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CURBING CONFLICTS THROUGH CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISM

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Abstract

Conflict resolution is of immense importance and very relevant in the present world of conflicts. Several countries of the world are daily engulfed with conflicts ranging from social disorder to political upheavals, ethnic, jingoism and social dislocations. Conflict resolution is a process where parties in a conflict come together to resolve their disagreements through peaceful means. It is a well-known fact in the world that over that war is the last option or resort in any conflicting issues. Conflict resolution as a mechanism of the peace process can include peaceful methods and techniques which can be used for the maintenance of peace and security such that generations to come can be protected from the intricacies of war since the war has very bad repercussions. So conflict resolution mechanisms can be adopted in order to prevent an outbreak of war. The

methodology adopted for this work is both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include oral tradition as handed over from generation to generation. Whereas secondary sources include information from both published works. The theoretical framework is based on the realist conflict theory of inter-state as posited by Scholars in which states were seeking for the same limited resources invariably it works leads to conflict. It is therefore recommended that conflicts be resolved so that they cannot escalate to war and then the world and churches can operate in a peaceful and conducive atmosphere.

Introduction

According to the argument of some scholars, the wrap and woof of history is, of course, the succession of human and to some extent social conflicts. Indeed human history has been interjected by wars and other forms of organized violence and crime. However, there are some temporary situations where swords are shielded and guns thereby remain silent. In the years of human history, what strikes the eye of humankind is the omnipresence of conflicts.

Indeed, in our intellectual discourse and interaction, it can be seen that peace is hardly more than a truce. This transforms into a temporary respite from violence and with ultimate victory. Modern states today seek to have security through arms possession, a way of aspiring for peace and gearing efforts towards preparation for war.

According to Wani (2011). This perception of history and the human condition has no eternal validity. He argues further that in today's world, conflicts, wars, aggressions, incompatibilities and disputes are false means and false ends not to be adopted in a modern and mechanical world. All of the above as a matter of fact constitute grave demerits of human civilization regarded as a menace to the survival of humans and their development.

Currently, the modern world is made up of a world of

technologies of destruction which can destroy humankind. The technologies for the destruction of production are sophisticated enough but highly vulnerable. Therefore, it is important that conflict resolution mechanisms be adopted in order to prevent different conflicts. It is also important to understand that war is the last option to be adopted in various conflict situations. So it is necessary to consider conflict resolution as the best instrument to be adopted such that one can minimize and mitigate conflict situations in the peace building process.

According to Pooja (2007), conflict resolution is the best mechanism towards social justice, peace, harmony, cooperation, towards global bother-hood. He went on to maintain that it is the best instrument for peace-keeping, peacemaking and peace-building among conflicting parties anywhere and that it should be resolved through peace and not through violent means of destruction. Therefore, it can be said to be a means towards peace and harmonious relationships

Meaning of Conflict Resolution.

Conflict is a term meaning so many things to many people. Within the context, there are words such as disagreement, fight, clash, argument or in-compatibilities according to Bercovitch (1990). Conflict

is a situation which generates incompatible goals or values among different parties. Similarly, Coser (1957) defines conflict as the clash of values and interests, the tensions between what is and what some groups feel ought to be. Here, the real meaning of conflict can be understood as other scholars have divergent on what conflict could mean. On the other hand, a resolution could mean the quality of being resolute, of being firm. In other words, Coser (1957) went on to state that it involves an expression of opinion or intentions agreed on by a legislative body, the action of solving a problem or dispute, and the process of reducing or separating something into components.

Therefore, Alan (1998) could be said to be correct when he defined conflict resolution as a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves the central incompatibilities, accept each-others continued existence as parties and cease all violence against each other. Indeed, conflict resolution has become a term embracing a whole range of methods and approaches for dealing with conflict. It is therefore a range of processes made to alleviate or eliminate sources of conflict, a whole range which includes negotiation, diplomacy, conflict prevention, reconciliation and mediation etc.

The Emergence of Conflict Resolution

As conflict is inevitable in every society, conflict resolution itself has come to stay having come face to face with the fundamental new challenges in our recent times. Far into the 1950s and 1960s, during the period of the Cold War when the development of nuclear weapons and the conflict between the superpowers seemed to threaten the survival of the human race. For several years, a group of scholars discovered the value of studying the conflict as a general phenomenon, drawing from communities, families, individuals or from the circle of international relations. This group of scholars saw the need to apply approaches that consisted of industrial relations and community Mediation. At a point, some scholars from North America and Europe began to establish research groups in order to research new ideas.

