The Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy

ISSN: 2467-8406 (Print) 2467-8392 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jsdlp

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Sustainability of Development and Peace in Africa

Samuel Chukwudi Agunyai

To cite this article: Samuel Chukwudi Agunyai (2023). The COVID-19 Pandemic and Sustainability of Development and Peace in Africa. The Journal of Sustainable Development, Law and Policy. Vol. 14:2. 83-106, DOI: 10.4314/jsdlp.v14i2.5

To link this article: DOI: 10.4314/jsdlp.v14i2.5

Published online: December 1, 2023.

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jsdlp

© Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND SUSTAINABILITY OF DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE IN AFRICA

Samuel Chukwudi Agunyai *

Citation:
Samuel Chukwudi Agunyai (2023). The COVID-19 Pandemic and Sustainability of Development and Peace in Africa.The Journal of Sustainable Development, Law and Policy. Vol. 14:2. 83-106.

Submitted:
1 July 2023
Final version received:
31 October 2023

ISSN: 2467-8406 (Print)
2467-8392 (Online)

ABSTRACT

Contrary to the general opinion that the COVID-19 pandemic is destructive, it presented a mutual agreement situation between conflicting parties in some African states. Although the sustainability of this mutual agreement is difficult to establish, evidence shows that conflicting parties jointly agreed to combat the common enemy called COVID-19 purposefully because the pandemic affects all, including warriors in battle fields. While several studies on this subject are quick to criticize the pandemic as highly destructive, there is very little research on the positive attributes of the pandemic. Drawing on secondary data and state fragility theory, this article examines how the pandemic somehow stimulated development and peace in some conflict-ridden African states. It specifically interrogates how sustainable development and peace were during the pandemic era. The findings reveal the extent to which development and peace have fared amid COVID-19 in Africa.

Keywords: COVID-19, Development, Pandemic, Peace, Sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

All things being equal, socio-economic development is likely to be high and available in a conflict-free and peaceful country. It is also possible that in this contemporary global system, adequate security, peace, and socio-economic development are partly the determinants of attraction of foreign direct investment, capable of swinging a country to the pedestal of development. Studies have supported this view and have highlighted the role of state and non-state actors in combating conflict-stimulating conditions by the COVID-19[1]. As the COVID-19 penetrated Africa, there were calls for collaborations within and outside Africa to tackle the pandemic. The precarious state of some African countries, especially those with existing armed ravaging conflicts, whose capacity to effectively tackle the pandemic is low or limited, partly led to the call for global collective action against COVID-19. While on the global scene, the UN's call showcases an appeal made by Antonio Guterres, on March 23, 2020, calling for cease-fire in all conflicting countries of the world [2]. It is to enable the response against the pandemic more effective and sustaining. Africa's call, was made by the African Union (AU) in a call, tagged "Silence-the-Guns". It was hoped to engage both state and armed non-state actors, grappling each other in an existing conflict, to drop their guns and combat the COVID-19 collectively.

While the call for cooperation between conflicting parties yielded positive outcomes in some conflict-affected countries, like between Saudi and Palestine, the outcome was not the same in other conflict-affected African countries like Libya, South Sudan, Nigeria, Cameroun among others[3]. The difference, could have been due to the proactiveness of some governments in eradicating

---

* Dr. Agunyai Samuel Chukwudi, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, North West University, South Africa and Lecturer, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. Email: agunyais@oauife.edu.ng

1 De Coning, Cedric, 'COVID-19 and the Resilience of Africa's Peace and Security Networks' (2021) 14 African Security 341,369

2 Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia, 2:4,1678–1687.

3 Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'We Aren't Killing Each Other, but We Bear Grudges That Could Be Sparked': How Interreligious 'Peace' and Non-Peace Coexist in a West African City' (2020)31 Islam and Christian Muslim Relations 307,323

conflict-provoking conditions imposed by COVID-19. Most African governments failed or lack the capacity to provide adequate supports in terms of finance, palliatives, and other social security incentives that can cushion the effects of harsh conditions of the COVID-19. This invariably created tensions and local violence that led to the resurgence of most of the existing wars and conflicts in African states with existing conflicts [4].

Apart from activating conditions or drivers of war or conflict, the COVID-19 hampered peacebuilding process. It is true that the cease-fire and silence the guns calls fostered cooperation between state and armed non-state actors in some conflict affected countries, this cooperation, like in countries like Senegal and Saudi, forestalled peace and peace agreement[5]. However, the sustainability of this cooperation or peacebuilding process appears to be highly suspicious, as more ravaging conflicts later broke between Saudi and Palestinian government during the second wave of COVID-19[6]. Similarly, in countries like Libya, South Sudan, and Nigeria, evidence shows that cooperation was reached to cease-fire between armed non-state actors and the state actors, to enable robust response to the COVID-19, in the first early wave of the pandemic. However, as people began to feel the harsh consequences of the pandemic, especially, the armed insurgents, they resorted into violent protests and criminal activities, which led to the collapse of some peacebuilding agreements [7]. This goes to show that additional stress and frustrations imposed by the pandemic on conflict-affected countries, not only led to the resurgence of conflict, but the dissolution of peacebuilding process, and peace in Africa. Ethiopia's Tigray conflict in November, 2020 further corroborates the fact that COVID-19 may not necessarily led to a new war or conflict, but it activated

---

[4] Ongoma, Victor., Epule, Terence Epule, Brouziyne, Youssef, Tanarhte, Meryem, & Chehbouni, Abdelghani., 'COVID-19 Response in Africa: Impacts and Lessons for Environmental Management and Climate Change Adaptation,' (2023)25 Environment, Development and Sustainability,1,23

[5] Lehrs Lior, 'Conflict and Cooperation in the Age of COVID-19: The Israeli-Palestinian Case'(2021)97 International Affairs 1843,1862.

