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VIOLENCE CONFLICT IN GEO-POLITICAL ZONES IN NIGERIA

**What is violence?**

It is the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage or destroy. It consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social damage and prevent people from reaching their full human potentials.

**What is conflict?**

It is a clash of interest. The basis of conflict may vary but it is always a part of society. Basis of conflict may be personal, racial, class, caste, political and international. Conflict is commonly misunderstood as the direct opposite of peace. It is coined from the Latin verb “confligere” which means to clash or engage. It refers to a confrontation between individuals or groups; resulting from opposite ends or means.

**What is peace?**

It is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. Peace is commonly used to mean lack of conflict and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups. It also means various things to different people under diverse situations. Peace is multi-dimensional. It is a state of tranquility or quiet.

**What is a violence conflict?**

It involves at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing claims or interests.

**Why do we have conflicts?**

Several things can cause conflict because it is a part of human existence. It could be between individuals, states, communities, groups, organizations, even within a person. Major causes are competition for resources and power the operations and clash of human values; psychological needs of individuals and groups; poverty and ignorance; and poor management of information. We have two broad category of these causes “the agency and the issues of structural or political economy”.

**Political Economy Category**

Perspectives on this category holds that the way the society is organized endangers the causes and conditions of conflicts. Unequal social structures produce unequal access to resources for different social groups, and this struggle drives conflict. So therefore, once the disadvantaged group(S) seek to improve their lots this leads to the privileged group to perceive it as a threat and will want to resist. This culminates in an unending cycle of conflict. Sadly, they are adequate examples of this in Nigeria. To start, community of people in the Niger Delta region and Kanji, places where petroleum and hydroelectricity are produces respectively, do not enjoy equitable access to these resources. Political theorists, therefore focus dynamics and forces at play in a society.

Political economy as an explanation of causes of conflict argues that different actors benefit differently from conflict situations. It maintains the existence of conflict entrepreneurs who benefit directly from the conflicts at the expense of others or in general public. In the same light, IPE (International Political Economy) maintains that global political and economic processes contribute to the systemic conflict. This underscores the direct and indirect roles of colonialism, imperialism, and international financial institutions like the IMF and sometime directly contributing to conflicts in developing countries.

**Manifestations of conflicts in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, conflict manifest in different forms across geopolitical zones and ethno-cultural groups. Some of the conflicts peculiar to Nigeria are worth discussing here.

**Ethnic conflict**: this is a situation where two or more ethnic groups in a polity strive to gain dominance over one another based on the belief that doing so will grant access to power and resources and other advantages over the other group(s). Ethnic conflict is majorly caused by lack of trust, suspicions, jealousy and envy. Historical and contemporary evidences perceived domination fuels conflicts between ethnic groups. It can lead to violence like killing of each other, forced divorce because they are from different ethnic group

**Religious conflict**: this is very prominent in Nigeria. It is a conflict allowed under the banner of a religion or sect of a religion. It could be against another religion, another sect of the same religion, or a secular government. It therefore, manifests as interfaith or interreligious, sectarian conflicts as well as confrontation between a religious or sect and a secular state. Interfaith conflict is one between two religions (between Muslims and Christians) while sectarian is between a two sects of a particular religion (between Shia and Sunni sects in Islam). Religious conflict is prevalent in the Northern Nigeria.

Ethnic and Religious conflicts often go hand-in-hand, hence the name **ethno-religious** conflicts. It is known to be driven by the political elites (i.e. groups of influential politicians) who take advantage of ethnic and religious differences in their competition for power ad resources. Ethno-religious conflict is known to be prevalent in the North-central of Nigeria where Hausa-Fulani group are predominantly Muslims and minority are Christians the same goes with the south-central or south- east of Nigeria where the Igbo’s are predominant and majority are Christians. It also can lead to violence like burning of mosques and churches.

**Resource-based conflict:** it manifests in Nigeria as competition over natural resources mainly among hosts communities, governments and multi-national companies. Popularized by the oil conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This causes conflict because when oil is exploited from the state no compensation is given in the sense like economic and developmental benefits. Nowadays, resource based conflicts have moved beyond oil and gas into area of minerals like gold, iron ore, diamonds etc. also water and land.

**Political conflict**: this is related to electoral process. It includes conflicts among political parties, politicians and voters. This was predominant in the south-western Nigeria probably due to the higher level of education and political enlightenment of the westerners in the early days of Nigeria. However, with other regions attaining higher level of education and political awareness and especially due to monetization of Nigeria politics and increasing emergence of politicians of dubious wealth, political conflict have spread every part of Nigeria.

Some of these conflicts can lead to serious violence. A good example is the Lagos Lekki Massacre, it all started as a peaceful protest where citizens were exercising their right to freedom of expression and life because police were brutally killing and arresting young citizens. But due to the Bad governance in Nigeria, the peaceful protest ended up in a massacre ordered by its own country NIGERIA!