

CONFLICT OF CULTURES, PEACE AND UNIVERSAL COMMUNALISM

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Abstract

Peace is a necessary condition for the development and growth of man in his society. But this peace can be thwarted and scuttled by man's "kill-peace" culture, which has the elements of injustice, hatred, selfishness and tendency to self preservation, among others. Anyone conscious of the happenings in the world, cannot but observe that some part of the world no longer enjoys the state of tranquility because of conflict of cultures in the society. These have affected millions of people and have ensued in lost opportunities relative to economic development, persistent poverty and inequality amongst some world citizens. Above all are the insecurity and the death these have caused. Thus, this paper attempts to highlight and examine religious violence, poverty, ethnicism, war and terrorism, kidnapping, political violence, colonialism and their various manifestations in the world, making Nigeria a case study among few other nations. It also seeks to transform, reintegrate and re-orientate the minds of men and women, to embrace peace by practicing universal communalism. This is because; it makes a peaceful, progressive and harmonious coexistence in the society.

Keywords: Conflict, Culture, Peace, Universal Communalism.

Introduction

In his Nobel Peace Prize address Martin Luther King Jr. (1964) writes: "we live in a day, says the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead when civilization is shifting its basic outlook: a major turning point in history where the presuppositions on which society is structured are being analyzed, sharply challenged, and profoundly changed". This is the situation the world system finds itself today. We live in a world; where "might is right"; that is torn by division, injustice, poverty, and strife; a world of culture conflict where our pattern and way of life is inhuman, unfair, deceptive and wrong. Decrying the situation, one writes: that the world economic order encourages trade mainly among the wealthy nations, which emphasizes efficiency as the supreme law of economics and dismisses morality from trade; elevating self-interest to a moral virtue in the accumulation of wealth, while ignoring the resultant poverty and misery of over one billion people in a section of the world and leaves much to be desired (Ugorji, 2014:41).

Thus, this condition of the world has become worrisome and needed to be remedied by building a peace and developmental processes. Little wonder, Peace and Collaborative Development Network (2014) suggests; creating peace in one's personal life; change in Global priorities; additional training/education on conflict issues; engaging in productive dialogue with others; fostering sustainable economic development among others. Therefore, this paper seeks to transform, reintegrate and reorient the minds of the world citizen through the philosophy of peace know as Universal Communalism.

Concept of Culture Conflict

Also known as conflict of culture refers to a kind of friction or discord that arises within a group especially when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are resisted by or not acceptable to one or more members of another group (Wikipedia, 2017). From the above definition conflict could be intra-group and inter-group. It is defined as a situation whereby there are opposing demands or ideas that brings about making a choice. (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2017). Thus, conflict means a state of friction, discord, collision, opposition, disagreement, contradiction, within or among a group of people. On the other hand, Culture according to Emenanjo (2000:5) is the totality of the ways of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment which gives order and meaning to their social, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and models of organization. For Okoro (2005:163) culture offers people a configuration of meanings and behavioural norms. It controls their perception of things, programmes, their thinking and acting, and bestows on them the much desired and cherished identity.

Accordingly, culture conflict refers to the conflict of behavior patterns and values that occur when different cultures are incompletely assimilated especially the conflict that finds expression in high level of criminality and delinquency (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2017). So, it is a kind of conflict that happens as a result of clash or differences of cultural values and believes within a society. Consequently, conflict of culture could be seen as unfair and wrong ways of life by people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and models of organization. It is an unjust, deceptive, and wrong pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior in the society. Here, culture conflict is likened to the "negatives" which are shunned in Martin Luther King Jr. concept of the "World House". This "World House" is the world in which everyone lives

together. Thus, in the "World House" he admonishes all to; transcend tribe, race, class, nation, and religion to embrace the vision of a world house; eradicate at home and globally the triple evils of racism, poverty, and militarism; curb excessive materialism and shift from a "thing"- oriented society to a "people"- oriented society; and resist social injustice and resolve conflicts in the spirit of love embodied in the philosophy and methods of non violence (Martin Luther King Jr: 1964).

Furthermore, Culture conflict is akin to Thomas Hobbes concept of "State of Nature". The state of nature in the thinking of Hobbes was a state in which men lived prior to the setting up of organized society. In that state there were no laws, no authority, no morality and no sense of justice or injustice. Here, it lacked the central sovereign power, life was precarious, for human nature was predominantly egoistic, and man will do anything that seemed to him necessary for self preservation, no one will act on that maxim that will militate against self-preservation. To drive this point home, Hobbes opines that an invader has no more to fear than man's single power, if one plants, sows, builds or possesses a convenient seat, others may come with force in order to dispossess and deprive him, not only of his fruit of labour, but also of his life or liberty. And this invader may be attacked by another invader (Hobbes, 1963: 85). Here, Popkin et al (1969: 64) observes that in the state of nature "conflicts always break out among them in the effort to satisfy their desires at the expense of others. Thus, for Hobbes (1963: 8) state of nature becomes a state of continual fear, and danger of violent death, where the life of man becomes solitary, poor, nasty, and brutish and short. This really reflects the culture conflict where individuals are driven by their egoistical, instinctual nature struggle for power, glory and security.

