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## **Combating Civil Wars in Africa: Exploring the Church's Role in Bringing Sanity in Africa's Chaotic Shores**

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### **Abstract**

The Twentieth and twenty first centuries have been described as the age of anxiety. This is largely due to the many civil wars and conflicts that have been prevalent in our contemporary world, and especially with special reference to Africa which is the worst hit. In particular, armed conflicts been witnessed in Angola, Ethiopia Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan among others. Equally, civil wars have been witnessed in Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan. Sadly, some of these States are at the verge of collapse due to the effect of these unfortunate civil wars and conflicts. Other countries that were affected by civil or ethnic conflicts, albeit at lower levels include: Burundi, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Malawi, Senegal, and South Africa. The latter has witnessed xenophobic attacks, especially in May 2008. Terrorism activities have also Increased, as it continues to create tensions among nations, religions, tribes and so on. To this end, this article seeks to explore the causes of civil wars and conflicts in Africa, that bleeds poverty on a mass scale. How can the church participate in curbing these wars and conflicts, and eventually usher-in sanity in these troubled waters? In its methodology, this article strives to redefine war and discusses the characteristics of modern warfare. Through an extensive review of relevant literature, the article has also attempted to explore the place of individual persons, the nation-states and the international network systems in combating civil wars; and lastly, it has endeavored to show the contribution of the church in wrestling out all forms of conflicts in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Key words:** Church and Civil Wars, Church and conflict, civil or ethnic conflicts, Terrorism, Armed conflict.

### **Introduction**

According to Errol A. Henderson, war is a phenomenon of organized violent conflict, typified by extreme aggression, societal disruption and high mortality. Usually, it is a contest between two nations, states or parties, carried on by force whether for defense, for revenge, redressing wrongs, for the extension of commerce, for the acquisition of territory, for obtaining and establishing the superiority

and dominion of one over the other or for any other purpose highlighted by the warring parties as a worthy cause for war.<sup>1</sup>

While delivering a paper on the economic causes of war, Collier A Hoeffler defines civil war as an organized and violent conflict between prearranged groups within the same nation-state or less commonly between two countries created from a formerly united nation-state. The aim of one side may be to take control of the country or region, to achieve independence or to change government policies.<sup>2</sup>

Errol Henderson gives the definition from the Correlates of War (COW) project which defines civil war as a sustained military combat, primarily internal, resulting in at least 1000 battle deaths per year, pitting central government forces against an insurgent force capable of effective resistance, determined by the latter's ability to inflict upon the government forces at least 5% of the fatalities that the insurgents sustain. Collier and Hoeffler agree with Henderson that this Correlates of war definition has been utilized in quantitative as well as case study analysis of civil war.<sup>3</sup>

Ludwig Von Misses, opines that war is a primitive human institution. He argues that from time immemorial, human beings were eager to fight, to kill and to rob one another.<sup>4</sup> Frances Stewart quotes Psychologists E.F.M. Durban and John Bowlby who have argued that human beings especially men are inherently violent and that while this violence is repressed in normal society, it needs the occasional outlet provided by war. This explains why war is as old as human beings.<sup>5</sup>

In their study on war and underdevelopment, Stewart and Fitzgerald assert that between 1950 and 1990, 15 million people were killed.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Pascal Boniface estimates the figure of the people killed in wars between 1950-1990 to be between 35-40 million. Fitzgerald may be concentrating on civil wars alone while Boniface concentrates on both civil and other wars<sup>7</sup>. Scholars may differ on the number of deaths but it is clear that millions of people have lost their lives in these wars and that most of these wars have occurred in the African continent. Whereas other continents have progressed since their struggle for independence, African communities are still encumbered with large scale armed conflicts.

### Characteristics of Modern Warfare

John Stott, an evangelical scholar, argues that war has always been horrible whether fought by sticks and stones, bows and arrows, swords and spears, muskets and rifles or bayonets and bombs. He agrees with Albert Einstein who argues that, "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and thus we are drifting towards catastrophe." Stott is convinced that modern warfare threatens the very survival of human race.<sup>8</sup>

Robert Brown agrees with John Stott that modern warfare threatens the very existence of the human race and summarizes the characteristics of the modern warfare as follows: -

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<sup>1</sup> Errol A Henderson in Alfred Nhema and Paul Zeleza, *The roots of African conflicts: The causes and costs* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), pp.51-53.

