

An Involvement of African Traditional Means of Reconciliation to Improve Conflict Management in Africa

Adrian R. Mwesigye

(Department of Educational Foundations and Psychology, Faculty of Science, Mbarara University of Science and Technology,
Uganda)

Abstract: Conflict in Africa has been an endemic problem. People internally conflict with one another and countries conflict with each other. More often than not when conflicts arise, forces like the UN and the ICC are called upon to manage them. The most common style of conflict management in Africa heretofore is use of courts of law introduced by colonists. An example of how African means of conflict management can be applied even in very complicated cases is the conflict in Northern Uganda. There has been a long standing conflict between Joseph Kony and the Government of Uganda. Kony has already been indicted in the ICC. But his kinsmen, who are the major victims of this conflict, insist that he should rather undergo their traditional means of conflict management (*mato oput*), which is as well his preference. African means of conflict management must be revisited. Use of courts of law may only suppress the conflict which does not solve the problem. The advice of Christ is very African “settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise, your opponent will hand you over to the guard, and the guard will throw you into prison” (Mt.5:25). The African means of reconciliation are an effective means of conflict management as they percolate deep into the feuding parties’ consciences, even if the rift is very wide. On the other hand, courts of law are not entirely defective in their administration of justice, since retribution is usually exercised. The offended party gets gratification. This paper calls for an integration of both systems to manage conflicts in Africa.

Key words: conflict management, International Criminal Court (ICC), Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), *mato oput*, victim perspective, victim’s satisfaction

1. Background

This paper, about conflict management in Africa, is philosophical in nature and, consequently, the research findings are not empirical in style. The research will take a closer look at conflicts caused by politics practiced on the African continent. Africa is a continent devastated by conflicts. Politics in Africa today is characterized by turmoil, war venging, dictatorship, fascism, and many other negative tendencies (Mwesigye, 2003). Arguably, all these are fanned by leaders who enter the political arena as immaculate, and when they stay long, signs of dictatorship begin to emerge. Meantime, they oppress sections of their subjects. Often times, such leaders get opposition from those who are able to recognize oppression, and conflict arises (Mwesigye, 2012). As soon as

Adrian R. Mwesigye, Ph.D., Department of Educational Foundations and Psychology, Faculty of Science, Mbarara University of Science and Technology; research areas: human resource management. E-mail: topi122000@yahoo.com.

conflict intensifies, the leaders apply Machiavellian style of leadership and declare themselves anointed life time leaders. Usually, such leaders, who are a political hybrid of colonial masters, manipulate the constitution to allow themselves unlimited term of office. A few cases like Tanzania and Zambia have upheld their constitutions and to a certain extent averted the above scenario.

Pre-independence politics in Africa was based on divide and rule where justice for the indigenous people, the so called natives or savages, was denied. It is found appropriate, heretofore, to elucidate that in Uganda, the citizens were divided in a manner reflecting the philosophy of Plato. Those from the Central Region, namely the Baganda, were trained to be administrators, Northerners were nurtured to be soldiers, and those from the South-West and the West were recruited as workers. This is a kind of platonic ideal state to create the philosophers or rulers, guardians, and the artisans or producers respectively. The colonial masters ruled either directly or by proxy through the Baganda chiefs from the central region. This kind of political structure created tension among tribes, some of them taking themselves as underprivileged, whereas others considered themselves superior.

One pertinent issue is the administration of justice brought by Europeans when they colonized Africa. Apart from Liberia and generally Ethiopia which was colonized by Italy for a very short period, all countries in Africa were colonized by European Super Powers especially the British, French, Belgians, Portuguese and Spanish. The Europeans were so fierce in applying the law so as to protect themselves from the otherwise resilient natives. These natives needed strictness to be monitored. Imperative to note here is the fact that colonialists' initial occupation of Africa aimed at enriching their mother countries economically. Therefore, the development realized in colonies was only to the advantage of colonialists. For example, Mwesigye (2003) contends that infrastructure was improved by colonialists in order to have easy ways of ferrying resources from colonies to their motherlands. Health was improved in order to create a healthy workforce that would produce enough raw materials for export like coffee, cotton and tea.