Following the above, culture conflict becomes the unjust, inhuman and wrong pattern of behavior and activities of men in the society. These kinds of life are experienced politically, economically, religiously, socially, globally, and are driven by injustice, hatred, selfishness, individualism and tendency to self preservation. Let's consider some manifestations of the unjust culture having Nigeria as a case study and few other nations.

Manifestation of Culture Conflict

Conflict of culture is visibly expressed and experienced through; poverty, sex and child trafficking, political violence, colonialism, gender inequality, racism/ethnicism, religious violence, Terrorism, cultism, kidnapping, theft, war, murder among others.

Religious Violence

It is a situation that involves the use of provocative words, quarrelling, fighting occasioning harm, maiming, killing and so on between opposing religious parties (Ofoegbu, 2014:35). In African countries especially Nigeria there are African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity. African traditional religion here refers to the indigenous religion of Nigeria, whose scriptures and fundamental principles are non- documented. Islam is the religion of the Muslims, which is largely practiced in Northern Nigeria and it is very uncompromising in the totality of its claims for authority over all aspects of life (Agi, 1998: 17). On the other hand, Christianity is the religion of the Christians, who pay ultimate allegiance to God Almighty who is seen to be beyond this sinful world. In Nigeria due to certain circumstances some of these religions have often clashed, thereby giving rise to very serious consequences. These clashes or violence in Nigeria may be seen as intra religious violence or inter religious violence. Amidst all the causes of religious violence, one may observe that ignorance, poverty, fanaticism, and the hegemonists or opportunist exploration of religion for political ends is the major cause of the violence. And these portray an unjust culture which is detrimental to national stability and development of Nigeria in particular and the world at large.

Poverty

It deals with general scarcity, dearth, or the state of one who lacks certain amount of material possessions or money (Merriam-Webster Dictionary: 2013). The people in this state are burdened with hardships, starved and are homeless. The poor are exposed to greater personal and environmental health risks, are mal nourished, have less information and are less able to access health care; they thus have a higher risk of illness and disability (World Health Organisation:2015). The World Bank global monitoring report forecasts that “about 702.1 million people were living in extreme poverty in 2015, down from 1.75 billion in 1990” (World Bank:2015). This kind of unjust culture, result from the action of the leaders of rich countries, multinational corporations, institutions, and influential people,

while the poor nations and their people are powerless (Shah:2014). Hence, this poverty and inequality must be addressed for the good of everyone in the society.

Ethnicism

Ethnicity connotes the interaction among members of a diverse groups and the concept of ethnicism denotes ethnic loyalty, which is a feeling of attachment to one's ethnic group. It involves a degree of obligation which is often accompanied by a rejective attitude towards those regarded as outsiders. One may observe that based on the heterogeneous ethnic social formation of Nigeria, there have been a high potentiality of lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and in addition a high tendency towards violent confrontations for various reasons which have contributed to the failure of Nigeria as a nation. For instance, in some parts of Nigeria, ethnicity has employed the weapon of ethnic military that has led to unnecessary killing of members of other ethnic groups. Other groups have employed the weapon of serious blackmail backed by threats of more serious action to be taken in order to redress real or perceived marginalization. No wonder Nnoli (1978: 176) in his *Ethnic Politics* captures the colouration of Nigerian politics with ethnicism thus:

Most Nigerians have come to believe that unless her own men are in government they are unable to secure those socio-economic amenities that are disbursed by the government. Hence governmental decisions about the siting of industries, the building of roads, awards of scholarships, and appointments to positions in public services, are closely examined in terms of their benefits to various ethnic groups in the country.

Drawing from above, one cannot deny the fact that this is an existing status quo in Nigeria which reflects culture of conflict and these have implications for national development, peace and security of Nigeria among the comity of nations.

War and Terrorism

War is a state of armed conflict between societies. It is generally characterized by extreme collective aggression, destruction, and usually high mortality (War:2015). It also involves state of hostility, conflict and antagonism among people. Report has it that for about hundred years now, the United States of America has sent about 39 million Americans to fight in wars. Among this

number about 631,000 people have been killed, while more than 1,224,000 have been wounded or maimed (Adams:2013). This conflict of culture has been a serious occurrence in nations like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ukraine, South Sudan, Israel/Gaza, Somalia, and Yemen among others. It has caused a lot of death, injury of people, loss of economic resources, destruction of the environment, loss of productivity among nations and people.

