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CONFLICTS IN AFRICA: A THREAT TO THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE GROWING ECONOMIES

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ABSTRACT

The continent of Africa in the post-cold war period has been ravaged by horrendous destruction of lives and property following its prevalent conflicts. Almost all the countries on the continent have been engulfed by unabated and intermittent conflict and or war of attrition. This heart-rending continental woe has undoubtedly imposed some obvious and immediate human and economic costs such as, loss of lives, including workforce, wounding, disabilities and displacements on the continent. These corollaries of violent conflicts create losses that are transmitted across whole economies of these war-ravaging countries, because the unwarranted conflicts constitute significant threat to all factorial elements of productivity, which automatically undermine the potential growth of the economies of these countries. In order to appropriately comprehend the stand point of this study, these factorial elements of productivity were examined in relation to how the conflicts are threatening their functionalities, thereby hindering the economic growth of the war-torn countries. Some appropriate recommendations on how these ugly situations could be arrested were also highlighted in the study.

Key: Conflict, Africa, threat, productivity, growing, economies

INTRODUCTION

As globalization, a post-cold war development evolved out of the controversial World Trade Organization (WTO), with the intent by the international community to build a global civilization based on participatory democracy, respect of human rights, social justice, economic competitiveness and consciousness about the environment – all centering on the unification of the human systems and viable institutions, the continent of Africa seems to remain in a cooler. Continental integration, one of the very important off-springs of globalization is rather a far dream on the continent. The disturbing high levels of divisions in Africa have cast a pall of gloom over the continent. (HDR, 2005). The divisions on the continent cut across regional, linguistics, tribal, ethnic, cultural, religious and political lines and have generated it with rivalries and conflicts, thereby constituting a threat to the productivity of the growing economies of African countries.

Specific sub-sectors of the growing economies, which promote production and productivity have suffered owing to these internecine conflicts and wars of attrition include; labour

(workforce), education and human development, environment, capital, agriculture, industries, infrastructures and the global market economy etc. These are several factorial elements that are often identified as associated components of higher productivity in viable economies. Since 1990s, more than 3million people have died in armed conflicts. Almost all of the deaths directly attributable to conflicts have happened in developing countries. Nearly 40% of the world conflicts are in Africa, including several of the bloodiest of the last decade and a half. Apart from the immediate human costs, violent conflict disrupts whole societies and can roll back human development gains built up over generations. (HDR, 2005). African continent represent s such alarming outcry as the continent, since the beginning of the “fashioned out” controversial slogan, “globalization”, in place of colonization and neo-colonization has been plunged into series of conflicts.

The extent to which these conflicts are threatening the functionalities of the productivity of these conflict-ridden countries in Africa in relation to

their economic growth is the mission of this study. An attempt was made at defining some concepts for proper understanding of the work.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

Conflict

Conflict occurs when there is a serious disagreement, use of violent or threat to use of violence. It is considered a normal and almost inevitable phenomenon at all levels of human society. This is because occasions and issues of conflicts always exist and can be activated when an actor seeks a major redistribution of values while other actors refuse to allow such basic changes. Onuoha, (1999). Conflict has been defined as a "fight, quarrel, struggle, be in opposition or disagreement". Hornby et al., (1974). It has also been tackled from the perception of "a situation where two or more interdependent groups, or systems of action have incompatible goals. It is itself virtually inevitable in society and is an important indicator of the need to address a situation in order to avert tension and even violence".

Productivity:

Productivity expresses the relationship between the value of inputs (labour, capital, raw materials, energy, land, communications, technology etc.) and the value of goods and services produced. Prokopenko, (1978). It is a measure element in promoting economic growth, controlling inflation, and maintaining competitiveness in international trade. Increasing productivity is an important goal of every society. It is all about the continual exploration of the present state of affairs; of adding value to quality and of aiming always at attaining excellence for economic growth and higher living standard. Bowers et al, (1978). It becomes imperative to note, that the productivity of African countries may not improve for economic growth under unabated threats of conflicts.