<sup>2</sup> Collier A Hoeffler, 'Economic causes of civil war,' Oxford Economic paper 50 (1998), pp.563-570.

<sup>3</sup> Errol A Henderson in Alfred Nhema and Paul Zeleza, *The root causes of African conflicts*, pp.51-53.

<sup>4</sup> Ludwig von Misses, *Human Action* (Washington: Fox and Wiles, 1949), pp.1-10.

<sup>5</sup> Frances Stewart, 'Root causes of Violence in developing countries,' <http://www.bmi.com/continent/324/733/342>, accessed on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Stewart F, Fitzgerald V, *Introduction: Accessing the Economic causes of war* (Oxford: Queen Elizabeth house, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Stewart F, Fitzgerald V, *Introduction: Accessing the Economic causes of war* (Oxford: Queen Elizabeth house, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall pickering, 1999), pp.91-119.

The nature of warfare has been fundamentally altered by the fact that most person to person combat is now omitted. Extraordinary technological advances mean that areas can be patrolled and defended and that attacks on areas can be instigated by computerized devices operated at a great distance. This is true not only of ground warfare but even more of aerial bombardment since those dropping the bombs often never see the target or confront in any way the human consequences of their actions. The resulting dehumanization makes the human consequences even more devastating.

Brown is quoted by Ann Hironaka as he argues that international conventions outlaws the use of weapons designed to inflict cruel or unnecessary pain upon human beings.<sup>9</sup> Yet this has become a common part of modern warfare. The continual refinement of weapons indicates a new emphasis on the destruction of human rather than military targets and a kind of self-generating process of improvement that seems so blind to moral consequences. The extensiveness of destruction has reached a new magnitude. This not only involves more widespread devastation from bombing attacks with conventional bombs and the human destructiveness of the antipersonnel weapons referred to above but also involves the use of defoliants, herbicides and various gases that not only destroy forests, vegetation and arable land but may by their widespread use, upset the ecological balance for generations to come. Those who handle these weapons later experience slow but irreversible disintegration of their cellular tissues. Various nerve gases may produce genetic malformations in future generations. The ever present threat of an escalation to nuclear weapon is a further example of the potential extensiveness of destruction.

Brown goes on to show the risks of modern warfare as he asserts that the breakdown of clear distinctions between civilian and combatants means that even the so-called limited wars are total in their immediate impacts. Such distinctions are technically impossible as aerial bombardment will see the killing of many civilians, who will die in the process. Modern warfare is further characterized by an increasing erosion of moral constraint; not only on the part of those who participate directly but also on the part of those who set policies.

According to Brown, the disturbing fact is not only that such incidents takes place but that they are condoned or even defended as necessary and inevitable. While instances of unnecessary brutality abound in the history of warfare, it can be argued that there are more of them now with less qualms of collective conscience than in the past. The magnitude and efficiency of our weaponry makes it increasingly attractive to use military means so as to solve political problems. We are faced with increasing temptations to use massive military might as a shortcut for and avoidance of painstaking negotiations.<sup>10</sup>

Brown notes that there is an increasing power of military in the political and economic decision making process. This is illustrated by the massive proportion of national budgets that goes to the military. The military also gets both financial and moral priorities. Most corporations are willing to manufacture antipersonnel weapons in large numbers. The modern battlefield thus becomes a laboratory for experimentation in new methods of warfare using human beings for experimentation with cooperation of the civilian sector.

## Causes of War

According to Kenneth Waltz, causes of war can be analyzed at the level of the individual, the nation state and the international system. The individual level focuses primarily on human nature and

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<sup>9</sup> Ann Hironaka, Never Ending Wars (<http://www.wikipedia.org/civilwar>, accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Ann Hironaka, Never Ending Wars (<http://www.wikipedia.org/civilwar>, accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019).

predispositions towards aggression and on individual political leaders and their belief systems, personalities and psychological processes.<sup>11</sup>

The national level includes both governmental variables such as the structure of the economic system, the nature of policy making processes and societal factors such as the structure of the economic system, the role of public opinion and non-economic interest groups, ethnicity and nationalism and political culture and ideology.

