

THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL ORDER: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIZING ON SOCIAL CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In Nigeria, the spate of ethnic, communal, religious, resource control and political clashes with bloodletting and massive loss of human lives, misery, fears of domination, cry of marginalization and threats of secession has forced an unending debate on the nature and desirability of social conflict. It should not always be assumed that conflict is always violent. There is a continuum from violence or war to joint consultation or dialogue. There are also wide ranges and variations in the forms of conflict. The positive characters of social conflicts have been recognized, as inducing social change and integrating society. We must also never lose sight of the fact that conflict can be temporarily suppressed, regulated, channeled, or controlled. Neither a philosopher-king nor a modern dictator can abolish or resolve conflict once and for all. Sociologically theorizing social conflict and social order may appear to present a useful framework in terms of which contemporary social situations in Nigeria might be comprehended.

Keywords: Challenge; Conflict resolution; Nigeria; Social conflict; Social order; Sociological theorizing

Introduction

"Social order" is a relatively stable system of institutions, patterns of interactions and customs, capable of continually reproducing at least those conditions essential for its own existence. The concept refers to all those facts of society which remain relatively constant over time. These conditions could include both property exchange and power relations, but also

cultural forms, communication relations and ideological systems of values (Stark, 2007; Hechter & Home, 2003; Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum and Carr, 2009). On the other hand, "social conflict" may be generally defined as a process of social interaction, social relationships or sociation in which individuals or groups struggle or clash with one another over limited or scarce

resources, or some commonly prized object, value, interest, desire, or goal (Nisbet, 1970; Simmel, 1955). It is the opposite of order, consensus, agreement, cooperation, peace, or harmony. The defeat of an opponent is considered essential for achieving the desired goal of the conflict. The sociologist, George Simmel, has identified major types of social conflict to include: wars between groups, or intergroup conflict, for example, international, interethnic, intercommunal, industrial or class conflict. Second, is intragroup conflict, that is, feud or factional strife within groups. Third, is litigation, conflict that is legally handled and may be settled in the court of law. Fourth, the clash over impersonal ideals, for example, beliefs, ideas, ideologies, rather than over some desired material possession (Simmel, 1955).

The reasons for placing the problem of social order and conflict at the centre of theoretical inquiry are fourfold. First, the very idea of human society presupposes order or consensus. Second, order or consensus is itself something positive and its opposite - conflict - is only conceivable in terms of it. Third, the existence of social order is problematic and cannot be taken for granted. And fourth, the investigation of the problem of social order illuminates the nature of conflict in its various aspects (Cohen, 1975; Rex, 1976; Hechter and Horne, 2003).

The challenge of social order, how and why it is that social order exists at all is historically central to sociology. Thomas Hobbes is recognized as the first to clearly formulate the problem, to answer which he conceived the notion of a social contract (Hobbes, 1651). Social theorists, such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Jürgen Habermas have proposed different explanations for what a social order consists

of, and what its real basis is. For Marx (1910), it is the relations of production or economic structure which is the basis of a social order; according to Durkheim (1947), it is a set of shared social norms; for Parsons (1949), it is moral consensus; and to Habermas (1990), it is all of these, as well as communicative action.

Evidences of social conflict abound in almost all known human societies and have had their tolls in massive loss of human lives and misery, so much so that the idea and phenomenon of social conflict has increasingly preoccupied everyone in society, especially, sociologists and anthropologists, both on the theoretical and empirical levels. Social conflict impresses with its socially destructive force as an apparently indisputable fact that it is naturally viewed negatively because it has often ended in violence, unhappiness, destruction, and even death (Simmel, 1955; Habermas, 1990; Nisbet, 1970).

It may not be surprising therefore, that one of the earliest problems or questions that sociology attempted to answer from its beginning is: what makes or accounts for a condition of social order among members of societies and groups? The problem was clearly at the center of Auguste Comte's preoccupation, as he lived in a society that had been intensely disorganized by anomie and the series of social conflict that began with the French revolution (Comte, 1953). Emile Durkheim's sociology was also centrally concerned with this problem as he began to write after another great disintegrating crisis in French society (Durkheim, 1947). Once again, the problem of social order in the face of threatening breakdown was very much the order of the day following the industrial revolution in England and the American revolutions. So, from Comte onwards, sociologists have

been concerned to show what institutions are necessary for achieving social order.