[6] Onuma Hiroki, Shin Kong Joo, Managi Shunsuke, 'Short-Medium and Long-Term Growth Impacts of Catastrophic and Non-Catastrophic Natural Disasters' (2021)5 Economics of Disaster Climate Change 53,70

[7] Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687.

conditions (low purchasing power, negative coping strategies, total shutdowns at home, unequal distribution of palliatives, selective or divisive humanitarian responses, among others), that provoked the resurgence of existing wars or conflicts in conflict-affected regions of Africa[8]. This explains why conflict-affected African states like Nigeria, Libya, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, despite their cease-fire, later resorted into violence when the government was trying to implement the lockdown measure[9]. The armed non-state actors felt infuriated or angered with how the state effectively utilized the instrument of coercion to execute COVID-19 safety measures[10].

From the foregoing analyses, it can be inferred that COVID-19 has significant impact on resurgence of conflict and dissolution of peace talk or agreement in conflict-affected countries. This, in return, affects their socio-economic development, as the resurgence of conflict and breakdown of peacebuilding process will lessen the country's attraction of foreign direct investment by scaring away possible local and foreign investment in the country. While the socio- economic and level of development of countries of the world have been shrunken by the COVID-19, the development of countries with existing wars or conflicts is more devastating because of the resurgence of the conflict and breakdown of peace and peace agreements. This brings to the fore the relevance of this article, which tries to examine how COVID-19 impacts on conflict, peace, and socio-economic development in Africa. It specifically proposes questions such as how has the COVID-19 stimulated resurgence of existing conflict in some African states, dismantled peace, and hampered development? How have conflict-affected countries responded to COVID-19? How can Africa mitigate conflict-provoking conditions imposed by COVID-19? These questions were addressed using systematic qualitative method. The rationale for this method is hinged on the fact that the research intends to provide answers and adequate

---

[8] Shulla Kaltarina, and others 'Effects of COVID-19 on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Discover' (2021)2 Sustainability 1,19

[9] Ide Tobias, 'COVID-19 and Armed Conflict' (2021)140 World Development, 105355,105364

[10] Christofis Nikos, 'Peace building', in Romaniuk Scott, Thapa Manish, Marton Peter (eds.) The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Global Security Studies. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020)

information to some research questions. For Canwat[11] systematic method is best used for any research that seeks to answer some hypothesized questions drawn from the subject.

Following the introduction is conceptual and theoretical underpinnings, which is followed by the impact of the COVID-19 on conflict, peace, and socio-economic development. The next section discusses how conflict-affected countries responded to the pandemic, while the subsequent one discusses the mitigation strategies Africa can adopt against conflict-provoking conditions of COVID-19. This was followed by the conclusion and recommendations.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

One of the greatest challenges facing Africa unlike the continents is conflict. Africa as a continent is partly down in socio-economic development index because of existing lingering wars or conflicts. Although, conflict, is believed to be inevitable among human begins, but the extent to which it ravages African countries is alarming, dehumanizing, and requires serious concern within and outside Africa. Conflict is generally a disagreement between two or more parties over issues of interests as the case may be. In this context, conflict that exist within African countries is the focus. That is, existing conflicts in African countries. These are usually conflicts caused by issues bothering on climate change, communal clashes, boundary dispute, resources control, ethnicity, secession, religion, governance failure, insurgency, violent protests, xenophobic, military interventions among others. Evidence shows that many of the African countries have at least one or two types of the foregoing conflicts[12]. Africa remains highly prone to conflicts, with almost 30% of the countries in Africa affected by

---

[11] Canwat Vincent, 'Political economy of COVID-19: windows of opportunities and contestations in East Africa' (2023)10 Humanities and Social Sciences Communication 599

[12] Ossai Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687

conflict as at 2019[13]. Although, the intensity and ramifications of armed conflict dropped in early 2000s, but since 2010, there have been spike in the resurgence of armed conflicts in Africa[14].

The intensity and tradition of conflicts in Africa changed from the usual civil wars in 1990s and replaced by the armed non-state actors' onslaught[15]. Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa have remained very bad and deadly, as more than 825,000 conflict-related deaths was recorded in the 1990s alone[16]. This huge death figure was driven by the genocide war in Rwanda; lingering violence in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone as well as the Ethiopian-Eritrean war[17]. In contemporary Africa, civil wars no longer drive armed conflicts, but climate change, resource control, ethnic identity, call for secession, military interventions, COVID-19, religion, among others, provoke conflicts. In some countries like Nigeria, Cameroun, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, South Africa, Mali, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, and more recently, Niger, drivers of armed conflicts include, climate change, ethnicity, religion, military take-overs, boundary dispute, calls for secession, among others. There are some countries with more than one nature or dimension of conflicts, for example Nigeria is grappling with herders-farmers conflicts caused by climate change, it is also confronted by conflicts driven by religion (commonly between the Christians and Muslims in Plateau State, ethnicity (Ife-Modakeke conflicts), resource control (conflict between Nigerian army and militants in Niger-Delta region, Nigeria). Similarly, South Africa is facing internal armed conflicts such as violent protests against marginalization of Black South Africans, xenophobic conflicts, the Marikana massacre, among others. In

---

13 Ibid.

14 Clapham Christopher, The Horn of Africa: State formation and decay (London, Hurst and Company, 2017)

15 Mueller Hannes and Tobias Julia, The cost of violence: Estimating the economic impact of conflict (International Growth Centre,2016)<https://www.theigc.org/sites/default/files/2016/12/IGCJ5023_Economic_Cost_of_Conflict_Brief_2211_v7_WEB.pdf > accessed 20 October 2023