Systematic level causes include the anarchic structure of the international system, the number of major powers in the system, the distribution of military and economic power among them, patterns of military alliances and international trade and other factors that constitute the external environment common to all states<sup>12</sup>. I will discuss these causes under the following sub- topics: -

### **Economic causes of war**

Frances Stewart and Fitzgerald puts forward four hypotheses as they explain how economic factors can cause wars. These hypotheses are Group motivation, Private motivation, Failure of the social contract and Environmental degradation.<sup>13</sup>

**Group motivation hypothesis** - Stewart and Fitzgerald argue that since intra state wars consist of fighting between groups, group motives, resentments and ambitions provide motivation for war. Groups may be divided along cultural or religious lines, geography or class. Group differences only become worthy fighting for, however, if there are other important differences between groups, particularly in the distribution and exercise of political and economic power. In this situation, relatively deprived groups may be persuaded by their leaders to seek redress. Where political redress is not possible, they may resort to war. Resentment inspired by group differences, termed horizontal inequalities are a major cause of war. These group differences have many dimensions-economic, political and social. Relatively privileged groups may also be motivated to fight to protect their privileges against attack from relatively deprived groups.

In Kenya, pastoral groups like the Pokot, the Samburu and the Turkana have been involved in conflicts and raids as they struggle to survive with the few animals that they depend on. During famine, they lose many animals and as a way of surviving, they raid their neighbors and steal animals from them so that they can survive.

**Private motivation**--War confers benefits on individuals as well as costs which may motivate people to fight. Young uneducated men in particular may gain employment as soldiers. War also provide opportunities to loot, profiteer from shortages and from aid, trade arms, and carry out illicit production and trade in drugs, diamonds, timber and other commodities. Where alternative opportunities are few, because of low income and poor employment and the possibilities of enrichment by war are considerable, the incidence and duration of wars are likely to be greater. This greed hypothesis has its base in rational choice economics. The view that private motivation plays an important role in prolonging if not causing conflict in some countries is well supported by work in Sudan, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Collier and Hoeffler tested the greed hypothesis and found a significant association with conflict.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of international relations* (Reading: Mcgrew-Hill,1979), pp.15-24.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth, *Theory of international relations*, 15-24

<sup>13</sup> Stewart F, Fitzgerald V, *Introduction: Accessing the Economic causes of war* (Oxford: Queen Elizabeth house,2000).

<sup>14</sup> Collier A Hoeffler, *Economic causes of civil war*, Oxford Economic paper 50 (1998), pp.563-570.

Some scholars have attributed the growing number of African civil wars and not to the genuine concerns of grievances; but to the lucrative and burgeoning booty future markets. While the sale of this booty continues to initiate and prolong civil wars in Africa, the complex web of obscure, but pernicious types of contracts concluded between rebels and their commercial clients. provided there is the necessary funds needed to launch assaults on governments. For instance, in Sierra Leone, Angola and DRC conflicts, the weaker party sold oil or mineral resources so as to help in paying the cost of ongoing combat, thereby lengthening the conflict altogether. This inevitably led to the fragmentation and criminalization of the conflict, as military units changed their activities from political-military objectives to economic ones.

There is an obvious connection between the conflict and the foreign interests engaged in the exploitation of natural resources. All foreign governments involved in in the conflict have used their political alliances with internal actors on all sides of the conflict to legitimize the systematic illegal exploitation of the DRC resources. Natural resource exploitation has become a key factor in determining military deployment, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence.

**Failure of Social Contract**--This derives from the view that social stability is based on a hypothetical social contract between the people and the government. People accept authority so long as the state delivers services and provides reasonable economic conditions (Employment and income). With economic stagnation or decline and worsening state services, the social contract breaks down and violence results. Hence rising levels of poverty and a decline in state services would be expected to cause conflict.

**Green War Hypothesis**---These points to environmental degradation as a source of poverty and cause of conflict. For instance, rising population pressure and falling agricultural productivity may lead to land disputes. Growing scarcity of water may provoke conflict. Collie and Hoeffler have explored the correlative relationship between poverty and conflict. Their quantitative research has shown that countries with a high level of dependence on commodity exports are at higher risk of experiencing conflict, whereas countries with higher levels of secondary schooling and economic growth have reduced risk of conflict. From 1980-2002, low income countries with per capita income of less than US\$2,000 experienced conflict approximately one out of every five years. This figure dropped to one in every eight years when a country's per capita income grew to be between US\$2000 and US\$4000 and to one in every 33 years in countries with per capita income in excess of US\$ 4000.