Social Order and Social Conflict

Many sociologists, in accounting for the institutions of modern industrial societies, have been inclined to emphasize the integration of social institutions and to posit a mutually sustaining system of such institutions recognizing only the possibility that some institutions rely upon the regulated conflict processes of the market (Parsons, 1949; Durkheim; 1947). As a result two modes of sociological enquiry which differently approached the problem of social order in society were pursued by early sociologists: the macro-sociology which studies social systems and the micro-sociology which studies social rules and relations, or social action. Talcott Parsons (1949), for example, focused attention on what he calls 'institutional social relations', that is, social relations in which one actor has expectations of another's action and those expectations are understood and fulfilled. But clearly, there are two other possibilities, namely; those in which expectations are not understood and in which expectations are understood but not fulfilled. The latter case is the case of conflict at the level of micro-sociology.

The main attempt to systematize conflict theory emerges from the writings of Karl Marx (1910). In Marxism the basis of conflict is to be found in the social relations of production. The political and economic institutions of capitalist society are seen as representing "the political and economic sway of the bourgeoisie", and as against this there is reference to "the political economy of the working class". A conflict between classes in the social relations of production spills over to become a conflict in all spheres

and the social system becomes one of "two great warring camps" (Marx, 1910). Ralf Dahrendorf, on the other hand, has suggested that intra-institutional conflict occurs about authority in all institutions and that there need not necessarily be any overlapping. In particular, he argues that industrial conflict has become institutionalized, that is, it is confined within a particular institutional context (Dahrendorf, 1959). Lockwood has also drawn attention to the importance of conflict between institutional sub-systems, for example, there is no necessary harmony between industrial and educational institutions (Lockwood, 1964). Lewis Coser and Max Gluckman have both argued that orthodox functionalist theory gives insufficient weight to conflict and that it should be revised to take this into account. Both argue that a number of cross-cutting conflicts which ensure that one's ally on one side is another's enemy on the other makes for social stability. Coser (1956) also argues that a looseness of institutional arrangements which permits the terms of some social relations to be fixed after a trial of strength between the parties makes for greater stability than a more rigid structure. The recognition of regulated conflict of this kind as a permanent feature of all social structures is now widely accepted in modern sociology (Coser, 1956; Gluckman, 1955).

Our selections from the classic works by George Simmel, Max Gluckman, as well as Lewis Coser further extending the ideas already adumbrated in the approach of Karl Marx point out that conflict may be a precondition for orderly functioning of society. These authors see stability as a temporary balance of conflicting forces. Ralf Dahrendorf argues that static model of society cannot account for social change and that only a conflict model can do justice to the dynamic elements within society.

Therefore, the nineteenth century sociological thought which underplayed the importance of social conflict and predicted a sociology that would engineer the reordering of society towards a state of political restraint and lack of conflict has become a utopia in contemporary society (Simmel, 1955; Gluckman, 1955; Coser, 1956; Marx, 1910; Dahrendorf, 1959).

The main lines of the conflict model for the analysis of society should now be fairly clear. Instead of being organized around a consensus of values, society may be thought of as involving conflict situations at central points. Such conflict situations may lie anywhere between the extremes of peaceful bargaining and open violence. The existence of such conflict situation tends to produce not a unitary but a plural society in which there are two or more groups, each of which provides a relatively self-contained social order for its members. The activities of the members take on sociological meaning and must be explained by reference to the group's interests in the conflict situation.

Theories of Social Order and Social Conflict

There are currently two different theories that explain and attempt to account for social order, and indeed, its opposite, social conflict. The first theory is that order results from a large number of independent decisions to transfer individual rights and liberties to a coercive state in return for its guarantee of security for persons and their property, as well as its establishment of mechanisms to resolve disputes (Malesevic, 2010; Hechter and Horne, 2003; Hobbes, 1651; Locke, 1689; Rousseau, 1762). This theory has two variants often associated with coercion and interest. The coercion