16 Xiaodong Zheng, Xiangming Fang, Hope Ugboke and Deborah Fry, 'Violence against Children and Human Capital in South Africa' (2019) 34 Journal of Family Violence 139,151

17 Serhan Cevik and John Ricco, Fiscal Consequences of Terrorism (IMF Working Paper, October 23, 2015)< https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2016/12/31/Fiscal -Consequences-of-Terrorism-43359> accessed 30 October, 2023

Libya, since the dethronement of Muammar Gaddafi, there have been more dangerous and ravaging conflicts between the interim government supported by the West and the Libyan National Army[18]. The Ambazonian separatist movements and the Cameroonian government have been in a long battle over the call for secession from Cameroun[19]. Angola's armed conflict is between the Angolan government and the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) over independence of Cabinda province[20].

Evidence abounds to support the description of Africa as theatre of war or conflict. From the country-by-country analyses of existing conflicts, it is very clear that one of the reasons why Africa has a very low development ranking index is due to armed conflicts. These conflicts, no doubt, have huge severe implications for the region's socio-economic development. Although, the effect of conflict on the economic largely depends on the intensity and duration, it affects the economy of a country beyond the conflict period and has s significant long-term output loss[21]. It affects tax revenue, as it is always difficult to generate income from taxation during armed conflict. It also changes government expenditure towards huge spending on the defense sector. This aptly explains the Nigerian case, where huge sum amount is allocated for the defense ministry, whereas, education and health sectors received very little budgetary allocation[22].

Conflict-affected countries or regions are zones, regions, or countries that have been battling with armed conflicts before the COVID-19 pandemic penetrated[23]. These are countries, especially African states with existing armed conflicts before the outbreak of

---

18 Montevecchio Caesar, 'The Peace Dimension of the COVID-19 Pandemic'(2021)5 The Journal of Social Encounters 37, 50

19 Ossai Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687.

20 Makosso Amanda 'United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in the Era of COVID-19' (2020)3 Journal of. Intelligence, Conflict and Warfare25, 39

21 Natalija Novta and Evgenia Pugacheva, 'The macroeconomic costs of conflict' (2021) 68 Journal of Macroeconomics 10328

22 Agunyai Samuel Chukwudi and Ojakorotu Victor**,** **'**Budgetary Allocations and Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa and Nigeria' (2022)15 Journal of Risk and Financial Management 252

23 Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678,1687.

the COVID-19. Nigeria before COVID-19 struck have existing armed conflicts ranging from Boko-Haram insurgency, Fulani herders-farmers conflicts, banditry, Biafra calls for secession, gunmen attacks, militant onslaught in South-South Nigeria. With the penetration of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, conflict-provoking conditions were activated. This invariably worsened the precarious existing conflicts in Nigeria, as the state's use of coercion to execute COVID-19 safety restrictive measures, provoked more ravaging violence in the country[24]. This is because the pandemic activated drivers of conflicts, these drivers include low purchasing power of citizens, negative coping strategies, restriction of movements, unequal distribution of COVID-19 humanitarian palliatives, social and economic frustrations, among others.

All of these are conditions that angered citizens, especially daily income earners and the unemployed to engage in crime, violent protests, and armed conflict with the Nigerian state. For Idowu[25], COVID-19 activated conditions, gave rise to the incessant armed attacks by the bandits. It was revealed that while the Nigerian army leveraged on the COVID-19 showdowns and movement restrictions to tame and curtailed Boko-Haram insurgency, the same cannot be said about bandits' attacks amid COVID-19 in Nigeria. The reduction in attacks from Boko-Haram insurgents and their decimation by the Nigerian army, during COVID-19 may have been due to the lockdown measure that made majority of their targets (civilians), remain at home. The rise in bandits' attacks amid COVID-19 was because bandits live among the people at the community level, it was easy for them to kidnap and attack people in their homes, unlike Boko-Haram insurgents that live in caves, forests, and dangerous camps in bushes. The foregoing analyses showed that prior to the struck of COVID-19 in Nigeria, there are existing conflicts. COVID-19 only activated conditions that provoked conflicts, that further devastated the dangerous existing conflicts.

---

[24] Amusan Lere and Agunyai Samuel Chukwudi**,** 'The COVID-19 Pandemic and the crisis of Lockdowns in Nigeria: The food security perspective' (2021) 9 Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review 78,98

[25] Idowu Harrison Adewale, 'Reappraising conflict trends in Nigeria amidst the COVID-19 pandemic' (2020)3 Conflict Trends 20,27

Peace is a complete absence of direct or physical conflicts in a country or region. COVID-19 related peace concept is hardly discussed in the literature. Peace and peacebuilding from the perspective of conflict have both been widely discussed in past studies, evidence is scarce on COVID-19 related peace or peacebuilding[26]. Peace in the context of COVID-19 refers to absence of existing war or armed conflict due to the penetration of the pandemic. While peacebuilding in the context of COVID-19 is the cooperation or agreement between the conflicting parties to cease-fire and embrace peace to enable them collectively and cooperatively combat the COVID-19, which was regarded as the greatest challenge to humankind as the time of its outbreak. Indeed, peace, no matter how temporary, it was, was achieved with the penetration of the COVID-19 in some countries. In West Bank, peace was reached between Israel and Palestinian government, when they both agreed to cease fire in order to collectively respond to the COVID-19 (Ossia, 2021; Lehrs, 2021)[27]. It was the same result in some African countries too, for example, in Nigeria, the Muslims and Christians have to team-up and cooperated in fervent prayers in churches and mosques to God to crush the COVID-19[28]. With the penetration of the COVID-19 in Nigeria, Muslims and Christians have to jettisoned their differences and embrace peace and cooperation to collectively use the instrument of prayer to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Ossai[29] also revealed that in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leon the three countries, despite their existing internal armed conflicts, combined efforts to combat EBOLA. This goes to show that contrary to popular held view about the negative stance of COVID-19, it has been instrumental to stimulation of peace, cooperation, and peacebuilding between and among conflicting parties.