**Identity and Ethnicity**---This one deals with class, ethnicity and consequently distribution of resources surrounding the class. It involves class consciousness and class awareness. According to Tshitereke the so-called tribal wars or more appropriately ethnic wars have troubled humanity since time immemorial.<sup>15</sup> He argues that the only difference now is that this form of conflict has had to go global in accordance with the dictates of contemporary international patterns. Mercenaries are fighting wars throughout the world and Africa has not remained immune. Tshitereke gives an example of Sierra Leone where recent reports have revealed the involvement of foreign troops in the conflict brought in to fight on behalf of one or both of the warring factions. This enterprise has experienced a boom in the recent years with former military officials of the old establishment working as mercenaries to earn a living.<sup>16</sup>

According to Tshitereke, few countries are heterogeneous and identity becomes a causal factor in war as allegiance of men and women to their nation and intimacy to the state are the hallmarks of

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<sup>15</sup> Clarence Tshitereke, On the Origin of War in Africa, *African security review*, Volume 12 no 2.

<sup>16</sup> Clarence Tshitereke, On the Origin of War in Africa, *African security review*, Volume 12 no 2.

their spirit of patriotism. The doctrine of national self-determination explicitly sets out the basis on which states form and break up. Historically, there are no cases of all members of a particular state gathered in one geographic region. Inevitably, many states contain sizeable ethnic minorities. Tshitereke continues to argue that, in Africa, the situation is further complicated by arbitrary drawn boundaries, many of which consist of straight lines that cut through ethnic group boundaries. The consequence of this missing correlation between ethnicity and geography has frequently been dangerous tension that may lead to war. A government inspired by extreme nationalism may conduct a policy aimed at the assimilation of national minorities. National groups that are not in control of a state may feel dissatisfied with the regime and claim the right to self-determination, as demonstrated in the attempt to carve Biafra out of Nigeria.

Tshitereke argues that in wars of national or ethnic identity, minorities are often at risk of total annihilation. For instance, prior to the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the government (Hutu Dominated) had been stockpiling weapons for months and then passed them to Hutu militias as part of the planning for a systematic butchery of the minority Tutsi. What followed was the most gruesome genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The mere fact of being outnumbered means that minorities lack the human potential to execute a successful breakaway. The majority simply plunders the assets of the minority; remove their remnants in the state apparatus and cream of external assistance. The logic is simple: food can be rationed and used to reward political clients and punish opponents.

Tshitereke also gives another example of what happened in Congo in 1992. He argues that 200,000 Balabu people were expelled from Shaba and Kasai as none—indigenous. As it stands, in the context of the current war, the Congo continues to face a rather severe predicament. Ethnic conflict is demonstrating how shifts in ethnic identity depends on the social economic and political contexts of the moment rather than on some objective criteria of identity.

Often when scarce resources are divided on the basis of nationality, non-nationals are more likely to make an assertion for that status in order to get a share. Their claims on the country depleted resources further antagonizes the already- resentful nationals. In such a volatile scenario, the absence of protection subjects' non-nationals to untold misery through abuse and in the worst cases, even physical violence that may lead to war. Such is evident in the constant xenophobic attacks, and especially the May 2008 attacks.<sup>17</sup> Nationalism not only induces wars but also through the severity of its influence makes compromise and acceptance of defeat for the minorities more difficult, even when their only hope of victory is through the mobilization of their resistance to the point where they are prepared to fight with their bare hands.

### Religious causes

According to Prof. Kennedy Onkware, most religions make strong claims of exclusivity and this causes conflicts and wars in some parts of the world.<sup>18</sup> This statement is echoed by many scholars who show that throughout the course of the last century, civilization disunity and religious divergence have sparked some of the bloodiest wars. Samuel Huntington in his book *Clash of Civilizations* captured some of the cases. Although his analysis has been criticized as attack on Islam, the substance of his arguments on the growth of religiously inspired wars remains valid. Huntington's thesis focuses largely on the

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<sup>17</sup> Julius Gathogo and Isabel Phiri, "Xenophobia/Afrophobia in post-apartheid South Africa: Strategies for combat," *Theologia Viatorum*, 2009, 33(2), pp.216-241.