Accordingly, United Nation (1999) defines terrorism as any act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act. It is also seen as the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies. It is believed that this is motivated by religious, political, or any ideological beliefs and committed in the pursuit of goals that are political (Department of Defense Dictionary:2015). Terrorism therefore is a conflict of culture that is very cruel and deadly, it only produces people who are morally and psychological diminished. De Petris (2014) observes that the 5 deadliest terrorist groups in the world are; the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps- Quds Force, Haqqani Network, and Kataib Hezbollah. This group has done no good but harm to the society, even to the extent of destruction of lives and properties. Hence, there is the need for a peaceful reconstruction of our society, through the propagation of philosophy of peace (Universal Communalism).

Kidnapping

This is the crime of forcibly abducting a person from his or her own home and sending the person to another place, but often this is done with a demand for ransom. According to Adibe (2015), kidnapping is the taking away of a person against the person's will, and usually for ransom or in furtherance of another crime. For instance, in Nigeria it has become lucrative to be a big business for militants, unemployed, swindlers and greedy people. It spreads from the Niger Delta to all nooks and crannies of the country. The victims of kidnapping were first the foreign oil workers and later extended to Nigerians, including grandparents, parents, children or any person who has a relative that could be made to pay a ransom. Kidnapping later assumed dangerous dimension whereby wives would want to fleece their husbands of their hard-earned money

by organizing their own kidnapping and share the loot with kidnappers. Likewise, the husbands may do this to their rich wives and children may also do it to their parents. Here one can see kidnapping as a culture conflict caused by government neglect of her people and selfishness, which has cost a lot to Nigerians especially in the area of security, development and investment.

Political violence

It is a violence perpetrated in order to secure political interest or fight against it. The motives behind political violence include political fanaticism, ethnicity, religious, extremism and ideological differences (Ofoegbu, 2014:48). This violence could arise by aggression from frustration and social discontent or fallout of clashes among dominant groups in a society. One may observe that politics and violence are like Siamese twins in Nigeria. This is because political activity has always featured a notable degree of violence, in both the colonial and post colonial phases of Nigeria's chequered existence. In the recent democratic dispensation, political violence in Nigeria has metamorphosed from open demonstrations (strike actions) to faceless bomb explosions and assassinations. Also, election crisis is another political violence which is manifested especially through political thuggery and abduction among others. It is pertinent to note that this inhuman and culture conflict is not just peculiar to Nigerians, but is also prevalent in other parts of the world. Hence the need and desire for a philosophy of peace that will guarantee a progressive, peaceful and harmonious coexistence in the society.

Colonialism (Neo)

Colonialism is the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary: 2015). A researcher captures this well when he observes that most African scholars agree that all forms of conflict and woes of African Continent can be traced back to colonialism and the scramble for Africa. And in historical past, as a result of this Africans were humiliated and mentally strangulated, and even lost their pride and dignity. The researcher further decried that this scramble has continued in two ways: a) The form of neo-colonialism which keeps Africa as "Third World" with all the negatives which go with that title, b) There is a continuation of the scramble among Africans themselves and that Nigeria has had and is still having her own fair share of the evils of colonialism (Obilor: 2005: 151).

Further, to maintain the existing imbalance the colonialists employed a hidden and 'neutral' mechanism by the way of neo colonialism. This they did by introducing the structural imbalance/inequality in the world socio-economic system. Ugorji (2005:14) observes that there are three distinct methods by which the rich Western Countries maintain their advantage over the poor nations in Africa: the first is the mechanism of international trade; the second is through the whole international finance system (IMF, World Bank, London, and Paris Club, etc); and the third is through multinational or trans-national companies. This is conflict of culture that should be rejected, whereby everyone works together to enshrine respect, peace and justice in the society. Hence, the need of Universal Communalism as a political system and a philosophical principle, that will guarantee the right and well being of an individual and the society.

Unjust Culture: The World Desire for Universal Communalism

Universal communalism as the philosophy of peace is a systematic and universal application of communalism. It has "an underpinning philosophy of "Live and Let Live" and consists of solidarity and subsidiarity. Solidarity, because there is alliance, collaboration, help, compassion, commitment to the cause of the needy, friendship and social charity among one another. Subsidiarity because of the society protects the particular right and competence of individuals and the larger ones. It establishes social justice that impels everyone in the society to promote and advance the cause of common good in the society. It gives the individual members of the society a "sense of belongingness, complementarity and integration in the society. It is also a social political system that guarantees an individual right and involves a rational process (Ofoegbu: 2018: 129).