---

[26] Canwat Vincent, 'Political economy of COVID-19: windows of opportunities and contestations in East Africa' (2023)10 Humanities and Social Sciences Communication 599

[27] Lehrs, Lior, 'Conflict and Cooperation in the Age of COVID-19: The Israeli-Palestinian Case' (2021)97 International Affairs, 1843, 1862.

[28] Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'We Aren't Killing Each Other, but We Bear Grudges That Could Be Sparked: How Interreligious 'Peace' and Non-Peace Coexist in a West African City' (2020)31 Islam and Christian Muslim Relations 307,323.

[29] Ibid.

It also goes to show that the COVID-19 has significant impact on peace generally. Its impact on peace is better understood from perspective of short, medium, and long terms[30]. The short-term effect of peace amid COVID-19 was the time the pandemic was announced in 2019 as a threat to the world and when it was waning, depending on the response [31]. While medium-term effect, is between the period of its outbreak and recovery period, its long-term effect is the period it takes a country to fully recover from the COVID-19[32]. It can therefore be inferred that while the COVID-19 activated conflict-provoking conditions, it stimulated peace and peacebuilding moves. One of such moves, is the global call made by the UN that all countries with existing wars or conflicts, should immediately cease-fire and cooperate to effectively tackle COVID-19 (Mehrl & Thurner, 2020)[33]. In Africa too, the call by AU was tagged "Silence the Guns" in conflict-affected African countries to enhance a robust response against the pandemic (Ide, 2021)[34]. All of these calls were heeded by most conflict-affected countries, thus, creating the expected peace amid COVID-19 in conflict-affected African countries. However, in some other instances and in some conflict-affected countries, COVID-19 scuttled peacebuilding process, as some of the peace agreements reached were not sustainable or permanent[35]. The case of Israel and Palestine, where the initial peace and peacebuilding process of the first wave of the pandemic collapsed in the second wave, aptly explains how COVID-19 distorts peace and peace agreements. In Nigeria, it was the same, as the peace accord reached between Fulani herders and farmers in Benue State, also collapsed due to lingering nature of COVID-19. In other African countries like Angola, Cameroun, Libya, and South Sudan, the result was the same as the peace and cooperation reached by conflicting parties during the early wave of the pandemic could

---

30 Montevecchio Caesar, 'The Peace Dimension of the COVID-19 Pandemic' (2021)5 The Journal of Social Encounters 37, 50

31 Ossai Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687

32 Ibid.

33 Marius Mehrl and Paul Thurner, 'The Effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Global Armed Conflict: Early Evidence' (2021)19 Political Studies Review 286,293

34 Ide Tobias, 'COVID-19 and Armed Conflict' (2021)140 World Development 105355, 105364

35 Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687.

not stand the test of time in second and third waves of the pandemic. This may have made Makosso[36] conclude that COVID-19 has mixed impacts on peace and peacebuilding.

With COVID-19 global ramifications, socio-economic development, which is the transformation of the social and economic conditions of a country to a more desirable and advanced level was adversely affected. It is an increase in country's GDP, levels of employment, literacy level, and life expectancy. The COVID-19 lockdown restrictive measures severely hampered all the indicators of socio-economic development across continents. For example, with restriction on movements, there was reduction in local productive efforts across sectors (manufacturing, agriculture, oil, among others). The domestic production, especially from small and medium scale enterprises, was very low, due to restriction of movement. In addition to this, the lockdown led to massive retrenchment of the workforce and low earnings of daily income earners. This contributed to reduction in purchasing power of people, thus, making them to resort to undesirable coping strategies. COVID-19 activated conditions of loss of jobs, low domestic production, untimely deaths, leading to low life expectancy, and low literacy level as people are prevented from going to school. For example, many students from rural areas in Africa lack access to internet facilities to continue with their studies online. This, does not only waned their interest to learn and study, but made some of them dropped-out from school. This has severe implications for low literacy level in some African countries.

Theoretically, state fragility theory succinctly explains why violence and resurgence of existing conflicts in some African states. This holds the view that the inability of the government or failure of the state to perform its core functions to meet the needs of its citizens, often, provide the opportunity for some citizens to take up arms against the state or resort into criminal activities like violence. The theory further argues that the failure or deficiency of the state to perform its authority to control violence, capacity to provide basic needs of the people, and legitimacy, which is its

---

[36] Makosso Amanda, 'United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in the Era of COVID-19' (2020)3 Journal of. Intelligence, Conflict and Warfare 25, 39

ability to respect the law, fundamental human rights, and freedom from oppression[37]. States in Africa, especially, conflict-affected states, before the outbreak of the pandemic lack effective authority and control over existing wars or conflicts, weak capacity to adequately provide services and welfare packages required by their citizens, and lack the public trust in terms of legitimacy, as majority of the African leaders, get to position of power through illegitimate means. This may have made Clapham[38] and Coleman and Tieku[39] submit that state's weakness to perform its core functions (authority, capacity, and legitimacy) is tantamount to violence and crises. Just like violent conflict fuels state fragility, according to Yonas[40], it can be inferred that COVID-19 fuels state fragility in Africa. The penetration of COVID-19 in Africa, especially in countries-affected by conflict, weakens the state's authority, capacity, and legitimacy. With the COVID-19 lockdown measure, coupled with the state's low capacity to support the people with grants, palliatives, loans, and other incentives, and the state's use of coercion to implement the COVID-19 measures, the existing violent conflicts in some of the African countries were continued, while other local violence and crises were provoked.