variant explains social order in its various aspects and also explains the breakdown of social order or the occurrence of conflict. Coercion itself may emphasize the use, or threatened use, of physical coercion or the use of symbolic and moral coercion. According to this theory, order exists in society only, or largely, as a result of the power which some people have to command compliance from others in the name of all: people do what is expected of them because they are compelled to do so by those who monopolize some means of coercion. If they do not comply, they are threatened with some form of physical punishment, deprivation of property, resources, or rights and privileges, or with some social stigma or supernatural sanction. This theory may assert that those who command compliance do so in the name of all men (Hobbes, 1651). The theory can also explain disorder, conflict and change. In all societies, there are at least two sorts of conflict. First, there is conflict between people contending for positions of power. Since order is based on nothing but coercion, any show of weakness on the part of the powerful will produce a struggle for succession among those close to power. This is most likely to occur when authorities are weak or under pressure. Second, there is conflict between the powerful and the powerless. Whenever coercion fails or exceeds certain limits it produces a reaction against it to abolish it. These reactions are often successful when accompanied by struggles within the powerful group. During such periods of conflict all types of disorder occur, if there is no one able to uphold the norms they are not adhered to. The result is that instinct and impulse re-emerge and chaos and violence ensue. In such conditions, social change may occur; though

change may also occur if the powerful foresee such consequences: planned changes may result in greater or lesser repression (Cohen, 1975).

The interest variant of the theory sees societies as composed of social relationships, which most people unconsciously or consciously enter into in pursuit of their own interests. This interest theory therefore, has two main versions. The first explains social order or disorder as resulting from a contract between people who find it in their interests to have some social arrangements. This states that people cannot achieve their aims without the cooperation, or at least the dependability, of others. This dependability requires the establishment of rules which accord to each party, rights and obligations which are mutually beneficial and which prevent some parties from benefiting excessively at the expense of others. The second version of the interest theory states that social order results from the unintended consequence of the actions of many people separately pursuing their own interests: it is not that people consciously discover that order is in their collective interests and then establish it, but that they establish it unwittingly and then, subsequently, discover that it is in their interests. However, the interest theory in its two versions can also explain the occurrence of social conflict or social disorder, for the adjustment of interests is never fully achieved. There is always the possibility that individuals will develop new interests which will tend to conflict with others and to pressure for new adjustments, and there is always the likelihood that circumstances will arise which could not have been foreseen and provided for in the establishment of any particular set of rules. Moreover, man's 'nature' is such that he will not resolve

content with the pursuit of particular goals, and his interaction with others may even stimulate or compel him to engage in new activities. Man is, on the whole, capable of rational action in pursuing his goals, though, he is also considerably affected by sentiments and passions, but he does not rationally design the form of his social life (MacDonald, MacDonald and Norman, 2002; Hayek, 1949).

The second theory is that the ultimate source of social order resides not in external controls but in a concordance of specific values and norms that individuals somehow have managed to internalize (Hechter and Horne, 2003; Parsons, 1949; Durkheim, 1947; Davis, 1959). Social order is based on some minimal consensus on certain values which are predominantly moral but may also be technical and aesthetic. The argument underlying this theory is that if people are committed to the same values they recognize a common identity as against others. They accept common goals and also certain prescriptions and prohibitions concerning the means whereby these goals can be achieved. The choice of conduct made by each individual will be largely governed by these common standards and by the psychological satisfaction which is obtained from such conformity. The commitment to values enables men to devise means for reconciling or adjusting conflicting interests, and for turning coercive force into legitimate authority. This theory also explains conflict or disorder in the following way. First, no man is totally committed to common standards, and some, because of their upbringing, are never fully committed. When circumstances change radically, many people will abandon their commitments. But when circumstances change even slightly some men will do this

more readily. Thus, there are always individuals who are ready to deviate, and they are large in number when circumstances encourage this. The second possible cause of disorder or conflict occurs when there is a clash of values due to contact between different societies or when new values emerge which are incompatible with the old. Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim had argued that disorder or conflict in society was due to a lack of consensus on certain fundamental ideas and principles concerning the desired type of society and the proper means of administering it (Comte, 1953; Durkheim, 1947).

