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Colombia: Assessing the Roles of the European Union in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

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Abstract: Colombia's internal armed conflict, dating back to the 1960s, has garnered international attention and become a priority for many donor countries. The resurgence of violence in the 1990s, combined with the influx of drug trafficking funds and the emergence of new illegal actors, resulted in fresh humanitarian crises and human rights violations. Concurrently, the internationalization of the armed conflict, spearheaded by the government of Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) through the policy of diplomacy for peace, brought the shared responsibility approach to drug control onto the global stage. The European Union has played a significant role in Colombia, particularly in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and supporting the country's development process. In contrast to US cooperation, European engagement has been characterized by a less militaristic approach to addressing the ongoing armed conflict in Colombia. This approach is evident in intervention strategies more directly linked to civil society. These strategies encompass cooperation in peacebuilding and the promotion of human rights. This research aims to elucidate and analyze the strategies employed by the European Union in resolving the conflict and fostering peace in Colombia, while also assessing their effectiveness.

Keywords: European Union, Colombia, strategies, peacebuilding, conflict resolution.

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Introduction

The European Union formalized its policy of international cooperation for peace with the enactment of the 1992 Treaty on the European Union (TEU). The Lisbon Treaty of 2009 stands out as a crucial milestone in

bolstering the EU's international cooperation, serving as one of its key agreements and primary instruments for foreign policy. In the late 1990s, the European Union adopted five objectives for international cooperation: (1) Promoting regional cooperation and integration; (2) Promoting human rights; (3) Promoting democracy; (4) Preventing armed conflicts; and (5) Combating organized crime. These goals have evolved over time to align with other global cooperation agendas, such as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. Alongside these priorities, the European Union maintained a paramount objective: to uphold and champion human rights. Even in other areas of action, including trade, aid, and cooperation, political dialogue was anchored in the requirement of human rights respect as a precondition for legitimizing the opposing party. As for Colombia, the European Union considered meeting this condition one of its necessary demands. The Union called on successive Colombian governments to pay attention to issues related to respect for human rights defenders, movements, and non-governmental organizations.

The European Union had a clear strategy for cooperation with Colombia, which was part of its Regional Strategy for Latin America. This strategy materialized in the mid-1990s. As global dynamics shifted and the European Union emerged as a significant actor in a world increasingly dominated by the United States, fostering closer ties with Latin America became imperative. It presented a new avenue for trade opportunities for the European Union and offered a fresh area of interest through which strategic gains could be achieved within the framework of cooperation. Additionally, in the 1990s, the European Union began integrating a conflict prevention and peacebuilding dimension into its foreign policy. This move can be viewed as a commitment to the aid-for-peace strategy.

In this new global context, the European Union saw opportunities in Colombia in three areas to achieve peace by strengthening cooperation policies: (1) Peacebuilding; (2) drug control; and (3) environment, with respect for human rights as a cross-cutting area. The European Union prioritized its strategy by starting to support the Pastrana government in peacebuilding and then prioritizing drug control in its development programs. Regarding EU policies on environmental protection, the European Union saw Colombia – a country with one of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world – as an opportunity to integrate environmental protection components into the other two agendas and at the same time create specific programs for this line of action. The European Union has also adopted and implemented various cooperation mechanisms in Colombia for more than 20 years, including institutional strengthening and governance, and sustainable social and economic development in the areas most affected by armed conflict.

We will explain in more detail the development of the European Union's strategies in Colombia to resolve the conflict and bring peace through its main initiatives, since the

end of the last century, until the signing of the Peace Agreement (Havana) in 2016. An accurate assessment of the strategies that have been pursued by the European Union, will explain the effectiveness of these strategies in resolving conflict and peacebuilding in Colombia.