<sup>18</sup>Kennedy Onkware, *Religious causes of war*, seminar paper presented at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Nairobi campus.



contest between the west and other civilizations. There is much detail on the line that separates Croatia from Serbia and subsequently, Catholic versus Orthodox and Muslims but little attention is paid to Africa. The clash of civilizations seems to manifest itself through religious wars, either between Arabs and Israelis, Indians and Pakistanis, Lebanese Shiites and Maronites or Buddhists and Hindus<sup>19</sup>. Africa has also her own share of the conflicts and wars stemming from this thesis, although the civilization aspect of it remains highly contested. For instance, Sudan has witnessed the bloodiest Christian-Muslim war. In Nigeria, religious skirmishes often break out between the Muslim north and the largely Christian south. Many other African countries that have two or more distinct religious practices have not been immune to this form of conflict, among them, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Chad and others.

### Natural resources endowment

The possession of natural resources within a particular country can be a source of happiness or unhappiness to its citizens. Positively in countries like Botswana where they are managed properly, the state has brought affluence and much needed foreign exchange earnings. Botswana avoided conflict over resources by distributing their rents widely within the population.

Annan K in her paper causes of conflict argues that in those countries where the management is weak, many countries in southern Africa have degenerated into zones of chaos as nascent rebel organizations seized the opportunity to extract resources whose profits enabled them to launch a civil war. The argument is that natural resources offer rebel groups a unique opportunity, because they typically produce rents and are location specific and can be rooted on sustained basis.<sup>20</sup>

Mahmood Mamdani agrees with Annan and Tshitereke that most African civil wars started as clashes over access to natural resources. He gives examples of situations where human demands press against limited supplies as well as conflicts over timber rights and minerals in Africa. It appears that most resource based conflicts occur in very poor countries with weak governments which make them susceptible to aligning themselves with foreign companies to market their resources globally. In some instances, external destabilization elements whose aim is to maintain the status quo for commercial considerations should not be underestimated. Under the colonial yoke, resources were literally stolen from their rightful owners under duress. The end of colonialism, and the colonial power's resource exploitation, meant that other ways had to be developed to secure access to the lucrative resources which had been surrendered at independence.<sup>21</sup>

According to K. Annan, the nature and location of natural resources affects the occurrence of war. There are two main types of resources

- Point resources such as minerals. These are non-renewable, geographically concentrated and their extraction requires little labor input
- Diffuse resources such as soils and water. These are renewable and geographically spread and are used in the production of crops and livestock mobilizing large amounts of labor.

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<sup>19</sup> Samuel P Huntington, *clash of civilizations* (United States: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Annan K, Causes of conflict in Monica Juma, 'Conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa: A Reader' (pulp: Pretoria University Low Press, 2007) Monica Juma, *Conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa: A Reader* (Pulp: Pretoria University Low Press, 2007), pp.47-64.

<sup>21</sup> Mahmood Mamdani M, 'Report on exploitation of natural resources in DRC,' in Monica Juma, *Conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa: A Reader* (Pulp: Pretoria University Low Press, 2007), pp.47-64.

The argument is that countries that are abundant in point resources are more likely to experience conflict than countries that experience only diffuse resources especially when the later also undertake land reforms. For instance, in Congo-Brazzaville where there is one mineral resource, offshore oil, it was necessary for the rebels to capture the capital city, the centre of the state apparatus and the main port, Ponte-Noire during the 1997 civil war. Angola's two mineral resources, offshore oil and Alluvial diamonds in the interior, have enabled both the MPLA government and UNITA rebels to engage in a protracted conflict for decades. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the diversity of resources and their geographical spread have led to the development of war lords and a highly fragmented conflict between a weak government and numerous armed groups controlling resources in the interior.<sup>22</sup>

### Greed and grievances

Mahmood Mamdan is quoted by Alfred Nhema in his analytical frame work that there is a particular rationale behind war. Resource related grievances are possible mechanism that may spark violence or civil war. Grievances arising from economic issues, often triggered by poverty or inequality have tended to influence civil wars. Depending on the resource being contested, the conflict may eventually reach a point of self-determination or secession as was the case in Angola-Cabinda and in the southern part of Sudan.<sup>23</sup>

There are two schools of thought concerning the causes of contemporary conflict related to greed and grievance.