Growing economy:

African economies are not settled. They can better be described as fluctuating economies. Hence, they can better still be described as growing. A growing economy could be described as one in a state of disequilibrium accessing from changes which emerge from threats and or opportunity extant in the said economy. It is an economy on the move to global market competitiveness. Therefore, it can be said to be unsettled. It is an economy between the present state

and a future state of the same economy. It is characterized by uncertainties, fears, anxiety, hopelessness and expectations. This economy is cognitively expected to arrive at stable and developed states, (like those of the Western world and the "miraculous economies of the "Asian Tigers" – Japan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, India etc.). Ofoegbu, (1985).

SOME CAUSES OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

Shocked by the rate of bloodshed, the Champions alarmed that, Africans relish so much in fratricide that life means nothing to them. Everywhere you turn to on the continent, reading in the Newspapers and Magazines, listening to the radio or watching the television, the story is the same – war everywhere, brother at each other's throats. Nobody gives a damn who is murdered or who is suffering as a result of it. The most important thing is that blood has been spilled and must continue to be spilled – primitive savagery. (The Champion, 2000:11).

Obviously, the definite cause of conflict amongst countries of Africa is generated by intense competition for economic resources anathema manifested in poverty, squalor, degradation and unabated unemployment etc. As Olusegun Obasanjo once pointed out, resistance to economic, social and political reform measure, injustice, poor leadership, disregard for laid down rules and regulations, undue manipulations, general disregard for participatory approach to forming consensus and social marginalization, all contribute to various conflicts in Africa. (Guardian, 2005). In this regard, we think of the conflicts generated by the quest for power as meshed with social and economic struggle in Sudan, Congo Democratic Republic, Somalia, Rwanda, Coted'Voire, and other conflict-ravaging countries of Africa.

Indeed, the most alarming situation of conflicts and wars in Africa today are presented by ethnic and tribal crisis. Such ethnic or (clannish) and tribal unrest linked with nationalism, have been a social dynamite threatening productivity of the growing economies of African countries. Nwaeze, (2001). The ethnic, tribal cum nationalism crisis was observed in the Great Lakes Region, specifically in Rwanda where abominable crime of genocide in 1994 in which about 800,000 people, mostly from Tutsi tribe were massacre by Hutu extremist forces who see Tutsis as foreigners from Ethiopia, trying to set up the Hutu-Tutsi empire in the region. In Burundi, where hundreds of thousands, including the then elected

President, Meihor Ndadaye (killed in 1993), massacre and counter-massacre were committed between Hutus and Tutsis. Closely related to the above scenario is the Congo Democratic Republic where over 80,000 people had flee and is still emigrating their homes and nearly 4million deaths recorded in Northeast Congo since 1999 between ethnic Lendu- dominated militia and rival Hema factions.

Besides, some of the conflicts in Africa are occasioned by divide *Et Pera* (divide and rule) of the imperialistic forces bent on destabilizing the African continent with a view to exploiting, maintaining hegemony and finding wider markets for the sale of their military wares. The inter-play of the imperialistic forces can be seen through the kaleidoscope of conflicts in Cote d'Voire against former President Gbabgo, Libya against President Mauma Gaddafi and Egypt against President Hosni Mubarak to mention but a few. Although abated in some countries, this is the fate on boundary altercations between Ethiopia and Eritrea over the Badme territory; Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Penninsula; Egypt and Chad over the Hareyi Triangle; Libya and chad over the Aozu Strip and on-going Malawi and Tanzania border.

Moreover, some conflicts in Africa have been made inevitable by cultural and religious intolerance. In this respect, one can mention the sporadic conflicts in Nigeria and in Sudan, before and after the Independence of Southern Sudan – the conflict between the two countrie, (Sudan and Southern Sudan) are still raging on but intermittently. Kenya and Mali are presently wallowing into a mud terrain of political conflicts not too separated from the above sedate. In Central African Republic, conflict has reduced the country to unbearable rubble, leaving the country with great records of deaths and wanton destruction of property.

EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS ON THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE GROWING ECONOMIES

A. Broad Effects:

Effects of conflicts on the continent of Africa do not only reflect on human and material resources alone, but encapsulate on every aspect of human endeavour and all factorial elements of productivity which automatically undermine the potential growth of the economies of the countries. In the 5th summit of the African Union Leaders held in Abuja, one of the issues discussed was centred on the various conflicts

ravaging the continent and their dire consequences. The summit observed that about 70% of the continent's population is as a result of the various conflicts still below poverty line, subsisting on less than one dollar per day. According to the summation of the summit, conflicts in Africa have subjected the continent to conditions of poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS and dismay performance in the race for Millennium Development Goals project. Little wonder then that Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) remains a miserly \$480billion as against the global GDP of \$31,500billion. (Tell Magazine, 2005).

Lamenting on the effects of conflicts in Africa, the Human Development Report (2005) declared, "From as high as 51 conflicts in 1991 there were only 29 ongoing conflicts in Africa in 2003. But although the number of conflicts has declined, the wars of the last 15 years have exacted an extremely large toll of human lives. Rwandan genocide in 1994 killed almost 1million (800,000) people. The ongoing civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo has killed some 7% of the population. In Sudan, a two decade of long civil war between the North and South claimed more than 2million lives and displaced 6million people. As the conflict ended, a new state – sponsored humanitarian crisis erupted in the Western Region of Daffur. Today, an estimated 2.3million or more are displaced and another 200,000 or more have fled into neighbouring Chad. It further pointed out that, even limited outbreaks of violent conflict can create a downward spiral, insecurity, losses of physical infrastructure, reduced economic activities, the opportunity cost of military expenditure, loss of assets and related vulnerabilities are a toxic combination for development and also creates losses that are transmitted across whole economy, undermining potential growth.

Research has shown that on the average, civil war in each country costs as high as \$54billion, reduced the economy by 2.2% each year and has a credible prospect of halving poverty by 2015. It becomes imperative to note that the productivity of the conflict-torn countries may not improve for economic growth under incessant conflicts. The reason being that, direct loss of incomes and investments and unwarranted military spending increase during conflicts. This is because these are resources (capital, materials and productive labour force) that could have been more productively deployed to provide social services and economic infrastructure in these countries.

As rightly observed by the HDR (2005), despite the unprecedented opportunities offered by globalization, not much of these could be seen on developing economies of African countries due to lack of or non-availability of necessary structure and policy to support the challenges posed by the open trade, investment and financial flows, occasioned by conflicts. It further observed that there are, however, evidences of improved economic development performances resulting from high productivity in some African countries. Suffice it to say that, most of them recorded positive per capita income, thus helping to sustain improvement in human development indicators. But, such positive economic performances remain incapable of catapulting African economies beyond the incumbent level of productive mediocrity, as the continent still precariously lag behind due to its various wars of attrition and conflicts.

On productive labour force:

Productive employment can be said to be one that contribute positively towards the uplift of an economy or towards the achievement of goals or arrival at the desired future state of an economy. By this definition, we express labour as one of the essential value of inputs of productivity. Productive labour force is one of the vital factors of production whose role on productivity cannot be underscored in relation to economic growth. This is because, the segment of the population critical for active participation in improving the productivity of any nation fall within the bracket 18-55 years of age. This is the youthful and most valuable part of the workforce of any nation. It is therefore considered dangerous if for any reason the greater proportion within this population bracket is not mobilized for active participation in improving the productivity of any nation.

As the Human Development Report, 2005 rightly observed, "The challenges of today's global competitiveness for economic survival amongst nations demand that development policies recognize an ardent investment in human factor. This need is much more pressing on the productive and sustainable part of the national workforce, endowed with energy, alertness, skills, potentials, creativity, intellectualism and professionalism for resourcefulness. Unfortunately, in Africa, conflicts have resulted to unproductive waste of productive employment of the labour force into arms and ammunition carriers. This productive age- brackets who are engaged in unproductive employment of the

various wars of attrition has cost the continent colossal loss of productive labour force. People are the first and foremost enduring asset of any nation. There is no greater waste than not to use people adequately. No wonder Arnold, (1985), observed that less than 70% of the potential working population is actually employed in useful occupations. Employment of productive labour force into armed conflicts is counter-productive on productivity to these growing economies of Africa.