Administration of justice was through courts of law, which was different in form and procedure from the African style of conflict management. The law enforcement facilities were established at every administrative center and were headed by judges. Prisons were built adjacent to courts of law, not as rehabilitation centers, but as houses of punishment. Courts, up to today have maintained the colonial strictness, minimizing the idiographic element of a person. Moreover, once the judge has spoken, *causa finita*, the case is finished, no more questioning. Worse still, the judgment is a one man's show, and such a person, as a human being, can be in error or be biased. A case in point is the judgment in which a one Kajubi was acquitted of a murder case by Justice Moses Mukiibi, a ruling that was quashed by the Court of Appeal. It was reported in the New Vision of November 24th 2010 by Mugisha and Nsambu that Justices Amos Twinomujuni, Stephen Kavuma, and Augustine Nshimye of the Court of Appeal concurred that Mukiibi erred in ruling.

Imperative to note is the fact that right from the beginning of colonial days, some Africans began to realize the anomaly in colonial rule's style of administration of justice. They rationalized around the concept of African values, and getting information from America, they began to revolt. America itself was against Europe's colonization of Africa. This is highlighted by the case of Britain and America. At one time, Hitler from Germany wanted to colonize Britain. Britain asked for a hand from America to repulse Hitler. America agreed on condition that Britain grants independence to all her African colonies. Adjacent to the Black consciousness in America was growing fast. African Americans were revolting against marginalization. Young Ugandans, especially Baganda who were sent to America for studies, imported such ideas from America.

These young men came back with American slogans of independence and Africanization, especially the

African system of justice, and started to struggle for them. In the event, colonialists built universities in Africa where they would dictate their own curriculum and deter the Africans from attaining the “American syndrome”. This is substantiated by the fact that Britain built Makerere University in Uganda in 1922 to stop young men from studying in America where they would get “brain-washed” by African Americans. In spite of this apparent maneuver to retain the colonies, the struggle continued and most African countries gained independence in mid-20th century, but most of the colonial elements remained and the strict and un-African legal system is a legacy left behind by these colonialists. It is within this understanding that this paper sets out to explicate the relevance and effectiveness of African means of conflict management in Africa today.

2. What Are Conflicts?

A conflict is a disagreement, misunderstanding or clash between two or more organization members or groups arising from the fact they must share scarce resources, or work activities and from the fact that they have different statuses, goals, values and perceptions. Human beings have needs in accordance with Abraham Maslow’s theory. Once the wants, needs, and values are communicated to the other, conflict arises (Stoner, Freeman, & Gilbert, 2000). Lo and Dabire (1999) define conflict as the manifestation of divergent interests between at least two parties on a given cause. Actions of each party aim to inhibit the realization of the objectives and goals of the opponent. In any case, there is a hedonistic element where each individual wants to gain for the self as much pleasure as possible and avoid as much pain as possible. The individual becomes a private entity in society and, as asserted by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, private property, objective or subjective which quickly follows on the division of labor, makes humans alienated from each other by the class division engendered by private property (Audi, 1995).

Conflict can be classified according to its effects or according to the type of people affected by it. Conflict, in regard to its effects can be either dysfunctional or functional. Dysfunctional conflict is a traditional view and it looks at conflict as unnecessary, bad and harmful. It causes dislocation of resources in organizational activities, and results in lack of cooperation, mistrust, and remorse. It impedes attainment of organizational goals (Mwesigye, 2004). Conversely, functional conflict can be healthy and inevitable and even very necessary. This is the interactionist or modern view which sees conflict as an outcome of organizational dynamism. The organization becomes more effective as it leads to search for solutions. It is thus an instrument for creativity, innovation and change, and may lead to justice (Mwesigye, 2004). This paper will limit itself to the dysfunctional type of conflict, which is the type of conflict that needs liberal management, as functional conflict does not need such management but rather needs stimulation.