- Sees violence as a response to a range of grievances including systematic discrimination and human rights violations, inequalities in wealth and political power or a scarcity of resources, particularly where these fall along existing social cleavages such as ethnicity or religion.
- The second characterizes war as irrational, either originating in ancient hatreds, causing a needless disruption along the normal path to development or simply as mindless violence.

Theorists on war and peace see the causes of civil wars as stemming from the greedy behavior of those with control over resources and the grievances of marginalized communities who seek justice. For instance, successive South African governments wittingly skewed the allocation of national resources in favor of the white minority. Initially, black's resentment of this reality led to the formation of diplomatic resistance structures but later this evolved to a revolutionary armed struggle to contest power with the state by violent means.

In his book, *The Truth About African Hospitality: Is There Hope for Africa?* Julius Gathogo has dwelt on why Africa remains poor amidst plenty.<sup>24</sup> While appreciating that the colonial and post-colonial Africa has sadly embraced some pockets of *Ubuluwane/Unyama* (beastly behavior) in place of our cherished African hospitality, Gathogo posits that Endless Wars is one of the factors that causes poverty in Africa, and the situation will remain if it is not arrested in good time. Other causes of poverty in Africa, in Gathogo's view include: Lack of competitiveness in business, Beliefs in witchcraft, Bing a nation of whiners rather than innovators, promoting intellectuality that is not open-minded but poor echoes of the west, foreign domination of the economy, the culture of pulling one another down, unjust international economic systems, evil aspects of African culture such as the disregard for time,

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<sup>22</sup> Monica Juma, *Conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa: A Reader* (Pulp: Low Press, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Alfred Nhema and Paul Zeleza, *The roots of African conflicts: The causes and costs* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), pp.4-10.

<sup>24</sup> Julius Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality: Is there Hope for Africa?* Mombasa: Salt, pp.129-.



bad politics, incompetent governments, political manipulations and con artistry amongst leaders, historical factors such as slavery, slave trade, colonialism, foreign dominance and invasions; colonial systems of education that did not encourage creativity and innovation in the African education, poor drawing of colonial boundaries that separated kinships and related cultures into different countries thereby complicating their socio-economic activities, manipulations by the developed countries, civil wars and political assassinations, lack of meritocracy among the African governments and African institutions, political mismanagement, negative ethnicity, and wrong prioritizing among other points.

In his book, *Beyond Efficiency in Leadership: Exploring Effective Teacher Leadership and the Leadership Challenges in the Twenty-First Century*, Gathogo further builds on the causes of inertia and lack of progress (poverty), even in our education systems, by decrying neocolonialism that extends to the education sector as well; and which rewards novices rather than experts, mediocrity rather than professionalism, incompetence rather than competence, the bad ones rather than the good ones, the lazy ones rather than the hardworking ones and ironically promotes the less deserving people in society without any iota of shame. Such serious violations will always cause tensions in our education systems and even in the larger society. It will also cause anger, inertia, depression, stress, burnouts, psychological conflicts or at worst physical conflicts.<sup>25</sup> Such disparities, that begins in school days, in my view, gets reflected in the rest of society, as a bitter society will always behave like a volcano that is about to erupt and cause further harm. While appreciating that African hospitality was critical in ushering both European Settlers and the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> century missionaries, though by default, the resultant encounter of abuse and misuse, and/or betrayal, of this well-intended hospitality remains a critical thorn in the flesh in the African soul; and this can be blamed for the current woes. Clearly, it provides the psychological background for some of these challenges.<sup>26</sup>

To this end, Gathogo decries the endless wars that are evident in the Democratic Republic of Congo right from the late 1990s and says,

An example [of endless wars] is evident in the Democratic Republic of Congo or the Great Lakes Region Crisis. This war has taken so long, and doesn't seem to come to an end. In general, Africa is burning from Cape Town to Cairo! I want to say that one challenge that we face is that we must find an alternative to war and bloodshed. Anyone who thinks that war can solve the social problems facing humanity is simply unrealistic. In fact, Hans Haselbarth [the Nigerian Ethicist scholar] has rightly noted that the threat of nuclear warfare as a clear pointer that there can be 'just war.' War as a political method of solving human problems has now become old-fashioned. Today, therefore, the pacifists are realists whereas their opponents are idealists in hoping to save the world with the methods of the past (war).<sup>27</sup>