Unlike countries in the global north, where the state adequately supported their citizens with different categories of funds and palliatives to cushion the effects of the shutdowns[41]. Their counterparts in the global south, especially, African states failed support their citizens with grants and palliatives amid COVID-19[42]. This shows the extent of state fragility in Africa, as majority of the states show very low interest in following up on their

---

37 Yonas Adaye Adeto, 'State fragility and conflict nexus: Contemporary security issues in the Horn of Africa' (2019)19 African Journal on Conflict Resolution 11,36

38 Clapham Christopher, The Horn of Africa: State formation and decay (London, Hurst and Company, 2017)

39 Coleman Katharina and Tieku, Thomas, 'African actors in international security: Four pathways to influence" in Coleman Kathrina and Thomas Kwasi Tieku'(eds). African actors in international security: Shaping contemporary norms (Boulder, CO, Lynn Rienner, 2018) 1,21

40 Yonas Adaye Adeto, 'State fragility and conflict nexus: Contemporary security issues in the Horn of Africa' (2019)19 African Journal on Conflict Resolution 11,36

41 Nicolas Berman, Mathieu Couttenier, Nathalie Monnet, and Rohit Ticku, 'Shutdown policies and conflict worldwide'(2020)50 Journal of Comparative Economics 240-255

42 Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678,1687

citizens, for humanitarian assistance. In Africa, COVID-19 further weakened the already weak capacity of the state. For example, in most African states, despite their inability to support the people, they still apply the use of state coercion, which is heavily prone to abuse of human rights, oppression, and victimization, in the implementation of the lockdown measures[43]. In Nigeria, because of lack of the state's capacity to provide the needed supports in terms of palliatives, equitable distribution of COVID-19 incentives and packages, some youth broke into warehouses in search of food and resources they needed to survive during the shutdown[44]. From the foregoing, it can deduce that the COVID-19-state fragility nexus is critical to the resurgence of violent conflicts in conflict-affected African countries. It means that most of the violent conflicts that arose during the COVID-19 were because of the nexus between state fragility and the outbreak of the COVID-19 in Africa.

Comparatively, violence index rate in the global north was very low because states in this region have the authority, capacity, and legitimacy to perform their core functions and responsibilities expected to meet the expected needs of their citizens during COVID-19. The states were able to maintain and control violence, that may not likely arise, due to regular provision of humanitarian assistance and respect for their citizens fundamental human rights. The result was not the same in Africa, because most of the states are fragile and weak to perform their core functions during COVID-19. This provoked tendencies of violent conflicts in countries like Nigeria, South Sudan, Cameroun, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and others. It was reported that the COVID-19 shutdowns have been linked to the high rate of protests, violence, and criminality in 2020, as evidence showed that COVID-19-induced protests stood at 33,247 across the globe[45].

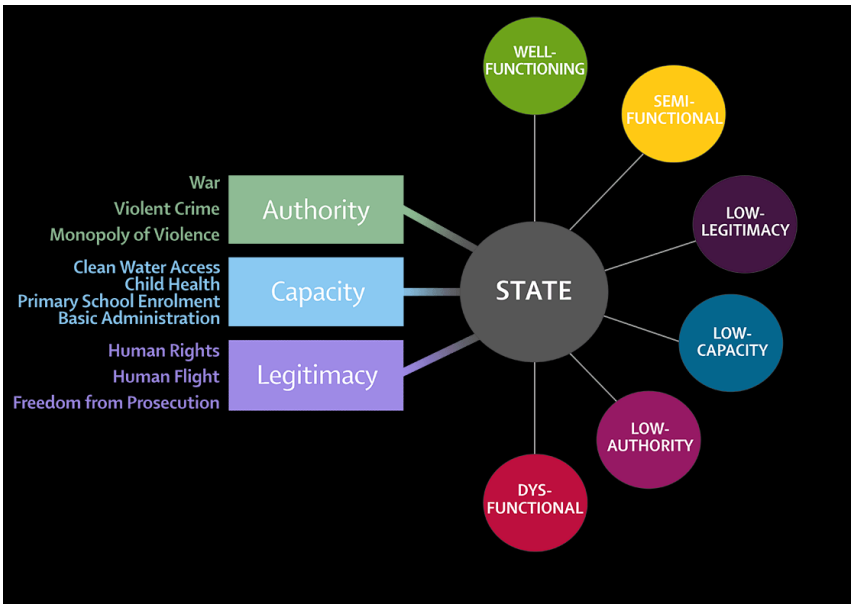
---

43 Ibid.

44 Bloem Jeffrey and Salemi Colette 'COVID-19 and Conflict' (2021) 140 World Develop ment 105294, 105313

45 Ossai Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687

Figure 1: State Fragility Theory



Source: (ACCORD, 2019)

From the figure above, it is evidently clear that the state's failure in terms of authority, capacity, and legitimacy, to adequately meet the expectations of its populations, will amount to dysfunction, which, can partly provoked violence, war, and crime. It can also be inferred from this figure that if the state lacks the legitimate power to act coupled with its weak capacity, the result is usually loss of authority and control over violence or conflict. This is likened to how Fukuyama[46] described state fragility as the inability of the seeming legitimacy of the government that holds the citizens together to freely accept its authority within and outside the country. It is evidently clear that most of the violent crimes, conflicts, protests, and frustrations during COVID-19, were partly because most African states have been more weakened with the penetration of the pandemic.