With regard to the type of people affected or involved, conflict can be horizontal or vertical. Horizontal conflict can be inter-community or intra-community as long as it deals with same actors without any apparent hierarchy. An example of this type of conflict is when two villages disagree on the management of a common swamp. Vertical conflict, on the other hand, arises when the socio-political and economic status of some actors is superior to others (Muhanguzi, 2003). An example of such type of conflict is the US invading Iraq, Rwanda-Uganda invading war torn, vast and hapless DRC for reasons unknown to this paper, or locally in Uganda citizens conflicting with government in the saga of the give-away of Mabira forest to investors. This paper will deal with both types of conflict without any distinction. Meantime, it is pertinent to note that conflict in Africa cuts across all types and is all inclusive.

3. Causes of Conflict in Africa

Conflict, whether individual, among individuals, among groups or organizations, is a symptom of an unsatisfied need in an individual. It is normally a result of what Martin Heidegger referred to as the phenomenology of everydayness (Audi, 1995). This is a situation which is supposed to capture the totality of human existence including moods, the capacity for authentic individuality, and the full range of involvements with the world and with others (Audi, 1995). The interplay of individuals over autonomy and satisfaction leads to conflict. For conflict management to be effective, causes must be understood and internalized (Oluka-Akiteng, 1999).

Causes of conflict in Africa include the following:

(1) Inequitable use of resources: conflict over resources has been endemic in society since the time of biblical Adam and Eve (Gen.3) and Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-8). Africa is well endowed with natural resources but paradoxically, Africa is poor (Mwesigye, 2010). Poverty in Africa is not natural but it is created. This is a result of exploitation by developed countries. It is as well due to African philosophy and politics which make resources partially exploitable and a reserve for few. The mere fact that the majority of populations are denied an equitable share of the resources causes conflict. This is the main cause of conflict between Uganda- Rwanda and DRC and between South Sudan and Sudan.

(2) Differences in perceptions: no two people are alike and people's views are shaped by background, education and training and social and cultural beliefs. This is counter poised by Immanuel Kant's idea that moral value is determined by the intention of the agent. This has been the main cause of intra-territorial turmoil or internal conflict like in Burundi, Chad, DRC, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Zimbabwe and others. This, as well, is diagnosed as the major cause of conflict between Kony and the Uganda government.

(3) Disrespect for territorial integrity of a country: this is usually when there are differences in managerial or leadership styles, the need to subjugate another country, the theory of expansionism, and the need to dominate. An example is the conflict between Rwanda and Uganda.

(4) Minor causes: these can be lack of information, extreme socio-economic disparity, and political influence (Oluka-Akiteng, 1999). Furthermore, conflicts can be caused by lack of patriotism and nationalism, and superiority complex (Nshangano, 2004).

4. How Can We Improve Conflict Management in Africa?

There are two major means of conflict management in Africa; the traditional or indigenous system, and the modern system. The modern system, also known as the colonial system or the adversary system (Karoooma, 2005) involves courts of law. Apart from some advantages to be explained later, the system has major flaws in Africa. Karoooma (2005) candidly puts it that this system is defective as there is no sense of remorse in a "rehabilitated" offender. The conflicting parties go before a judge who determines the loser between the plaintiff and the defendant single-handedly. Judgment given always creates the loser-winner situation which is not the best solution in conflict management. The victim is thrown in prison for a particular period of time, or is even convicted to death. Those who argue for this type of conflict management refer to its insistence on justice and retribution. But such justice and retribution is not always a solution to conflicts in African society.

This paper, in advocating for an integration of traditional means of settling disputes, believes in the saying

“summum ius summa inuria”, translated as “the highest justice, is the highest injustice”. Arguably, charity has to accompany justice which courts of law hardly put into consideration. Besides, this court system usually creates more hardened criminals because, by the time culprits are released from prison, chances are that they are worse off. Moreover, they have gone through hardships and are no longer afraid of jail (Karooma, 2005). They even exchange tactical and sometimes harmful ideas with other prisoners while in detention.

Courts of law manipulate the free will of the individual in order to make it consonant with the written law. This is in contrast with the Hegelian concept which insinuates that courts should not require duties in potential conflict with peoples’ own substantive ends, but should rather be experienced as a realization of their free will (Audi, 1995).