Profile of Conflict in Nigeria

The inescapable conclusion from all these theories is that social order rests on the combination of all of coercion, interest and values. Nigeria's social structure is inherently conflictual. These conflicts occur on a regular basis in the country, owing to the coexistence of divergent interests and values, and access to limited resources, as well as excess or failure of the coercive power of the state. Ethnic, communal, religious, political, ideological, class, and industrial conflicts have become an albatross in the Nigerian society. The conflicts are so numerous that fully detailing each is impossible and impractical. However, there have been a number of major confrontations that deserve elaboration.

The conflict in the Niger Delta arose in the early 1990s over tensions between the foreign oil corporations and a number of the Niger Delta's minority ethnic groups who felt they were being exploited, particularly the Ogoni and the Ijaw. Ethnic and political unrest has continued throughout the 1990s and persists as of 2013 despite the

conversion to democracy in 1999. Competition for oil wealth has fueled violence between many ethnic groups, causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups as well as the Nigerian military and police forces, notably the Nigerian Mobile Police. Victims of crimes are fearful of seeking justice for crimes committed against them because of growing impunity from prosecution for individuals responsible for serious human rights abuses, which has created a devastating cycle of increasing conflict and violence (Obi and Rustad, 2011).

There have been intermittent inter-and intra-ethnic conflicts that have pushed Nigeria to the precipice and almost put the Nigerian sovereignty asunder. From mid-September 2001 to end of November, 2001, Nigeria witnessed an avalanche of crises which violently rocked the tenuous fabric of her fledgling democracy. These include the various conflicts in the Niger Delta environment over the oil wealth of the region; the Zango Kataf crisis in Kaduna State, over the location of the common market and its economic benefits, and over the interruption in the occupational life of farming in the area; the religious and ethnic conflicts in Kano, derived from the exclusive promotion of the different and intolerant religious and cultural practices in the cosmopolitan city. The Tiv and Jukun in Taraba State have clashed over land ownership and migrancy-tenancy in Wukari area; the unprecedented carnage in Ukum and Katsina-Ala local government areas of Benue State between the Tiv and the Jukun people on the one hand and between a recalcitrant stratum of the Nigerian army and indigenous Tiv peoples on the other. The Kalabari and Nembe peoples have also come into conflicts; the Igbo and the Efik

have had conflict relations; so also the intra-ethnic and-communal clashes between the Umuleri and Aguleri peoples of Anambra State. Many of these conflicts occurred over land ownership, petroleum oil rights, pastures, religious intolerance, and even over such abominable acts as unprovoked killing of human beings and the abduction and killing or raping of women from a neighbouring community. There was the devastating pogrom in metropolitan Jos between the indigenous Birom and the Hausa/Fulani settler population. One can readily mention the internecine conflicts between the Itsekiri and Urhobo and between the Itsekiri and Ijaw peoples. Several other ethnic conflicts in the larger Nigerian polity have been documented to include those between Ife-Modakeke; Ogoni-Andoni; Ijaw-Ilaje; Amuoba-Anam; Okrika-Elleme; Rumuoro-Oduoha-Okporow. Most of these conflicts revolve around boundary delineation and the accompanying issues of resource distribution and control, and religion (Otite and Albert, 1999; Otite and Ogionwo, 2006; Jike, 2002).

The current Islamist insurgency in Nigeria began in 2001 with the formation of *Boko Haram*. Since 2009, the conflict has spiraled into its most violent phase, resulting in 3,600 mortal casualties within less than three years. A total of 15,000 have been killed throughout the conflict (Blench, Daniel & Hassan, 2003). The group conducted its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence. That changed in 2009 when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into the group's activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. Prior to that, the government reportedly repeatedly ignored warnings about the increasingly militant character of the

organisation, including that of a military officer. When the government came into action, several members of the group were arrested in Bauchi, sparking deadly clashes with Nigerian security forces (Blench, Daniel & Hassan, 2003).