---

[46] Fukuyama Francis, Political Order and Political Decay from the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy (London, Profile Books, 17 September, 2015)

3. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONFLICT, PEACEBUILDING, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Since the history of global interaction, humankind has struggled with responding to humanitarian disasters and pandemics. Given the worsening economic and political crisis and the unprepared nature of most African countries' responses to humanitarian disasters, their response to the COVID-19 pandemic has remained a reference point across the globe. It is therefore not surprising that the outbreak of COVID-19 in China posed a serious challenge to human society. Indeed, scholars admitted that "the outbreak and spread of coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) is probably the most serious global challenge since World War II[47].

Acknowledging the fact that several African countries have been entrapped in a vicious circle of obstinate and protracted conflict, several initiatives, with the African Union Silencing the Guns Agenda (STG) as the most recent, have been adopted. Nonetheless, armed conflict occasioned by the activities of rebel groups and other non-state actors has persisted even amidst the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, to the dismay of many. In this context, Ossai[48] observed that while peace agreements and other forms of mediation have reduced the spate of armed conflict in some parts of Africa, some other parts have witnessed increased fighting, leading to the deaths of thousands of civilians. Specifically, armed groups and other non-state actors leveraged the restriction of movement to perpetuate heinous crimes, looting, and the destruction of lives and properties unhindered. Such acts not only constitute human insecurity but also impede the developmental strides achieved over the years. It is therefore not surprising that many African countries are now struggling to cope in the post-COVID-19 era while building peace and sustainable development. This problem not only constitutes human insecurity

---

47 Chinedu Josephine Onyishi, and others 'COVID-19 Pandemic and Informal Urban Governance in Africa: A Political Economy Perspective' (2020)56 Journal of Asian and African Studies 1121,1421

48 Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687.

but further worsens the security situation in Africa amidst the outbreak of COVID-19. Accordingly, Ossai[49] noted that a lack of basic health facilities and professionals impacted the way and manner in which African states responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. This in itself created a strong sense of health insecurity across the region, adding to the long list of challenges confronting the continent. Though several African leaders accept this problem as a serious challenge, efforts at addressing health insecurity remain meager[50]. In some countries, like Nigeria, monumental fraud in the health sector occurred, and this affected the capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a situation whereby a large number of its population embarked on medical tourism abroad[51].

Given that the proliferation of armed conflicts in Africa has led to a series of military interventions or operations, the onset of COVID-19 and the consequent calls for shutting down of activities greatly led to a reduction of these operations. Most notable is the fact that peacekeeping troops were equally restricted by the lockdown rules imposed by countries across the region, and this affected training and deployment in war-ravaged zones. In essence, the nature of the military operations that took place during COVID-19 was not enough to meet the security challenges bedevilling the continent. This problem has been blamed for the relapse into more deadly conflicts in the post-COVID-19 era.

Apart from health insecurity, the lack of an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic led to a series of protests and rebellions against the governments, which became an immediate source of political instability across Africa. Given that most African countries were already fragile, the problems of poverty, starvation, and loss of jobs during COVID-19 further served as catalysts for political instability across the region[52]. For instance, unlike in countries like South Africa, where state-society relations were prevalent, leading to mutual compliance, Nigeria, on its part, was

---

49 Ibid

50 Ibid.

51 Erameh Nicholas and Ojakorotu Victor, 'The Nigerian State and the Politics of Commercialization of the Covid–19 Pandemic' (2021)19 Gender & Behaviour 17597, 1760

52 Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687.

confronted with a series of security challenges leading to political instability. The fact that a serious problem of lack of trust had hitherto existed between citizens and the government in Nigeria further amplified violence amidst the inability of the government to cushion the effects of the lockdown, leading to massive violence and political instability across the country[53]. Thus, the outbreak of COVID-19 created the opportunity for worsening violence, leading to political instability and protracted conflict.

A direct fallout from the incoherent responses of many countries in Africa to COVID-19 is increased inequality, which has equally contributed to insecurity across the continent. Though scholars have admitted that inequality is not a recent phenomenon in Africa[54], the advent of COVID-19 further opened a new phase in the discourse on inequality as experienced in several nations. Given such disposition, there is a high tendency that several African countries are likely going to be faced with a series of insecurity occasioned by worsening inequality.

On a global level, the socio-economic crises noticed were as a result of premature deaths, workplace truancy and absenteeism, supply shock due to reduction in productivity, and closures of industries [55]. In some cases, the purchasing power of citizens experienced a sharp reduction due to a lack of adequate cash flow, uncertainty about the end of the pandemic, and a drastic reduction in the activities of the transportation sector due to restrictions on the movement of goods and services[56]. Furthermore, the impact of COVID-19 was well felt across developing countries, especially in Africa. Given the absence of industries, a large number of its people depend on the informal sector to make a living. With the imposition of stricter rules amidst increasing cases of COVID-19 across the region, Africa's economy witnessed a near-total collapse. This problem further increased the level of insecurity, poverty, hunger, frustration, and hopelessness across the region. For Ossia[57], the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in negative

---

53 Ibid
54 Ibid
55 Ibid
56 Ide Tobias, 'COVID-19 and Armed Conflict' (2021)140 World Development 105355,105364
57 Ibid

economic growth rates, a fall in prices and demands for goods and services, a balance of payments deficit, and debt vulnerability.