EU Strategies Towards the Colombian Conflict

International cooperation between the EU and Colombia began with some fruitless approaches to resolving the Colombian conflict in 1996, in the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, the opening of international markets, and the European Union's efforts to define its foreign policy and its position in unipolar international relations. It was not until 1998, with the government of Andrés Pastrana, that these efforts were formalized into a clear cooperation strategy and roadmap, especially after the failure of peace talks in Caguan with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2002 (Aguilar, 2006; Sharqi, 2023). This moment coincided with the European Union's interest in playing a more prominent role in resolving conflict and peacebuilding in Latin America and Colombia. Therefore, the end of the peace talks did not prevent the European Union from continuing its cooperation with Colombia. The European Union has adapted to a new discourse and declared its commitment to peacebuilding in armed conflicts by launching its program called Peace Laboratories (Baribbi & Arboleda, 2013).

From Peace Labs to the establishment of the European Peace Fund to support the implementation of the Havana Peace Agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (Mughamis, & Kadhim, 2023). The European Union in Colombia has become concerned with conflict resolution and peacebuilding and strengthening it by emphasizing the consolidation of democracy, support for human rights, and the active presence of civil society in development processes. Despite the change in view of the administration of former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010) regarding the conflict and the impossibility of holding talks with the FARC and other armed groups during that period, the European Union continued to support its program (Peace Labs), designed to peacebuilding even in times of conflict by strengthening local capacities and paving the way for future negotiations (Pastrana & Aponte, 2006). Later, during the negotiations conducted by the government of former Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in Havana, the European Union reaffirmed its commitment to the success of the process of resolving the conflict and bringing peace to Colombia. In 2015, the European Union appointed Eamon Gilmore as its special envoy for the peace process in Colombia and established the European Peace Fund to support the implementation of the agreement (Borda, 2012; Hassan, 2017).

The most prominent strategies adopted by the European Union towards the Colombian conflict can be identified as follows.

1. Global Peacebuilding

By the end of the 1990s, the European Union was promoting what later became a policy of global peacebuilding. This was one of the main priorities of his foreign policy, defined as a counterweight to the military policies implemented by the United States. This strategy represented a cooperation framework between the European Union and Colombia during the government of Andres Pastrana (1998–2002) (Cujabante Villamin, 2016; Lederach, 2005).

The support provided by the international community allowed the Pastrana government to regain its legitimacy in the wake of diplomatic problems between the government of the former President of the Republic of Colombia, Ernesto Samper Pisano, and the United States, which gave the country a new image among the active forces in the international community. For Pastrana, the official invitation extended by the President of the United States to the White House days before his inauguration on August 7, 1998, was an opportunity to change the image of Colombia not only before the United States but also before the international community in general. Once formed, the new government improved relations with the United States, while initiating talks with Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas, and fostering good diplomatic relations with other countries, allowing it to reach out to donor countries and collaborators that were not particularly close to it. Colombia, as is the case in the European Union (Barreto, 2016).

For their part, donors, especially the European Union, saw the possibility of cooperating with a stable country that had institutional solidity and economic capacity, allowing it to implement the new cooperation instruments that were being formulated at that time, and at a lower cost than other countries (Reliefweb Colombia, 2011). This is what brought international cooperation to Colombia, despite it being a middle-income country. This allowed the EU to test its cooperation strategies in a controlled way, the implementation of which had been problematic in regions such as Africa or Eastern Europe, which were less politically, economically, and socially stable than Colombia.

Pastrana's government had two main cooperation mechanisms during his term: diplomacy for peace and Plan Colombia. The European Union has taken opposing positions for each of these strategies. Finally, as the end of the government's term approached, with the end of the talks and the arrival of a new government, the European Union redirected its efforts to increase cooperation with civil society organizations in the regions and began to formulate what would become its main tools for international cooperation in the country: peace laboratories (Restrepo & Aponte, 2009).