The phenomena of ethnic and religious intolerance and incessant recurrence of ethno-religious conflicts have given birth to many ethnic militias like the O' dua People Congress (OPC); the Bakassi Boys; the Egbesu Boys; the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC); and the Igbo People Congress (IPC). Others include the Arewa Peoples Congress (APC) the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); and the Ohanaeze N'digbo (Jike, 2002). With the emergence of these ethnic militias and the deep divides between the various ethnic groups, religious intolerance has become more violent and bloody with more devastating results using the ethnic militias as the executors of ethno-religious agenda. For instance, Boko Haram, an Islamist religious sect, has targeted Nigeria's police, rival clerics, politicians, and public institutions with increasing violence since 2009. Some experts say the group should primarily be seen as leading an armed revolt against the government's entrenched corruption, abusive security forces, strife between the disaffected Muslim north and Christian south, and widening regional economic disparity in an already impoverished country. They argue that Abuja should do more to address the issues facing the disaffected Muslim north (Wade and Reiter, 2007; Johnson, 2011; Onuoha, 2011; Wikipedia, 2013).

Functions of Social Conflict

This paper explores the paradoxical thesis that conflict is not socially destructive in most cases, but rather an essential

mechanism in the positive evolution of society. Society as we have come to know it is the result of both categories of consensus and conflict interaction. In order to attain a determinate shape, society needs some quantitative ratio of harmony and disharmony, of association and dissociation tendencies. These opposites, antitheses, or contradictions are by no means mere sociological negatives, but are instances of contrast between two much more general conceptions of life in society (Simmel, 1955).

Lewis Coser makes a broad distinction between conflicts which do not disrupt or contradict the basic consensual assumption upon which the relationships in society are founded and conflicts in which the contending parties no longer share the basic values upon which the legitimacy of the social system rests, and so are disruptive of the consensual basis of relationships in society (Coser, 1956). In the first distinction, social conflict appears in a new light when seen from the angle of sociologically positive character. Conflict is admitted to cause or modify interests, unity, organization, or structures of groups. It resolves the tension between contrasts or divergent dualism. In this way, a flexible or open society benefits from conflict because such behaviour frequently helps to revitalize existent norms, or it contributes to the emergence of new norms. In this sense, social conflict is a mechanism for adjustment of norms and power relations adequate to new conditions, or in accordance with the felt needs of its individual members or subgroups. On the other hand, in rigid or closely knit societies in which there exists a high frequency of interaction and high personality involvement of the members, and a tendency to suppress conflict, when the contending parties no longer share the

basic values upon which the legitimacy of the society rests, conflict would threaten to disrupt the structure of the society. Where social conflicts are suppressed, if it breaks out nevertheless, is likely to threaten the very root of the relationships in society.

There may be no better way to convey a sense of Coser's (1956) work than to rephrase some of the key propositions: The ability to engage in conflict with disagreeable individuals allows us to remain in a social relationship with them, conflict prevents them from growing even more abusive while also giving us some emotional satisfaction, without conflict we would be forced to withdraw altogether from social contact with such people. Open societies derive strength from the large number of antagonistic groups that they include, cross-membership in a number of these groups keeps individuals from orienting themselves on one side or the other of a single dividing issue threatening social cohesion, the varied antagonisms and conflicts cancel each other out. Relationships characterized by open and frequent conflicts are often the most stable, conflict tends to be suppressed by parties who fear that their relationship is too unstable to survive the tumult, conflict tends to bind the antagonists into acceptance of a common social order, conventions, regarding the rules of warfare are one outstanding example. Virtually all law is the result of social conflict. Despite the disadvantages of disunity in conflict the parties to any given conflict will tend to prefer unity in the ranks of their adversaries, only a unified adversary can be counted upon to adhere to the rules of engagement and to the terms of the agreement that concludes the conflict.

Conflict Resolution

The question that immediately arises is, if social relationships are constantly tense and are marked by continuous bargaining, disagreements, exploitations, frustration, compromise, dislikes, and incompatibilities, why is society not torn apart?" In other words, it is necessary to explain why, in spite of conflicts, consensus appears to exist, at least enough to control and/or prevent total breakdown of society (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006; Coser, 1956; Hare & Blumberg, 1977).

One safeguard against conflict disrupting the consensual basis of relationship in society is the social structure itself: it is provided by the institutionalisation and tolerance of conflict (Coser, 1956). That is to say that part of the expectations of the groups or parties is that certain questions cannot be regarded as settled in advance, but that, when they occur the question of how they are to be settled and what sort of behaviour will be permitted will depend upon the sort of balance of power prevailing at the time. Thus, instead of institutionalised social relationships resting, as they do in Parsons' work, entirely upon norms, part of the institutionalisation itself may lie in permitting certain issues to be settled on the basis of the outcome of a conflict between parties. Indeed, the emergence of norms may depend upon the balance of power achieved. Conflicts are part of social life and custom appears to exacerbate conflicts, but in doing so custom also restrains the conflicts from destroying the wider social order (Coser, 1956).