Gathogo goes on to quote the one-time American President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963), who reigned from 20 January 1961 to 22 November 1963, and who pleaded with humanity to 'Say No to War and Violence' lest it will put an end to humanity itself.<sup>28</sup> He says,

In 1999, Zimbabweans were on strike because their President, Robert Mugabe, had taken 6, 000 soldiers to the Democratic Republic of Congo to help in the ongoing war, without the consent of his poor people. It is no wonder then that in the June 2000 elections, Mugabe almost lost to his political rival, Morgan Tsvangirai. The ZANU-PF Party of Mugabe took 62 out of the 120 parliamentary seats;

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<sup>25</sup> Julius Gathogo, *Beyond Efficiency in Leadership: Exploring Effective Teacher Leadership and the Leadership Challenges in the Twenty-First Century*, Saabruken: Lap, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Julius Gathogo, *African Hospitality From A Missiological Perspective*, Saabruken: Lap, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Julius Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality*: p.129-130.

<sup>28</sup> Julius Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality*:

while the leading opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) took 57 seats; and the small ZANU-Ndonga party took just one seat. Even if some political leaders thought that DRC, with its vast minerals such as gold, copper, iron and so on, would resettle jobless and learned citizens, war will not help anyone. It will instead continue to impoverish Africa and soon all will be chaos.... In short, a state of war, often foreign induced, has been created in most areas in Africa. Hence, this denies Africa the right atmosphere to prevail and eventually allow the exploitation of human resources for national development.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Role of the Church in Curbing Civil Wars**

The church finds herself in a very tricky situation when it comes to the issues of war. Her holy book, The Bible, and especially the Old Testament, portrays God as one who sends His chosen people, the Israelites to fight other people, especially the Canaanite communities that had to be displaced for Israelites to settle in Canaan. On the other hand, the same bible is full of references where God is portrayed as one who hates the shedding of blood (Isaiah 1) the Bible then must be critically interpreted so as to avoid simplistic usage on matters dealing with war and conflicts.

John Stott argues that there are two strands of church teaching on war and peace. There is the pacifist tradition that seeks to maintain peace by using nonviolent means at all times; and beyond this, there is the just war tradition that opposes the use of force but concedes that engagement in war may be justified in certain circumstances under strict moral conditions; and only as a last resort as a measure of protecting the innocent or to restore justice.<sup>30</sup> The supporters of these positions differ in many things but also agree on a few things that the church can do to reduce civil wars. The two agree that the church can reduce civil wars by: -

### **Rejection of Arms race (accumulating so much weapons for war)**

According to Pope John Paul 2, the church has a strong moral reservation about the strategy of accumulating weapons as a method of deference. The arms race does not ensure peace and does not eliminate the causes of war but rather aggravate them. In a situation where most of the countries spend a lot of resources on buying and accumulating weapons, the church must come out and speak against such high accumulation of weapons. The church must also condemn those countries that directly or indirectly cause wars in other countries so that they can sell weapons to them.<sup>31</sup>

### **Promoting and brokering peace at all times:**

Christians are called to be peace makers and to imitate Christ in peace making. The church must lead her followers in seeking and pursuing peace at all times. Because peace is not just the absence of war but a tranquility of order or state of wellbeing that comes from respect for the dignity and rights of both individual people and whole communities, the church must encourage her followers to be involved in justice, truth and love that creates the environment of peace.

### **Reconciliation Role:**

The church is called to the work of reconciling communities. Like her master, Jesus Christ, the church is expected to be neutral and treat God's people fairly. The church should not have preferences based on ethnic, race, tribal, gender, political or any other factors. Such a church can intervene and

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<sup>29</sup> Julius Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality*: p.130.

<sup>30</sup> John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, pp.98-110.

<sup>31</sup> Pope John Paul 2 speech on wars and peace in 2003.

evade crisis between two warring communities. The church can lead warring groups to a situation of dialogue that clears any misunderstanding that leads to conflicts and wars. According to Collier Hoeffler it is the church that brokered peace during the Sierra Leone civil war among others<sup>32</sup>.