2. Diplomacy for Peace & Internationalization of Conflict

Diplomacy for peace was the European Union's strategy for resolving the conflict and Peacebuilding in Colombia. Three donor roundtables were established to obtain international cooperation resources to finance peace initiatives, to invite countries and

multilateral organizations to approach talks with the rebels, support them, and thus legitimize them. Here the Pastrana government's dealings with the European Union and its member states began in October 1998, a little more than a month after it took power. In seeking initial support from the European Union, the Pastrana government requested the achievement of two main goals by the European Union: the first: internationalizing the Colombian conflict. Second: Legitimizing the government as the sole representative of the country. Both goals were interconnected and represented the highest foreign policy priority of the Pastrana government (Carlos, 2003)

It is worth noting that, since the European Union adopted this strategy, various states and multilateral organizations (such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations) have begun to show interest and engage in activities aimed at reaching a negotiated solution to the armed conflict. This process led to the so-called internationalization of the Colombian armed conflict (Wolf, 2002).

Within the framework of the Diplomacy for Peace strategy, the EU actively participated in donor round tables and encouraged the participation of its Member States (Spain and Germany, among others) in the Caguan negotiations, in the final phase of which the European Union itself participates (Hudson, 2007). As Pastrana noted, the EU viewed these talks as an opportunity to influence the Peacebuilding process, although it did not allocate its cooperation resources to the extent that the Colombian government had expected. Moreover, when the talks began to collapse at the end of 2001, the EU asked the Colombian government to make a last-ditch effort to keep the negotiations going. The government agreed to the European Union's request, but set very clear limits to the European Union's participation in the negotiations, to defend the political legitimacy it had gained (Alejo, 2002).

3. Commitment to the Caguán Talks and Rejection of Plan Colombia

At the end of 1999, the Colombian government decided to take on a second dimension to its foreign policy. The aim of this plan was to strengthen state institutions and achieve the greatest possible amount of social investment, in order to address inequality in the areas most affected by the conflict, as an attempt to prepare societies for possible peace, under the principle that without this, peace cannot be achieved. It will not be possible to implement what was agreed upon, and the initial causes of the conflict will be reactivated.

This policy was called Plan Colombia. It was initially formulated as an emulation of the Marshall Plan, modeled on the post-World War II American program to promote the development of areas most affected by violence and poverty in Colombia. Pastrana indicated that his initial formulation of the plan aimed to allocate 75% of resources to social investment and 25% to strengthen state institutions, especially security institutions. To achieve the goals of Plan Colombia, the government needed to obtain the resources necessary to implement it. Pastrana began his search for resources with the

United States. The Colombian Embassy in Washington made a tremendous effort to obtain resources from the administration of former US President Bill Clinton, which in turn was accompanied by credits and cooperation from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

However, the biggest problem that emerged after that was that the United States did not spend the money as planned. When disbursed, the allocation was 75% to strengthen institutions, with a greater focus than originally planned on strengthening security forces, and contrary to what was initially requested, only 25% was allocated to social investment (World Bank, 2002).

In response to this situation, the Colombian government sought to maximize social investment resources by looking to other sources of financing, such as the European Union, but this did not go as expected. The results were, in Pastrana's words, "one of his biggest frustrations". Active pressure groups have been formed against Plan Colombia, both inside and outside the country, as it has been interpreted as a US military plan, to which the European Union refuses to contribute (Carroll, 2011; Assafi, & Aziz, 2022). This led the Colombian government to change its strategy with the European Union and focus its relationship with it on two aspects: regional social development projects, which would later become Peace Laboratories, and environmental protection projects, particularly focused on protecting ecosystems affected by drug trafficking.

4. Peace Laboratories Strategy (2002–2009)

Although not the first EU program in Colombia, the Peace Labs was the program that most strongly characterized the EU-Colombia cooperative relationship, as well as the program in which the EU became directly involved in the Colombian conflict. The European Union program focused on resolving conflict and Peacebuilding in Colombia by combating poverty, promoting the rule of law, sustainable economic development, promoting human rights, and strengthening civil society (Idler, Garrido & Mouly, 2015; Abdul Ridaah, 2023).