However, these new ideas soon began to arouse the interest of some people. People were attracted to the new ideas and the field of study began to grow. Scholarly journals in conflict resolution emerged by the 1980s. For instance, in South Africa, the center for intergroup studies applied some of the conflict approaches that had developed to also develop some strategies to forestall the challenges of apartheid.

Similarly, in the Middle East, a peace process which

was initiated through problem-solving mechanisms in conflict resolution encouraged some level of peaceful co-existence. Again, according to Wallensteen (2002) in Northern Ireland groups which were inspired by the new conflict resolution approach set up community relations initiatives which got across community divides and also became an acceptable responsibility of local governments. He went on to say that in war, in North Africa and South East Asia, development workers and humanitarian agencies were seeing the need to take account of conflict and conflict resolutions as an integral part of their activities. However, by the time the Cold War was ending, the system for conflict resolution began to change and by this time, many people became attracted to conflict resolution mechanisms.

Galtung (1965) claimed that international statesmen began to use languages as conflict resolution mechanisms and conflict resolution prevention during which some centers were set up for that purpose. He argued that Jimmy Carter, a former president of the United State was one of the most active leaders of conflict resolution. Similarly, Eduard Schvarduadze a former Foreign minister of the USSR established an organization to address ethnic conflict in the former Soviet Union. Between 1945-1965, the first institution for peace and conflict resolution emerged. Theodore F.

Lentz founded the peace research laboratory in Louis Missouri United States after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Kenneth Boulding who was born in 1910 in New England was the one that make possible the establishment of the Journal of conflict resolution in 1957. In 1959, he also set up the center for Research on conflict resolution. As early as 1951, John Galtung studied philosophy, sociology and mathematics and at the tender age of 21, he had influences by Gandhian ideas which somewhat formed a team in his peace research. By 1958, he was a visiting Professor of sociology at Colombia University. He eventually returned to Oslo in 1960 to establish a unit for research in conflict and peace which was based within the Institute for social research at the University of Oslo. It later became the precursor to the international peace research institute, Oslo.

Again, Galtung founded and edited the Journal of peace research eventually launching it in 1964. Another contributor to the evolution of conflict resolution is John Burton who was born in Australia in 1915. In the London School of Economics where he studied from 1938, he got a master's degree and in 1942 obtained a PhD. The appointment coincided with the formation of a conflict research society in London, he later became the Honorary secretary. Through his initiative, there was a

publication of conflict in society. This action led to the formation of the international peace research association and which held its first conference in Holland in 1965. Later in his career, Burton of Maryland spent some time during the mid-1980s at the University of Maryland. While there, he assisted Azar to found the center for international development and conflict management. Some other scholars insisted that the practice of mediation and new voices could be formed.

Conflict and Conflict Resolution.

The world has become so complex that conflict resolution mechanisms now have immense relevance. It is only through conflict resolution mechanisms, conflicts, disputes etc can be checked and minimized to the extent that peace can be established.

Conflict resolution as a mechanism of peace-building is also a peace-making process. This is why great leaders, academicians, media and civil society laid much emphasis on conflict resolution concepts. Conflict resolution engenders peace processes in which it can be resolved peacefully and with non-violent processes through diplomacy, communication, negotiation, summits, arbitration and mediation. According to Hilal Ahmad Wani (2011) in order to engender peace, there

must be cooperative and confidence-building measures. Wani (2011) continued in his argument to state that in the contemporary world, the role and primary of conflict resolution cannot be ignored.

Indeed, violence begets violence and therefore humanity can be preserved and protected from the onslaught of war and holocaust only when conflict parties are prepared to adopt conflict resolution mechanisms for the solution of their disputes (Wani, 2011). According to the argument of some scholars, conflict resolution has played important roles among conflicting parties even in war zones. Secondly, a resolution is the best means of balance or equilibrium among disputed parties. Further still, Wani (2011) has contended that conflict resolution is an integral part of social justice and social transformation which aims to tackle the humanitarian crisis and divisions through peaceful means such that conflict can be avoided among nations of the world. He went on to state that conflict resolution is the best weapon through which the entire humanity and posterity can be protected from the ills of war.