Apart from the death tolls, the resultant effects of these conflicts are subjection of manpower into destitution, amputees, despondency and refugees. Productivity and production are twin symbolisms in a factor of economic growth and development. The labour- force is the lubricant in the mechanism of production and productivity. Therefore, in an environment of conflict, and with the resultant outcome of the above conditions, productivity of the labour- force is bound to be a mere dream in the growing economies of the conflict-ridden African countries. In African countries, rather than focus development aspect of productive economy, policy makers seem to nosedive policies towards wars and conflicts for selfish ends. Hence, the productive labour- force is converted to unwarranted warriors at the detriment of productivity improvement of their growing economies. War decreases the number of labour force. A country with lesser number of people that are working has great economic consequences – reduction in production of goods and services; reduction in the supply of quantity and quality of goods and services: which lead to starvation, hunger, malnutrition and mass deaths. It also decreases the revenue - generation of a country, decreases the per capita income of citizens and bring about fall in living standard of the people.

B. On Productive Environment:

Productive environment, otherwise known as "Green Productivity", is the improvement and harmonization of the environmental protection for sustainable socio-economic development for enhancement of peoples' quality of life. Healthy nation, they say, is a wealthy nation. The effect of conflict as it relates to environmental hazards cannot be overemphasized. The concomitant environmental hazards associated with conflicts in Africa is such that have produced unprecedented pollution on the continent , thereby reducing the entire productive environment and productive workforce to hunger, poverty, diseases, mental and psychological degradation – conditions

that militate against productivity to the growing economies of these conflict-ravaging countries.

In addition to that, a slowing economy like those of African countries, and an uncertain security environment represent powerful disincentives for investment, domestic and foreign, and a powerful incentives for capital flight. A proof has been established that transfer of almost 20% of private wealth have been recorded in some countries as conflicts loom.(HDR,2005).

C. On Productive Capital:

In a world where per capita incomes are low, savings are low because incomes are low. Incomes in turn are low because productivity is low. Productivity is low because investment is low and investment finally is low because savings are low. If investment could be made to increase, productivity would increase and so incomes and savings. Akatu,(1987). The realization of the dreams to the immediate argument seems to be a mirage on the continent where conflicts and wars are the only "good" vocabularies in their economic growth. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), revealed that about 304million people on sub-saharan Africa live below \$1 per day. This represented an increase of \$87million impoverished people to date that climbed up from 217million in 1990 to 290million in 2000. If one arithmetically imagined that figure up to 2012, one cannot hesitate in agreement that, this situation if not adequately addressed, will deny Africa the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) project target of 2015, and it will take the continent 130 years before the major goals of reducing the poverty is won. (ThisDay,2005).

Investigations have further revealed that " the extra costs of military expenditure in the conflict-ridden African countries average 1.8% of GDP in each of the countries". This is the capital, including that (which translates to machinery, buildings, offices and other equipment; as well as working capital in order to take of and to function efficiently) on productive investments that would have positioned African countries and afford them ample opportunities in the race to the MDGs and global economic competitive advantage, rather than its diversion to intra and inter- continental wars. This situation invariably throws not only the peoples, but also the nation-states into unbearable economic doom.

D. On Educational Institutions and Human Development:

Educational institutions that produce the economic manpower and skills are also affected by the spate of wars and conflicts in Africa. Education embraces a whole series of mechanisms which can be described as the process whereby the learned transmits and inculcates knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviours – roles which are pre-requisites of productivity. The role played by educational institutions in increasing productivity of labour and in achieving the best future for individuals and nations means that education must be pedagogically efficient and economically profitable. This is because, education is not only the bed-rock, but also essential to any nations development. It not only guarantees economic growth, but as well influences the social and economic environmental paradigm of countries. It is one of the building blocks of human development. It is not just a basic right, but a foundation for progress in other areas, including health, nutrition and the development of manpower, institutions and democracy (HDR,2005).