It is interesting to note that the advent of COVID-19 also saw a disruption in the electoral and democratization processes in most African countries. For instance, countries such as Bostwana, Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe were forced to shift fixed dates for elections. Just as Burundi, Malawi, Benin, Guinea, Cameroun, and Mali struggled to conduct their elections under strict conditions [58]. No doubt, the fears of door-to-door campaigns, public gatherings via the activities of political parties, queuing up at polling stations and other forms of gathering, logistics problems, and a lack of adequate ad hoc staff were all considered vital to successful elections in Africa. While these moves were welcomed by a large section of the populace, some members, especially from the opposition, saw this as a deliberate move for incumbents to remain in power[59]. This became a major source of conflict, contestation, and squabbles in several African countries, which further increased armed violence[60]. Reflecting on the emerging challenges brought as a result of the election shift amidst worsening cases of the pandemic, scholars noted that such a position must be perceived beyond the lenses of mere politics to the larger health implications of conducting elections in such an atmosphere[61].

---

58 Erameh Nicholas and Ojakorotu Victor, 'The Nigerian State and the Politics of Commercialization of the Covid–19 Pandemic' (2021)19 Gender & Behaviour 17597, 1760

59 Ibid

60 Bello Ayodele, Agunyai Samuel Chukwudi and Amusan Lere, 'Armed Anti-State Organizations, Insecurity, and Government Response to Banditry in Nigeria' (2022)20 Ikenga Journal of African Studies 67,83

61 Cyril Obi and Abigail Kabandula, 'COVID-19, Peace and Security in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities' (2021)14 African Security 307, 317

4. THE NATURE AND DYNAMICS OF RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IN AFRICA

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries of the world adopted shutdowns or lockdown measures, specifically declared by various governments to tame the spread of the deadly virus. Almost all the countries, if not all, adopted this measure, including countries grappling with dangerous armed conflicts[62]. This declaration for global lockdown was followed by the calls for "cease-fire" and "silence the guns" by both the international and regional bodies, UN and AU respectively. Evidence shows that both calls by the UN and AU yielded cooperation between two conflicting parties in most conflict affected countries both within and outside Africa[63]. This can be interpreted to mean that most conflict-affected countries, adopted both the showdowns and cooperation response models during COVID-19. Some of the examples of African countries where cooperation and shutdowns were used as response strategies against COVID-19 include:

In Nigeria, precisely in Benue State, in addition to the lockdown measure, the Fulani herders and farmers cooperated to drop their guns and collective combat the pandemic, especially, during the early wave period of the pandemic. This peace accord between farmers and herders in this state paved the way for the needed cooperation and collective efforts to tame the spread of the deadly virus during the first wave[64]. However, this peace accord does not last because of the sudden outbreak of the violence that broke out in Nasarawa State, which led to the renewed operations Safe Haven and Operation Whirl Stroke of the Nigerian Armed Forces in both states. These operations in both states later provoked more

---

62 Amusan Lere and Agunyai Samuel Chukwudi**,** **'**The COVID-19 Pandemic and the crisis of Lockdowns in Nigeria: The food security perspective' (2021)9 Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review 78,98

63 Montevecchio Caesar, 'The Peace Dimension of the COVID-19 Pandemic' (2021)5 The Journal of Social Encounters 37,50

64 Ossai Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687

ravaging attacks and counter-attacks between farmers and herders[65].

Initially in Cameroun, the response to COVID-19 was both the adoption of the lockdown measure and compliance with the AU's call for "Silence-the-Guns" (STGs) between the Cameroonian government and Ambazonian separatist movements. This cooperation was reached because both conflicting parties understand that the COVID-19 is a common threat to humanity and they both stand the risk of contacting the deadly virus as engage in conflict. This cooperation too, also collapsed on the suspicion by the separatist movements that the Cameroun government was using the opportunity of the cease-fire to attack and decimate them[66]. Till date, this armed conflict is still continuing as the Cameroonian government failed to observe the STGs

The result was the same in Central Africa Republic, where in addition to the lockdown, two armed conflicting parties, the 3R (Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation) and the Democratic Front of the Central African People (FDPC) agreed to cooperate with the state health experts and authorities to collectively sustained the COVI-19 preventive measures within the state[67]. To show their commitment to the collective efforts against COVID-19, they both signed an agreement, the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR). This agreement, is expected to end the conflict in the CAR in February 2019. However, little did they know that the peace accord cannot stand the test of time, as conflict later broke out between the 3R and armed forces of the Central Africa Republic.

It was the same results in countries like Mali, Angola, Libya, Ethiopia, except in Senegal, where there was fairly long-last peace

---

[65] Bello Ayodele, Agunyai Samuel, and Chukwudi Amusan Lere, 'Armed Anti-State Orga nizations, Insecurity, and Government Response to Banditry in Nigeria' (2020)20 Ikenga Journal of African Studies 67,83

[66] Andrea Prah and Keenan Govender, COVID-19-related ceasefires in Africa: an opportunity to Silence the Guns? (ACCORD-Conflict & Resilience Monitor, December 2, 2020)< https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/covid-19-related-ceasefires-in-africa-an-oppor tunity-to-silence-the-guns/> accessed 30 October 2023

[67] Ibid

accord between the Provisional Committee and Unified Armed Wings of the separatist Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)[68]. The opportunity created by COVI-D-19 was positively utilized by the MFDC and others to combine efforts to lessen the negative effects of the pandemic while simultaneously cementing alliances with the community and security forces in responding to the pandemic.

From the foregoing analyses, it can be deduced that African countries with existing conflicts generally adopted both the lockdown and cooperation response models to combat the COVID-19. According to Ossai (2022) the adoption of the lockdown measure yielded different results between countries in the global north and global south. Minimal or near absence of violence exist in most countries of the global north because states and governments in this region supported their citizens with palliatives, funds, social security, and other humanitarian assistance[69]. Whereas, many of the states in the global south lack the capacity, legitimacy, and authority to provide humanitarian assistance to their citizens during COVID-19[70]. The weakness of the states in Africa to perform their core functions that can meet the expectations of their citizens was one of the conditions activated by the COVID-19, which in turn, provoked series of violence and criminal activities in many African countries with existing conflicts. In some cases, it led to renewed and resurgence of hostilities between conflicting parties, while in some others, it led to new tricks of violence. For instance, in Nigeria many youths were forced into the crime of break and entry with force, as many warehouses were looted across the country.

