, theories and issues in peace and conflict. Specifically, the book constitutes an introductory text for the teaching of peace and conflict studies in Nigerian higher institutions.