Using the concept of power it is also possible to offer a sensible explanation why any stability is preserved at all in society in spite of conflict (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006; Malesevic, 2010). Power, however, seldom rests on the use of force alone; more often,

it rests on the compliance of the ruled. Where holders of power positions are regarded as having a right to exercise that power, they are described by sociologists as being in a position of authority. This, in turn, is limited by norms and rules. Several factors make it easier for one group to wield power over another: initial control of key resources such as the military and police (violence), land and wealth (economic), religion, education and propaganda (ideological); number of people; and social organization. Thus, the existence of great inequalities in the distribution of resources, while creating the potentiality for social conflict, does not necessarily lead to social conflict.

Violence is neither the only nor the surest way to achieve control, resolution or regulation of conflict. The "Third party" is one non-violent approach (Hare & Blumberg, 1977). However, the pages of resolution of conflict without violence raise many questions. Can one really be a third-party and non-partisan at the same time? In considering many aspects of conflicts and their possible resolution, the third party has to be clear about its own position vis-à-vis the conflicting parties, the historicity of the environment enveloping the conflict, and the tools available. This applies more sharply to those third-parties which seek non-violent solutions of conflicts. There is one thing which should be fully understood, that conflicts can be aggravated and worsened if a so-called third-party acts in a paternalistic way. There can be a tendency among votaries of non-violence to emphasize the need for avoiding, curbing or minimizing violence and forgetting the deeper issues involved or giving secondary place to the real and lasting solution of the problem. One of the common, and to some extent, legitimate criticisms of such mediatory

actions is that instead of helping to resolve the conflict they often prolong it or help to maintain the status quo.

When should one consider a conflict resolved? Conflicts may be divided into two categories (Hare et al., 1977). First, there are conflicts of which the roots do not lie in injustice or exploitation. Their causes can be lack of information, breakdown or lack of communication, misinformation, false fear, misunderstanding etc. Such conflicts need the totally impartial arbitration. Once conflicts of this category are resolved they can be forgotten. The second category is of conflicts which generally have some sort of chain reactions. If the character of the conflict resolution and its methodology do not encourage and work out a process by which it is carried on until the symptoms and the causes are totally removed, it can not be considered resolved. Another point that seems to be crucial is that anybody functioning as third party has to be known to both the conflicting parties as well as to those members of the general public who may be interested in the conflict and its resolution; known by his or her service to the community and for human quality. The greatest authority one can have is that which is attained by genuine friendship and love of human life and its quality.

It may be useful to briefly consider the nature of human aggression since this has some bearing on the kind of help that can be provided. We can look at questions of motivation, and reinforced learning, and social diffusion. For motivation, a number of paradigms are relevant, but let us single out the well-established frustration aggression hypothesis (Dollard, et al; 1961), that people have a variety of needs: hunger, thirst, sexuality, achievement, affiliation, curiosity, and so on, and there is a sort of hierarchy of

various ways to fulfill these various needs. But when everything else fails, aggression is one possible response to frustration of a need. This means that, sometimes, if there is some felt need that is not being met, then it may look as if people are being naturally aggressive. But what must be done is to see what the need is and whether in fact it can be met. In this case, the third-party service is to work against institutionalised poverty or injustice, or whatever else is thwarting people's needs from being satisfied, and thereby prevent violence or riots.

As regards reinforced learning, once a violent response is initiated the recipient may well respond aggressively, and the confrontation can escalate. The initial violence can come from a small number of provocateurs, or from a misunderstanding, and once the cycle starts, it can almost carry on of its own accord, and people can get into the habit of responding violently. Here, there are a number of things that can be done. Osgood suggests a series of graduated peaceful initiatives to de-escalate a conflict (Osgood, 1962). He calls his strategy "GRIT"; "graduated reciprocation in international tension-reduction". Just as leaders can escalate conflicts by their statements and actions, Osgood proposes that they can de-escalate them by announcing and carrying out small conciliatory acts on a unilateral basis. Rather than be seen as a sign of weakness, such acts are likely to show the power and high status of a group or nation because they are taken voluntarily. Furthermore, Osgood points out that initiatives can be graduated in risk so that very little is lost if they are not reciprocated at first. And while his suggestion is that the initiatives be made by one of the opposing parties, they could also be initiated by a

third-party force, and people from both sides joined in.