On the other hand, traditional means of conflict resolution do capture the attention of the entire community rather than use of a single judge. What happens to the individual happens to the community and what happens to the community happens to the individual (Mwesigye, 1990). Those means of conflict resolution look at the internal cosmological context and content of the traditional mechanism (Mwangiru, 1999). The individual becomes a microcosm within a large macrocosm. Africans lead their people by consensus, build their support from the grass roots up, and are not imposed upon the people from the top (Titilayo, 1999). Actors are elders, clan leaders, family members, traditional healers, friends, and religious personages. Lanek (1999) succinctly puts it that traditional clan elders are predominantly engaged in conflict resolution, arbitration and reconciliation of disputants. The performance of these special people is accepted in most societies since their resolution of conflicts was always systematic (Lanek, 1999).

Methods used differ from society to society, but all in all, the individual’s total emotions are involved and the conscience is penetrated. This is in effect lime-lighted by the sentimental words of Suzan, who was deeply traumatized by the forced killings she carried out when she was abducted by the Lord’s Resistance Army of Joseph Kony. She laments thus; “I feel so bad about the things that I did. It disturbs me so much that I inflicted death on other people. When I go home, I must perform traditional rites because I have killed. I must perform these rites and cleanse myself” (Human Rights Watch).

In using traditional means of reconciliation, past experiences are evoked. This leads the victim to a remorseful experience. This is in consonance with the principle tenet of empiricism of Thomas Aquinas, Friedrich Nietzsche and John Locke, thus *“nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fluerit in sensu”* meaning that nothing is in the understanding that has not been previously in the senses (Audi, 1995). Adjacently, Nietzsche calls this the human possibilities in the service of past experience. In effect, during the ritual of reconciliation, stories are told to the participating community of past experiences and how these adversely affected those who did not take heed, and how those who accepted were rewarded (Mubangizi, 1963). Before the paper tackles in detail the widely publicized and very pathetic situation of northern Uganda as a good example, a few examples of ways of conflict resolution in Africa can be cited. Amongst the Bakiga, a kind of hypnosis (*okusisya*) was used which would manipulate the individuals psyche during sleep to let the wrong person air out what he or she has done. This would reveal the wrong party, who would convincingly accept any means of penance (Karwemera, 1984). This was an appeal to supernatural means. There was also *okushoora*. The medicine man would put cow ghee in boiling water and invite the conflicting individuals to come and remove the ghee. The one who did it before it could melt was the winner and declared innocent (Karwemera, 1984). It is, however, believed that the wrong doer would fear to get burnt, and would therefore declare himself or herself guilty before the exercise of removing the cow ghee was performed. Whatever the case, reconciliation was effected.

Among the Banyakole, when one killed a person, the murderer was considered non-human. A ceremony (*okuganga*) was performed to bring that person back to society. The murderer is smeared with concoctions mixed with his own blood. He stays in the kitchen eating alone for four days and after this, he is considered cleansed (Mubangizi, 1963). Among the Nuer of Southern Sudan, when a person killed another, compensation would be in terms of heads cattle equivalent to those given for bride price (Howell, 1954).

Furthermore, among the Bakiga, restitution (*okuhonga*) would consist of beer, a goat or a sheep (Karwemera 1994). In Luo, if a man killed another, the murderer was forced to marry the deceased's wife to let orphans and the widow continue with family life (Karooma, 2005). The immediate foregoing position is hereby critiqued as illogical, in case this would be the main intention of the murderer. The above are cases dealing with an individual which was an easier affair. Dealing with groups had to take recourse to accepted norms, goals and values of their groups which would, by and large, aim at conflict prevention (Armstrong, 1999). For example, among the Bakiga, taboos (*emizizo*) were established to keep members together (Karwamera, 1994). To reduce feuds among the Bakiga, blood pacts (*okunywana, omukago*) were established, and it was taboo for members of such group to conflict (Karwemera, 1994). On this basis, it is generally and ultimately construed that African communities were dealing more with conflict prevention than conflict resolution, a better means of conflict management.