The laboratories offered the advantage that they were fully compatible with EU values. At the same time, these events coincided with a time when the European Union wanted to distance itself from Plan Colombia, after the end of the negotiation talks conducted by the Andrés Pastrana government in 2000. The European Union joined the process of social mobilization carried out by various civil society actors, within the framework of the Peace and Development Program in Magdalena Medio (PDPMM) in force since 1995. Under the structure and experience of this program, in 2002, the European Union joined and became involved in this process, in the context of peace negotiations with the Pastrana government and the possibility of creating areas for disarmament and reintegration in the region (Betancur, 2007).

5. Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations (2002–2010)

The cooperation strategy adopted by the European Union during this period was based on development interventions and humanitarian aid to rehabilitate lands damaged by illicit crops, and to reduce conflicts that could have direct and indirect consequences for Europe (Sánchez, 2010). This was consistent with the European vision of combating and preventing conflicts and attacking the structural causes that generate and activate them.

With the end of the Caguan peace talks in 2002 and the imminent change of government, the European Union was forced to adjust its political strategies and formulate other projects to achieve its goals. The main change, that would affect its activities in Colombia from that moment on, was its distance from the national government and the prioritization of projects implemented with civil society organizations.

6. Regional Development, Peace and Stability Strategy (RDPS)

Once the laboratory strategy was completed in 2008, and especially after the EU's conditional support for the implementation of the Justice and Peace Act (which led to the disarmament of paramilitary forces), the Uribe government agreed to formalize EU projects and increase their convergence with institutions of the Colombian state (European Commission, 2014). This led to a milestone in EU cooperation with Colombia, embodied in the signing in 2009 of a formal strategy for cooperation to end the conflict and bring peace, which included a focus on lessons learned from laboratories, and formalized EU Peacebuilding strategies in addition to joint financing support from Colombian state (Castaneda, 2012).

The primary objective of the Regional Development, Peace and Stability Strategy (RDPS) was to support some of the most outstanding, strategic, and successful initiatives and projects of the Peace Labs in the second phase of funding, to ensure their continuity and stability. This new landscape has allowed EU cooperation to grow in Colombia, ensuring the continuity of its interventions (De Armiño, 2023).

7. Regional Development, Peace and Stability Programs (RDPS)

After the end of the Peace Labs in 2010, the European Union launched two new strategies: the Regional Development, Peace and Stability Programs (RDPS) between 2009 and 2016, and the New Zones of Peace (NTP) from 2011 to 2016. The RDPS has supported many initiatives that it began at Al Salam Laboratories and sought to ensure its continuity and sustainability. With the "New Territories of Peace" initiative, a new phase in EU cooperation began in Colombia, expressed with the state and civil society organizations, which would later become the EU's main ally (European Commission, 2015a). The focus of these programs was to support local processes of conflict resolution and Peacebuilding, with civil society organizations playing a leadership role, as priority was given to regional specificities of Peacebuilding. Through these programs, the European Union has expanded its areas of intervention in Colombia, while maintaining the main axes of its cooperation in the country, including strengthening institutions, promoting

human rights, and supporting local participatory processes (The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017).

To strengthen its vision for cooperation and gather lessons learned from the Peace Labs, in 2016 the European Union chose to work with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) in delegated cooperation. The European Union entrusted GIZ to carry out its work. This mechanism was embodied in a new project, FORPAZ, which became the fourth component of Peacebuilding Support in Colombia, the leading German cooperation program for Peacebuilding with a regional approach, transitional justice, historical memory, and reparations for victims. This program also aimed to clarify the efforts of Germany and the European Union in implementing the peace agreement (GIZ, 2016).

8. Expanding the Scope of Implementation of Transitional Justice in Colombia (2012–2016)

When the Peace Labs strategy was completed, and based on the experiences and lessons learned from these initiatives, other Peacebuilding projects were implemented in Colombia funded by the European Union, during the change of government from the Álvaro Uribe administration to the Juan Manuel Santos administration, reflecting the difference in approach, given that there has been a change from a government that emphasized a military response to the continuity of guerrilla organizations to a government that prioritized negotiating the armed conflict and realizing the rights of victims (Eva, 2015). This last goal was to be achieved through the creation and implementation of Law No. 1448 (Victims and Land Restitution Law) and the peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (Development Researchers Network *et al.*, 2012).