Conflicts and wars in Africa with their threatening effects, have robbed this industry of its invaluable roles of production of knowledge and knowhow; plus other attributes which make productivity increases possible in the growing economies of these conflict-prone countries. Educational institutions are often closed down, children are out of classes, and infrastructures are destroyed. These conflicts also reduce spending on schools and teachers. Educational institutions become hide-outs for the opposing conflict factions. The result of all this is that the productivity of this sector of the economy which directly or indirectly radiates to other sectors of the economy is brought to a total collapse. This ogre situation leads to brain drain because professional workforce in this industry is forced to migrate to more conducive environments to eke out a living.

E. Agricultural Sector:

These conflicts and wars also disrupt food systems, subject citizens to unbearable hunger and malnutrition and undermine progress in health, as the entire farming production come to an end during the span. It is a well-known fact that agriculture is the main-stay of almost 70% of the peoples of Africa. Majority of these farmers are engaged in subsistence farming, with little enough for exchange as sales for just meager incomes. Agriculture also constitutes almost 80% of the export commodities of African

countries, since the economies of these countries are mono-culturally based raw materials. Under violent conflicts it becomes impossible for people to move about talk less of attending to their farms or engage in pastoral activities. These conflicts result to deaths of farmers and live-stocks. It also becomes increasingly impossible to trade on any agricultural products as outputs in agricultural production in this sector are completely scarce, as labour productivity in this sector is affected. These conditions invariably expose the economies of these conflict-ravaging countries to vulnerability of threat of growth.

Africa like all developing countries, seek essentially the same productive goals: improved living standards. All these cover personal wealth; health; quality education; reasonable living standard, including less tangible things such as choice – the right to move from area to area, job, freedom to worship and so on. Similarly, a factor of great if often unrecognized importance is that a poorly fed person simply does not perform as well as a properly fed one does. Arnold,(1985). It becomes glaring that the horrendous conflict and wars of attrition ravaging the continent have stultifying effects on the agricultural productivity to an alarming proportion that, most African countries over 50 years after independence, still depend largely on importation of food, even common rice, from the West and the Asian countries. This is because the conflicts have disengaged a greater percentage of people (farmers) from their agricultural lands and energy. The conflicts which often result to refugee/emigration of peoples from one place to another within and outside the conflict-ridden countries adversely affect productivity in agriculture. This again is largely because, a large number of refugee/emigrants and war fighters fall within the agricultural productive age.

A proper study of the table below would bring to your imagination, the reality of the consequences of these conflicts on the refugee/emigrations problems in Africa. The figures, including the death tolls resulting from the various wars, could reconcile your imagination on the implications of the conflicts to agricultural production and productivity.

It has been observed that African countries form almost 80% of the world's poorest nations as a result of their high population growth rates, low income, high rate of illiteracy and life expectancy. African accounts for one out of every four poor persons in the world, while four of every ten Africans live in conditions of absolute poverty. ECA, (2000). Of course, the reason for this is not far to fetch – low

productivity in all sectors of the economy resulting to slow economic growth, occasioned by prevalent internecine conflicts on the continent.

E. On infrastructures:

Conflicts and wars in Africa have strangled the continent economically. This is so because, the long years of the internecine warfare brought nothing to the countries but destruction of physical capitals, roads, bridges, power installations, telecommunications, institutional edifices and other capital-intensive projects are destroyed as a result of conflicts. Besides, conflicts reduce the pace of the countries' economic growth and development, because during situations of conflicts, all factors of productivity are under-utilized, as productions remain at stand-still. So, "apart from "human costs", violent conflicts disrupt whole societies and can roll back human development gains built up over generations".