Furthermore, we learn that behaviour typically spreads through the social network. So if the third-party has finished helping out in one community after a riot or violence, it would be worth seeing whether there are potentially explosive situations to be dealt with. Also, rumours spread through the social system and become unimaginably distorted and can really cause tremendous misunderstanding and violent outbreaks. So another third-party service is one of listening to all sides, and having reliable information and spreading the truth (Blumberg, 1968).

Dual concern model of conflict resolution

The dual concern model of conflict resolution is a conceptual perspective that assumes individuals' or groups' preferred method of dealing with conflict is based on two underlying themes or dimensions (Forsyth, 2009), namely, a concern for self (assertiveness), and a concern for others (empathy). According to the model, group members balance their concern for satisfying personal needs and interests with their concern for satisfying the needs and interests of others in different ways. The intersection point between these two dimensions ultimately lead individuals towards exhibiting different styles of conflict resolution (Goldfien & Robbennolt, 2007). The dual model identifies five conflict resolution strategies that individuals or groups may use depending on their dispositions toward pro-self or pro-social goals.

Avoidance conflict resolution strategy is characterised by changing or avoiding the issue, joking or even denying a problem exists. Conflict avoidance mode is used when an individual or group has no interest in dealing with the other party, when one is uncomfortable with conflict and often times

because of cultural contexts. During conflict, these avoiders adopt a "wait and see" attitude, often allowing conflict to phase out on its own without any personal involvement (Bayazit & Mannix, 2003). Unfortunately, by neglecting to address high-conflict situations, avoiders risk allowing problems to fester out of control.

Groups or individuals give into others' demands out of respect for the social relationship. Accommodating conflict resolution strategy is characterized by a high concern for others while having a low concern for one's own self. This passive pro-social approach emerges when people derive personal satisfaction from meeting the needs of others and have a general concern for maintaining stable, positive social relationships (Forsyth, D. R. 2009).

Competitive or "fighting" conflict resolution model maximizes individual assertiveness, concern for self and minimizes empathy, concern for others. Groups consisting of competitive members generally enjoy seeking domination over others, and typically see conflict as a "win or lose" predicament (Forsyth, 2009). Fighters tend to force others to accept their personal views by employing competitive, power tactics: argue; insult; accuse; violence) that foster feelings of intimidation.

A cooperative conflict resolution strategy is characterised by an active concern for both pro-social and pro-self behavior, cooperative conflict resolution is typically used when groups or individuals elevate interests in their own outcomes as well as in the outcomes of others. Cooperators collaborate with others in an effort to find an amicable solution that satisfies all parties involved in the conflict. People with this type of conflict style tend to be highly assertive and highly empathetic at

the same time (Goldfien, J. H., & Robbennolt, J. K. 2007). They see conflict as a creative opportunity, and collaborators willingly invest time and resources into finding a “win-win” solution (Forsyth, D. R. 2009). The literature on conflict resolution recommends the cooperative conflict resolution style above all others (Sternberg & Dobson, 1987; Jarboe & Witteman, 1996).

Conciliation or compromising conflict resolution is typical of individuals who possess an intermediate-level of concern for both personal and others’ outcomes. Compromisers value fairness and, in doing so, anticipate mutual give-and-take interactions (Goldfien, J. H., & Robbennolt, J. K. 2007). By accepting some demands put forth by others, conciliators believe this agreeableness will encourage others to meet half-way, thus promoting conflict resolution (van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994). This conflict resolution strategy can be considered an extension of both “yielding” and “cooperative” strategies (Forsyth, 2009).