Causes and Forms of Conflict.

According to Peter (2002), the conflict resolution mechanism is the protector, guardian and custodian of

peace, harmony, social justice, World Brotherhood and equity across the globe.

The conflict, however, is a condition of opposition or antagonism. Moreover, conflict is the social process in which individuals or groups seek to achieve their ends by directly challenging the party that is antagonistic due mainly to emotion on account of opposition or impulses that are contradictory by recourse to either violence or threat of violence.

In individuals, there are differences in physical, cultural, emotional, attitudes, behavioral patterns and traits which make relationships very complex. Hence resolution of conflicts becomes difficult. In every situation, there are different types of causes which includes personal conflict, racial conflict, political conflict, class conflict, ethnic conflict, ideological conflict, economic conflict, cultural conflict, social conflict etc. Society can be understood once the different interests of the people are misunderstood.

In the present circumstances, human resources are said to be limited which invariably causes conflict. As a result, people want to achieve rewards and find an escape from punishment. Indeed, conflicts start in a society once people are exploited and marginalized economically, politically and otherwise.

Noteworthy is the fact that conflicts start due to a clash of interests and gains. The same applies to nation-states states world over. It is common knowledge that today's politics is based on those that have capitalists and the working class (proletariat) in the sense that the proletariat has not much role to play which means that the much talked about the democracy of the elite. When equal treatment is allowed irrespective of class, conflicts can be resolved easily. There are different methods and techniques applied to resolving conflicts in every society.

Methods and Techniques in Resolving Conflicts.

According to Wani (2011), the aim of conflict resolution is not to eliminate conflicts rather it is to transform the actual or potentially violent situations into peaceful processes. Below are some of the methods and techniques;

a. The negotiation involves two or more persons with the sole aim to resolving conflicts. This indeed is the first method used when there is a disagreement.

b. Mediation involves voluntary confidentiality of issues at stake. It is a process where participants come together with the assistance of a neutral person.

c. Arbitration is a method or process for handling conflicts. It is voluntary, final and binding on the parties to the conflicts. It is the settlements of disputes by the

award of a tribunal which gives effect to the existing laws which bind the parties concerned.

d. Adjudication: This is a process with which most people are familiar. Often many litigants use the courts to resolve disputes between parties.

e. Bargaining is also another method of resolving conflicts. It involves a kind of dialogue which can allow each party to a conflict to put forward its demands.

f. Persuasion: Here scholars define persuasion as altering the person's perception of any object of his attitude. This is the right means of effecting change.

Conclusion

Humans notwithstanding are always engaged in warfare, conflicts, aggression, violence etc which often equates with the human condition. Humans have struggled to contain conflicts effectively through the reduction of their negative effect. The human can engage in treaties, cease-fires, agreements and handshakes. All these have become symbols of human endeavors in reducing the negative consequences of conflict.

Indeed, conflict resolution as a field of study began in the 1950s and 1960s at the peak of the Cold War when the superpowers began developing nuclear weapons thereby causing uncertainty which threatened the survival of the human race.

Conflict resolution is now recognized as a legitimate academic field of study. It is a whole inclusive term for a range of methods and approaches dealing with conflicts, negotiation, mediation, arbitration and diplomacy etc. Therefore it can be said that conflict resolution is the best mechanism in which conflicting parties engage in an agreement that would invariably solve their central incompatibilities accept each other's existence thereby ceasing from violent actions against one another.

It is a known fact that conflict resolutions include a condition of opposition or antagonism against one another. Conflicts originate from different sources for which the reasons include personal conflict, racial conflict, economic conflict, and ideological and community conflicts. Conflicts arise, some of the time as a result of a conflict of interest or clash of interest.

In fact, Karl Max was right when he declared that the history of the world is a struggle between the haves and haves not, that is the capitalists and proletariat. Still, without going to war parties in a conflict can choose the process of negotiation, cooperation, diplomacy, reconciliation, summits and confidence-building measures for the solution or transformation.

Finally, conflict resolution is somehow the basis for professional practice in various fields including family and drug therapy, peace-making, peacekeeping and

peacebuilding and alternative dispute resolution.

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