Following the above, one may observe that conflict of culture is an ill wind that blows one no good. No wonder, John Paul II (1987) sees these structures as 'structures of sin'. He defines it as unjust structure, which is against God's plan and will, rooted in personal sin such as selfishness, short-sightedness, mistaken political calculations, and imprudent economic decisions. It is linked to the concrete acts of individuals, who introduce them, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins and so influence people's behavior. Here, the Pope sees the unjust culture as an evil that should be avoided. The causes of unjust culture may not be limited to the negative human nature (selfishness, hatred, individualism,

etc), but a reaction to injustices suffered from the hands of the oppressors (governments, leaders, and individuals).

Consequently, one desires a world fellowship in a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men, so there will be peace in the society. Thus, Martin Luther King Jr (1964) buttresses this:

This is the great new problem of mankind. We have inherited – big house, a great “world house” in which we have to live together – black and white, Easterners and Westerners, Gentiles and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Moslems and Hindu, a family unduly separated in ideas, culture, and interests who, because we can never again live without each other, must learn, somehow, in this one big world, to live with each other.

Therefore, the world desires Universal Communalism a philosophy of peace that will transform, reintegrate and re-orientate her.

In the light of the above, one would observe that with universal communalism there will be equality of opportunity and social justice for everyone in the society. This is because the basic content of social justice covers social and economic rights of everybody to adequate food, clothing and housing, health care, welfare services, education among others. This is against capitalism and individualism which discourages sacrifice and fairness, but encourages selfishness, inequality, greediness, and perpetrates social injustice (Ofoegbu: 2018: 129). And, it is only when there is social injustice that most of the unrests and crimes arise in the society. No wonder, Ucheaga (2001:218) buttresses that “there is a limit to which human endurance can be stretched because of social injustice, and once this limit has been reached, the individual fights back. The impact of this on society is in the wave of crimes.” Thus, conflict of culture accounts for the galloping wave of crime in the society.

Accordingly, the acquisitive instinct and excessive competition, which is largely responsible for the vicious excesses, exploitation and inequality under the capitalist system, will be tempered by a sense of togetherness, and a rejection of graft and meanness. This is because there will be loyalty to the society, and it gives the members a sense of security and universal hospitality. Thus, universal

communalism became a social security scheme, with no written rules, but with a strict pattern to which everyone adhered. If someone did not take on the obligations inherent in the system, he found that when he next got into trouble, he received little or no attention.

Moreso, universal communalism will bring about the normative conception of personhood in the society. This implies that one acquires personhood by being integrated into the society, and being morally educated and socially responsible about the communal ways of life and values (Ofoegbu: 2018: 129). This is contrary to culture conflict that encourages selfishness, hatred, injustice and individualism to the detriment of the society and creates deficiencies in harmonious coexistence. Thus, this emphasizes the primacy of social responsibility as a precondition for an individual's right, freedom and autonomy. With this, there will be love, human well being, communal peace and harmony.

Further, universal communalism will bring about the psychological well being of individuals in the society (Ofoegbu: 2018: 130). Unlike the culture of conflict where one is prone to loneliness, hopelessness, depression, suicide ideation and rejects social support. This is because, its intricate web of social relationships tends to ensure the individual's social worth. It is thus part of the doctrine of universal communalism that the individual can find the highest good-materially, morally, and spiritually, in relationships with others and in working for the common good. Therefore, there will be no opportunity for any unrest to be carried out in the society.

Whenever there is the practice of universal communalism in the society there will not be any conflict between an individual (a citizen) and the society (country). This is because, there will not be any tension between the interest of an individual and any effort to exclude the other will be termed wrongful act. From the foregoing, culture conflict is opposed to universal communalism which believes that "to be" is not to be alone. While culture of conflict de-emphasizes the common good and communitarian spirit in terms of which society is ought to be defined and lived. And anytime the society deviates from the reflection of the principles of universal communalism, the social political situations will be personally motivated, then the Hobbesian thesis of self-preservation and self-gains come to the fore.

Evaluation and Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to highlight and examine the concept of culture conflict and its manifestations in the world. It observes that conflict of culture could be seen as unfair and wrong ways of life by people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and models of organization. It also sees it as an unjust, deceptive, and wrong pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior in the society. The paper likened the culture conflict to the “negatives” which are shunned in Martin Luther King Jr. concept of the “World House”, and Thomas Hobbes concept of “State of Nature”. It is also of the view that unjust culture is visibly expressed and experienced through; poverty, sex and child trafficking, political violence, colonialism, gender inequality, racism/ethnicism, religious violence, Terrorism, cultism, kidnapping, theft, war, murder among others.

Accordingly, the paper buttresses that culture conflict is an ill wind that blows one no good, since it has affected millions of people negatively, ensuing in lost opportunities relative to economic development, persistent poverty and inequality amongst some world citizens. The worst of all are the insecurity and the death these have caused. Hence, the paper calls for a worldwide fellowship in the search of peace and the development of the world system and its citizens. Conclusively, it suggests that the world should embrace the Universal Communalism a philosophy of peace, which makes a peaceful, progressive and harmonious co-existence in the society.

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