---

[68] Ossai, Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'We Aren't Killing Each Other, but We Bear Grudges That Could Be Sparked': How Interreligious 'Peace' and Non-Peace Coexist in a West African City' (2020)31 Islam and Christian Muslim Relations 307, 323

[69] Bloem Jeffrey and Salemi Colette, 'COVID-19 and Conflict'(2021)140 World Development 105294,105313

[70] Ossai Emmanuel Chiwetalu, 'COVID-19 and Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas' (2022)2 Encyclopedia 1678, 1687

5. MITIGATING NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN AFRICA

Since evidence abounds to show the role of strong political will of the state or government in alleviating some of the COVID-19 induced conditions, especially, as it was done by states in the global north. It is therefore strongly suggested that African states, especially those grappling with armed conflicts, should devise the strategy of strengthening their capacity and authority to effectively control violence. This can be by a way of ensuring that the election that brought them into power is free, fair, and credible. With this, they can earn global, regional, sub-regional, and national legitimacy and public trust from the people. This will positively contribute to their authority to control conflicts and remain at the helm of affairs of things in their country.

Importantly, governments in African states should be more steadfast and focus on good governance,[71], absence of it, opens more opportunities and loopholes that can be tapped by armed non-state organizations to back their onslaught and armed violence against the state[72]. From the resurgence of military interventions in Niger, Mali, Burina Faso, and few other West African States, it clear that the citizens were seen jubilating openly on the streets because of bad governance of the civilian democratic governments in those African states.

Besides, the regional and sub-regional bodies, AU and ECOWAS have a role to play in ensuring that member states constitutions are not manipulated to increase the tenure of the ruling governments or leaders. For a very long time, The AU and ECOWAS and other bodies in Africa have been too quiet against the deliberate manipulation of countries constitutions to elongate the ruling term of the incumbent African presidents. This has

---

[71] Agunyai Samuel Chukwudi, 'Emerging Governance Crises in Twenty-First Century Nigeria' in Adeniran Adebusuyi and Lanre Ikuteijo (Eds), Africa Now: Emerging issues and Alternative Perspective, (Springer Publication, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

[72] Bello Ayodele, Agunyai Samuel Chukwudi and Amusan Lere, 'Armed Anti-State Organizations, Insecurity, and Government Response to Banditry in Nigeria' (2022)20 Ikenga Journal of African Studies 67, 83

remained one of the sources of armed conflicts and military interventions in African politics. This can be eradicated if the AU and other sub-regional bodies begin to place sanctions or promulgate laws prohibiting such undemocratic practices.

The African Union and its sub-regional bodies counterparts, should sustain and effectively follow-up on the call for "Silence the Guns" agreement between conflicting parties. The follow-up is needed to ensure that both parties cooperatively complied to the call for cease-fire. This will enhance the sustainability of the regional calls by the AU and promote an enduring peace in conflict-affected areas.

African governments should learn from the fallouts of COVID-19, especially the deplorable conditions activated by the pandemic, to prevent the occurrence of such conditions. For example, issues of unequal distribution of palliatives, mis-management of COVID-19 relief funds, excessive use of state coercion, which undermines human rights and oppressed the people, should be totally tackle by the African governments. This can be by a way of empowering the anti-corruption agencies to prosecute any corrupt officer saddled with humanitarian services, especially during outbreak of pandemics.

African governments should run an open, transparent, and people-oriented administration, where they would be accountable to the people. This will enhance government-citizen relation and promote conviviality between the government and the people. This, if effectively done, can increase public trust towards the government and reduce antagonism and conflict against the government.

Equitable distribution of countries' common wealth and resources, free from all forms of marginalization and discrimination would go a long way in resolving conflicts related to secession. Today, most of African states are embroiled in armed conflicts over secession or separation, but with strong justice system, and equitable distribution of countries' wealth, there would be reduction in armed conflicts by separatist movements.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although, COVID-19 came to kill, distort, and inflict social and economic frustrations on the world, its effects on social, economic, peace, health, and other sphere of life, could have been lessen, If African states were not fragile and weak to detect and prevent some of the conditions activated by the pandemic. States in the global north, showed more capacity and authority in the provision of humanitarian welfare support for their citizens than their counterparts in Africa. The weakness of African states to perform their core functions amid COVID-19 paved the way for COVID-19 to hit deep into the fabrics of most African nations. The resultant effect of this failure was the resurgence of violence and armed conflicts in some African states, especially, those with existing conflicts. This does not only provoked conflict, it hampered several peace accords reached in most African states during the early wave of the pandemic and distorted the level of development in affected countries.

While global, regional, and sub-regional organizations called for shutdowns and cooperation between conflicting parties in Africa, evidence shows that these intervening efforts only yielded temporary peace outcomes in most African states, as most of the peacebuilding agreement collapsed, with the lingering effects of COVID-19 lockdown. Again, many of the conflict-affected African countries resumed their existing wars and conflicts. The call made by the AU for "Silence the Guns" was a promising one, but lacks sustainability and full compliance by conflicting parties.

This gap in the implementation of cease-fire agreement can be checked and improved if most African governments and their armed forces see their conflicting parties as partners in progress towards peacebuilding process. With this, both can sit conveniently as partners, at a round table to collectively discuss and resolve issues causing conflicts.