5. An Example of Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda

Concerning Northern Uganda where there has been a bloody insurgency for over a long period of time led by Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the aforementioned two means of conflict resolution have been suggested, thus recourse to the courts of law and use of traditional means of conflict resolution. War has been going on between the Government and LRA. There has been a lot of human suffering in the affected areas, mainly Acholi Sub-Region, because of this war. In December 2003, the Government of Uganda referred the situation of the LRA to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. Investigations resulted in the ICC indictment of top LRA commanders, namely Joseph Kony, Vincent Otti, Raska Lukwiya, Dominic Ogweng and Okot Odhiambo for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity (Uganda Joint Christian Council Report, 2007). Proponents of this position insist that taking into consideration the gravity of the atrocities committed by the LRA high command, it is justified that they face the arm of the law. Retribution to the offended will give them psychological satisfaction, and this will lead to justice.

A section of people however, especially those affected, disagreed with the Government and ICC decisions, and preferred the traditional means of conflict resolution. Such people include religious leaders from Northern Uganda, a cross section of NGOs, elders, some politicians from the North, and the rebels themselves. Involving society in such a complicated case is very pertinent, and is reminiscent of conflict resolution in African societies in earlier days. The LRA commanders are asking the government to legalize *mato oput*, the Acholi traditional justice system (Daily Monitor, June 22, 2007). That would help the indicted rebel leaders escape the ICC arrest warrants, or else they remain in the bush fighting. They quote article 17, (a) of the Rome Statute which provides that "if the local jurisdiction is able genuinely to carry out prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations of the violations of human rights, the ICC would then not be competent to prosecute the case referred to it". Whereas this paper does not condone the current African political movement to secede from ICC, it nonetheless maintains that the indictment by ICC to the top rebels has been viewed as a stumbling block to the return of rebels. The rebels say that they fear arrest after coming out of the bush. The ICC, quoting its own means

of procedure and sections of its law, has since insisted on indicting the rebels. The rebels may not have had, and may actually not have a political agenda, but they have sustained the war for over 20 years, and people have suffered tremendously during this time. Moreover, they had their own cause of waging war. This may not auger well with international standards of the just war theory, but Socratic intellectualism, the claim that moral goodness or virtue consists exclusively in a kind of knowledge, concludes that if one knows what is good and evil, one cannot fail to be a good person and to act in a morally upright way. In Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle asserts that the goal of choice of an act is the human good, namely living well (Audi, 1995). On the other hand, Rene Descartes argues that since they are finite, human beings often go wrong because the data supplied by the senses is often obscure and confused. Taking the above philosophical arguments, rebels cannot be blamed squarely and *mato oput* becomes the best way of solving the long standing conflict.

Whereas the paper does not intend to condone the horrific acts of the LRA, it at a certain level takes a pragmatic victim perspective where judgment has to favor the actual people suffering directly from the effects of war. Victim perspective here, as used in critical criminology, seeks to highlight the most vulnerable in society, such that in accounting for justice, the advocacy and practice take into consideration those issues connected with victim satisfaction (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000). If reparation shall be considered in whatever form, then the victim could appropriately have a voice (Ashworth, 2000). It is adjacently acknowledged that people in Northern and Eastern Uganda have been traumatized and messed up by fellow creatures in this world and these people must take the benefit of doubt (Achilles & Stutz-Amstutz, 2006; Goody, 2000).

Adjacently, the ICC has no absolute justified claim, because people who lost their dear ones, whose lips, limbs and buttocks were chopped, whose relatives were cooked in pots, who were raped and maimed, whose children were abducted, who in short were subjected to untold misery, are saying that if their children, the rebels, undergo *mato oput*, they will be forgiven. This is still the cry of the people of the affected areas, despite the relative peace that exists there. This logically renders ICC arguments less tenable when the victims' satisfaction takes precedence in judgment. This is substantiated by a radical and highly generalized standing ovation of Bishop Baker Ochola, a retired bishop from Acholi Sub-region, who believes that *mato oput* is the best model of conflict resolution in the world. Unlike the ICC, *mato oput* involves the community which, by its very African nature, is forgiving. Ochola (2007) candidly puts it that according to Luo culture, justice cannot be reached without mercy or forgiveness. Thus, *mato oput* promotes a model of healing through a culture of non-violence, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. Ochola (2010), together with Ariko (2010), have reiterated this position of renouncing the efficiency of ICC in resolving the Kony conflict.