F. On Industries:

Research into economic history has proved that no country in the world attains industrial growth and viability without stable and dynamic industries and technological development. Since productivity is synonymous with economic growth, only productive and stable industrial nation can witness growth in its economy and enhanced living standard. Growth in productive economy is inseparable to stable, enduring and industrial operations. An empirical look at the economies of the industrialized nations of the world – Japan, Germany, USA, France, Canada, Britain, Italy etc. and the fast growing 'Asian Tigers' economies, attest to the fact that the viability and solid economic base of these nations are dependent on the stability of their countries. Rather than waste productive time and scarce resources in prosecuting wars, the industrialized west and Asian countries channel their productive resources into industrial and technological researches, which give them the advantages of edging out African countries in the competitive market economy. This competitive market advantage has been singularly made possible because of their sound industrial base devoid of conflicts and wars.

African countries relish so much on wars and conflicts that available resources which could have been channeled into industrial and technological growth to improve their productivity and economic growth, are often diverted to unwarranted conflicts and wars of attrition. This uncalculated conflict-syndrome has nailed the entire continent into

economic doldrum. Hence, Productivity in this sector remains undiluted threat. This is so because under conflict brouhaha , existing industries, especially those at their infant stages as in Africa, are closed down and never resurrect after the war. Larger ones and technological research institutes suffer. The workforce and capital meant for industrial upkeep and provision of raw materials are diverted to wars and conflicts.

CONCLUSION

Conflicts in Africa pre-dates the countries' independence, but its manifestations became more glaring with the exploitative tendencies of the erstwhile colonial masters, who in their quest for milking Africa's natural endowments, indiscriminately demarcated ethnic and tribal boundaries without respect for the peoples' cultural and traditional cleavages. The devastating monster exacerbated after the cold war in the 1990s with the Western imperialistic gimmicks "globalization". Other factors such as the struggle for power, sit-tight attitude of the African leaders, ethno-religious differences and so on, have contributing effects in fanning the embers of conflicts in Africa in terms of shapes and dimensions.

The conflicts, with its devastating effects on lives and properties, have adversely threatened, or rather is threatening the productivity of the countries of Africa. Since productivity is being threatened in the conflict-ridden countries, economic growths are on crippling stage; and so the living standard of the peoples is also on continuous threats. Rugumanu, (2001) was more graphical in his conclusion as he affirmed that the deplorable conditions in Africa are unambiguously reflected in weak growth in productive sectors, poor export performance, mounting debts, deterioration in social conditions, environmental degradation and increasing decay in institutional capacity. It is instructive to argue that these malicious situations are all concomitant outcome of conflicts on the continent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conflicts and wars are bane on productivity. The relative conflict-ridden environment in Africa is indeed, a miscarriage in relation to any efforts at ensuring a high level of productivity to the growing economies of African countries without necessary peace and tranquility. There would be no meaningful economic growth in an atmosphere of mayhem. Productivity can only thrive in a peaceful and conducive environment. Against this backdrop, this work posits the following recommendations: For African countries to move abreast with the Millennium Development Goals race target of 2015, Africans should respect the views and values of one another irrespective of ethnic, tribal or national geographical placements;

Africans should also accept the belief that we all serve one God, despite our individual religious inclinations. We should avoid religious extremists and acrimonies and be moderate in our religious activities; The peoples of Africa should imbibe the virtues of peace, tolerance and understanding which are the tenets of civilized behavior; and which placed the economically advanced West and Asian countries to vantage global economic positions; Rather than war-war, jaw-jaw on productivity and productivity related issues for economic growth and global economic competitiveness should always top agenda in African Union Meetings;

Efforts should be facilitated by various Governments in Africa to curb the scourge of unemployment of school leavers and graduates of tertiary institutions. They should be equipped with vocational and skills acquisitions; and be made to imbibe the culture of productivity in order to make them self-reliance and to contribute to economic growth of their countries; rather than be employed as warriors in the various conflicts;

African leaders should on their own delink from the Western leaning and think inwards like the Chairman Mao Tse Tong of China, Mahatmah Gandhi of India and other Asian economic reformers, who rooted their economic advancements to the cultural and traditional values and heritage of their indigenous technologies.

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