#### **Respect for human life:**

The church has a privileged position of coming into contact with people from very early age. Parents send their children to the Sunday school from as early as three years. The church should aim at teaching her followers on the value of life from that tender age. Using biblical teachings such as 'you shall not kill or shed innocent blood,' the church should emphasize that human life is sacred and no one has a right to take someone's life or shed their blood. The church should teach her followers on the importance of rejecting all forms of violence at all times. In Africa, teaching has to be contextualized so as to include: drama, dance, music, sayings, idioms, riddles and other forms of communication. Since violence brings physical and psychological pain; and war is always accompanied by evil and injustice, the church must urge all her followers to pray and act so that the people of God may be freed from the bondage of war and make all her followers to know that they all have a duty to avoid wars. To do this, the church must primarily seek to remove all the logs in her own eyes so as to remain morally at the top of things.

#### **Provide moral teaching and early signs of war:**

David Krieger, the founder of Nuclear age peace foundation argues that a sure way of reducing civil wars is when political leaders (who instigate these wars) and their nuclear families are made to participate directly in these wars. The loss of their loved ones will make them to think twice before they incite communities into wars<sup>33</sup> The church has a duty to teach on moral issues like the golden rule (do unto others as you would like them to do unto you) but also on getting rid of greed which is one of the causes of civil wars. The church can also identify and give early warning on upcoming wars and call upon political leaders to prevent them.

#### **War as adventure without returns:**

From whichever dimension one looks at war, one will see that war is an adventure without returns. Pope John Paul 2, calling for dialogue and negotiation instead of war, encourages world communities to walk on the path of peace. By reasoning patience and dialogue, with respect for the inalienable rights of peoples and nations, it is possible to identify and travel the paths of understanding and peace and avoid wars.

Gathogo pontificates by giving six points that will remake Africa from both locally and foreign induced wars and conflicts that bleeds poverty, hopelessness and starvation on a mass scale.<sup>34</sup> In appearing to rely largely on the Marxist lenses, which sees economic solution as the panacea to most, if not all, human problems, Gathogo avers thus:

Africa must recapture the spirit of nationalism and patriotism and rekindle it as the driving force towards a national identity and development... An atmosphere to enable African professionals to work within Africa has to be created ... Systems that were left behind by the colonial forces will have to be restructured in order that more congenial and African oriented systems of government can be

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<sup>32</sup> Collier A Hoeffler, *Economic causes of civil war* (Oxford Economic paper 50, 1998), pp. 563-570.

<sup>33</sup> David Krieger, *Hope in a dark world: Reflection on Humanity future* (New York: Capra Press, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Julius Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality*: p.139.

created.... Our education systems will need to be contextualized .... And more emphasis needs to be laid on agricultural and industrial development.... The problem of the lack of a common language needs to be addressed.... We must stop exporting raw materials and instead process finished products to be sold on world markets. To do this, we must waste no time in seeking to industrialize our entire Africa.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

As we have seen, many countries especially in Africa, we are experiencing civil wars or the effects of civil war and conflicts. The causes of these wars include economic factors, natural resources endowment, greed and unending grievances, religious concerns and political causes. Such conflicts lead to the destruction of infrastructure, loss of life and social capital and a curbing of direct capital investment. Food production cannot occur in regions where violent conflict is being waged. Fields are laid to waste and the means of production are destroyed when armed conflict stops, a considerable period ensues between the cessation of conflict and the resumption of food production. Provision in national budgets for important areas such as: education, health, infrastructure and agricultural development are often diverted for military purposes, to the detriment of economic growth and the well-being of the population. The church has a great role in preventing civil wars in their educative roles, advocating for peace at all times but also through mediation and intervening where civil wars have occurred. The church should network with state and non-state actors to ensure that wars are completely reduced or eliminated altogether. Certainly, Africa has the potential to combat and indeed conquer her Civil Wars and conflicts comprehensively. Hence, she these vices must not continue to relegate her to the periphery. As a common challenge, that affects all, the African church has a critical role in this endeavor, as the chaotic shores have also affected her negatively; and as is prophesied in the Psalms (68:31): "Ethiopia (Africa) shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God."

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<sup>35</sup> Julius Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality*: p.139.

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