Furthermore; *mato oput*, like other African means of conflict resolution, is a cheaper and quicker means of conflict resolution to a region that is already impoverished by the very conflict and other national wastages. Whereas the ICC involves trial in The Hague in Netherlands, *mato oput* is local. According to Mr. Opio Felix, a member from the Northern Uganda and Senior Assistant Academic Registrar, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, with *mato oput* or *kayo cuk (bilo)* in Lango, the aggrieved parties come together and after jumping over crushed eggs they acknowledge the wrong done. They amicably agree to forgive each other or to be forgiven in the presence of community elders. The words are proclaimed while drinking a concoction of a mixture of crashed charcoal particles mixed with sap from a certain plant, using a calabash. This is an extremely simple, cheap, quick and effective act of conflict management, though there are other complexities involved like paying a number of heads of cattle per person lost. The paper suggests that such traditional means of solving disputes should be reconsidered and be integrated in finding true peace to the affected people. Forgiveness is a treasured

tenet in African style of conflict resolution. Interestingly, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda castigated the acts of the ICC during the inauguration ceremony of President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya. It is important, heretofore, to note that during the 21st regular summit of the African Union Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa in May 2013, the African leaders suggested a withdrawal from the ICC in a proposal dubbed “African renaissance”. The argument put forward is that the ICC’s means of procedure are foreign to Africa.

Several researchers have reiterated that *mato oput* can be applied to bring about peace and tranquility in Acholi sub-region, and insist that courts of law can bring about injustices (Afako, 2002; Ariko, 2010; Ochola, 2010). This is because condemning five commanders implies condemning the entire LRA who executed the commands of their seniors. The majority of researchers testify that most combatants in the LRA were abducted by force, and have themselves been victims. This generates the realization that anyone could be subjected to the conditions that produced perpetrators of the crimes experienced in the conflict. Combined with a profound wariness with the war, and the suffering it has caused, this creates a moral empathy with the perpetrators, and an acknowledgement that the formal justice system is not sufficiently minced to make the necessary distinction between legal and moral guilt. As a result, most Acholi have decided to promote reconciliation and chosen to forgive, rather than apply the modern retributive understanding of justice, to create conditions to end the war and reintegrate the rebels in the community (Afako, 2002). Remaining in Garamba is not a solution as it is just a shift of the problem. Moreover, the actual problem, well analyzed, is not Joseph Kony himself, who can be captured any time, but rather “konyism” or the spirit behind Kony’s rebellion.

A number of people, in another school of thought, assert that *mato oput* is only limited to the Acholi, yet the war has affected many more regions. Onyago (2007), for example, asks why only *mato oput* and no other means of conflict resolution. The main proponent of this view Mr. Francis Onyango himself works with ICC and would possibly like to justify the policies of his employers. Nevertheless, it is widely known that the LRA commanders and the majority of the LRA soldiers are Acholi. These are the ones who attack other vulnerable areas, and if they stopped fighting, through which ever possible means, then peace would be realized. Admittedly, it is clear the Kony versus Uganda conflict is sustained because of blockage of opportunities to manage it. Peace initiatives in Uganda, which were attempted, must be applauded and such trials must be encouraged. Unfortunately, the issue of Kony rebels has since been politicized much to the detriment of the affected people. Even the use of internet in the film “the invisible children” to demonize Kony has had its political share.

6. The Way Forward

By and large, the modern style of conflict resolution has been defective and has abetted the prison congestion problem. Many Africans are detained without trial and may remain in goal for long, allegedly due to lack of enough judges to handle the cases (Amnesty International, 2006). Definitely, present means of conflict resolution in Africa have not been successful because they are not based on the African perspectives (Kagabo, 1999). This makes clear the paper’s argument that using traditional means of conflict resolution, along with but not limited to modern means, can improve conflict resolution in Africa. Important to note is the traditional system of conflict management recently reintroduced in Rwanda, the traditional courts locally referred to as Gacaca, which has supplemented the court system. This system has not only helped to decongest prisons in Rwanda, but has also proved to be very effective.