Conclusion

Social conflict increasingly preoccupies everyone in society on both the theoretical and empirical levels. Evidences of social conflict abound in almost all known human societies and impresses with its socially destructive force that it is naturally viewed negative because it has often ended in violence, unhappiness, destruction, and even death. However, several sociologists have emphasized that social conflict has some positive characters: conflict can serve as a force that integrates the people on opposing sides, bonding them firmly into a group or society. Conflict may also lead to needed social change, for example, by bringing groups into communication with one another, forcing them to face up to their problems (Malesevic, 2010; Simmel,

1955; Gluckman, 1955; Coser, 1956; Marx, 1910; Dahrendorf, 1959).

It needs be restated that social order and social conflict are two sides of the same coin of social reality, and both order and conflict theories may apply in order to have a comprehensive understanding of our societies. The pursuit of different personal and group goals always impel or incline people away from complete harmonious relations, to relations of conflict. When sociologists state that the only regular or even permanent feature of society is change, they also imply that conflict is a regular feature of social reality (Otite and Ogionwo, 2006; Hechter and Horne, 2003).

However, when divergent goals and perspectives clash within or between incorporated ethnic or other interest groups, initiatives and mechanisms are mobilised to restore normalcy and achieve as high a degree of social order as possible. Experience shows that there are hardly any societies in total equilibrium. Ultimately, a high degree of consensus and cooperation is a positive consequence of the resolution or the management of conflicts (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006; Wordu, 2004; Akpabio & Essien, 2004).

Policy Relevance Recommendation

Conflict resolution in Nigeria continues to face major challenges. Institutional challenges such as the capacity of security forces and other government agencies to prevent, mitigate and manage conflict remain despite the growing recognition by the government of the need to proactively address conflict as a development issue in collaboration with other partners such as civil society, private sector and development partners. There remain operational challenges manifested in the continuing need to improve effectiveness and impact of

peace building programmes, particularly the traditional justice systems.

Against the background that Strategic coordination amongst key actors has been lacking in conflict resolution and the political climate in Nigeria has not been responsive as far as policy formulation and legislation are concerned, the paper makes the following recommendations for policy and strategy.

1. There should be a national policy on conflict resolution and peace building in Nigeria.
2. In addition to the fact that there should be a formal policy framework for intervening in inter-community conflicts, this paper notes that in the past, practices have been implemented with no regard for community local knowledge, their indigenous systems of governance and natural resource management. An understanding of these is critical to the formulation of policies for conflict resolution that provide for processes and programmes that enhance and facilitate economic growth and poverty alleviation.
3. There is need to look beyond the immediate triggers of conflicts by formulating policies and economic blue prints that seek to improve household incomes, access to education and social services, especially for the marginalised or vulnerable Nigerians.
4. The government needs to realign its priorities and resources to ensure that adequate resources are generated for conflict resolution and peace building.
5. The structural problems that fuel conflicts must be addressed through the realignment of priorities that recognise the importance of peace and security in national development.

6. Of concern also is the development of an effective advocacy strategy that will inform the policy formulation and implementation process.
7. A cooperative conflict resolution is recommended above all others. Characterised by an active concern for both pro-social and pro-self behavior, cooperative conflict resolution is typically used when groups or individuals elevate interests in their own outcomes as well as in the outcomes of others. Cooperators collaborate with others in an effort to find an amicable solution that satisfies all parties involved in the conflict. People with this type of conflict style tend to be highly assertive and highly empathetic at the same time. They see conflict as a creative opportunity, and collaborators willingly invest time and resources into finding a "win-win" solution.
8. Since independence Nigeria has played a major role in peace advocacy and conflict resolution. The country has an impressive record of participation in peace making, peace-building and peace keeping. Nigeria can improve on her past performance through a more indebt study of the understanding of conflict situations, their historical causes as well as the dynamics and social forces that sustain them.
9. An effective approach to conflict management requires sustained commitment, democratization, good governance and functional civil institutions.
10. Also, third-party intervention in conflict situation, which Nigeria is being increasingly required to undertake, must be based on an adequate knowledge of the conflict in question, drawing on

technical skills required for effective management and peace negotiations.

These issues, if addressed, will enhance the potential for the policy to create an environment where peace may prevail. The issues that are highlighted are those that the policy must effectively address to promote conflict prevention,

mitigation, management, resolution and peace building. They can also act as motivating factors to the actors whose interests they reflect and accommodate, encouraging them to actively participate in implementing the policy advocacy strategy.

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