Conflict handling has become an important issue in the start of the third millennium as the natural resource base goes on shrinking (Muhanguzi, 2003). Corruption, overpopulation, over-capitalism, individualism, diminishing geo-resources, all generate conflicts, since people cannot utilize the resources at the same rate as they do not have the same needs and abilities at the same time. Conflict generates wars, and wars lead to destruction of human life and property. Refugees are created as is the case with Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, causing hunger, disease and death. Innocent recipients of the wrath of war are usually females and children. Females suffer rape, defilement, forced marriages, conditioned prostitution and uncalled for widowhood (Mwesigye, 2004). Children are recruited into forces as child soldiers. This bizarre situation prevents the children from going to school and they develop a militant culture that spills over to society when they mature, creating a vicious circle. Therefore, the African continent should be ready to look for ways and means of resolving her conflict not negating the African values.

Accordingly, in modern means of conflict management, there is hedonism involved. According to John Stuart Mill, this is a psychological fact where people seek only pleasure (Audi, 1995). On the contrary, African conflict management is axiological and utilitarian. It is in line with utilitarian theory of Epicurus supported by Mill and Bentham, and is parallel to Dewey. It criticizes any sharp distinction between what is intrinsically good as a means on the ground, as means we adopt, and the means adopted to achieve it. It abandons ends to the extent that they serve as means to the resolution of conflicting impulses and desires. Conflict management must be contextual, more concerned with how matters of human life could be evaluated, and with which values Africans live. Matters should be related to perspectivism, in light of their condition and state.

Therefore, Africans must uphold African values spelt in the African Charter of Human and People's Rights especially articles 17 (1 & 2) and 29. Certainly, harsh traditional means of conflict resolution like capital punishment, excommunication, banishment, ostracization, incarceration on islands, have to be redefined and restated (Mwesigye, 1999). A spirit of nationalism, Pan-Africanism, emancipation, respect for systems, reduction in social inequality based on region, religion, ethnicity, royalty, or class, should be revisited. Broadening the military base so that no group monopolizes the tools of force, addressing the evil of corruption, enhancing common means of communication, inculcating the sense of patriotism or nationalism in citizens, all should be the bottom line of successful conflict avoidance (Jogoo, 2004). Furthermore, use of religious leaders, civil society, and more reliance on Africans themselves as is the case in Somalia where Burundian and Ugandan peace keepers are respected more by Somalis, could enhance the peace process in Africa (Nkurunziza, 2003).

African aesthetics like art and music should provide a rare opportunity to prevent and or address conflicts. Already, there is a group of 50 young people from the Great Lakes Region using music, drama and martial arts to promote peace in this sub-region. A lot of process drama is conducted for conflict resolution and peacemaking throughout the world and Africa. There was a music center called *pararotti* who had an experience in Bosnia and extended the same culture and technique to Guatemala and Liberia. The Republic of South Africa is a good example of the use of music to end apartheid like Linda Bongani an ex-freedom fighter and his Victory Sunqoba Theatre, Miriam Makeba, Ivon Chaka Chaka, Lucky Dube, and others. Bole Butake, a professor of drama at the University of Younde has used drama to diffuse perpetual conflicts between farmers and cattle keepers in the Northern Province of Cameroon. As the saying goes that the eyes of an African are in his hands, the use of audio-visual aids is very important in African culture. Therefore, conflicts in Africa can be effectively resolved without necessarily using courts of law.

7. Conclusion

The situation in Africa, a rich continent with people having shared values, has been very fragile since independence. The victims of the insurgencies and counter-insurgencies have been treated in the most macabre way. There is need for relative and sustained peace in Africa so that the continent can experience reconstruction and development like many other parts of the world. Whereas courts of law may continue to work, traditional means of reconciliation should be incorporated as in the case of Kony in Uganda, and in many other cases in Africa, since such means of reconciliation are very effective.

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