The "New Territories of Peace" programs, implemented by the European Union and the Colombian Government, had a comprehensive approach and included issues of human rights and innovation for peace (European Commission, 2018a). Since 2011, they have managed Peacebuilding initiatives in four regions of the country severely affected by armed conflict: Canal del Dique, Zona Costera, Bajo Magdalena, Caqueta, and Guaviare. In order to implement this initiative, the European Union cooperated with 16 implementing partners, achieving a number of 22,336 beneficiaries (Dominguez, 2015).

9. European Union Support for Peacebuilding (2010–2018)

After coming to power in 2010, former Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos began talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), first in a secret phase in Oslo and then in a public phase in Havana in 2012. In this context, the European Union affirmed its commitment to resolving the conflict and bringing about peace. In 2013, the European Union announced its support for the peace process in Havana (Landesberg, 2013). The former European Union Ambassador to Colombia, Maria Antonia Van Gool,

the European Commission, and the European Council publicly announced their support on January 28 of the same year, within the framework of the EU-CLAS summit. At the same time, this political support was ratified at the highest level, and the European Union continued to support cooperation programs through the Regional Development for Peace and Stability Project (Hameed, 2022). EU also led a coordination process among the country's donors, seeking to prepare their international cooperation for the future post-agreement phase and implement the Havana Accords (European Commission, 2015b).

In 2014, the European Commission submitted a positive report that exempted Colombian citizens from visas, linking it in part to the achievements of the peace process. In the same year, the European Union examined the possibility of establishing a peace trust fund. In August 2016, Irish diplomat Eamon Gilmore was appointed as EU Special Representative to support the peace process, representing an important political endorsement of the process (European Commission, 2017).

In 2016, the European Commission announced approval to establish the European Trust Fund for Peace in March of the same year, with an initial amount of 70 million euros, from contributions from 9 member states (Germany, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom), which will enter into force after the signing of the official agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (European Commission, 2018b).

The Effectiveness of the European Union's Strategies Towards the Colombian Conflict

The EU's strategies were in sync with the US's move towards Colombia and its "war on drugs", which explicitly targeted far-left gangs, and later "terrorists", as threats to be eliminated or at least reduced. The more interventionist approach adopted by the United States appears to have been based on successive American security models, not Peacebuilding in Colombia per se and did not help prevent the erosion of trust in public institutions (Maher, 2018). Despite the dynamic relationship, which has had its ups and downs, the EU has also generally been a more reliable and stable partner for Colombia than its immediate neighbors. There is no doubt that neighboring countries were inevitably more directly affected by the effects of the conflict, which required the European Union to adopt different strategies to contain the conflict there, and it later became an active player in peacebuilding.

Despite the European Union's clear intentions and commitment to Peacebuilding, the impact of EU strategies in resolving the Colombian conflict has been limited (Gómez, 2007). The European Union dealt with the Colombian crisis as an issue for resolving the conflict and Peacebuilding at a time when most of the Colombian political elites were not convinced of this view. Instead, the Colombian political class has long viewed

violence in Colombia as a problem of internal security and territorial control. From this perspective, the EU strategies served as a precursor to the Peacebuilding approach adopted in Colombia since the signing, in 2016, of a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP).

This discrepancy between the EU and the Colombian government in their understanding of the dynamics of violence and conflict meant that the EU was initially unable to measure its influence in confronting challenges on the ground. While Peace Labs have led to successes in several projects and other EU development assistance, some institutional changes at the local and, to some extent, the national level, have been met with inevitable security constraints, because much of the EU's actions have taken place. In areas where there was violence and were not under government control. The political dialogue that took place at the regional and bilateral levels served as a pressure point to keep Colombia engaged at the international level and to raise its concerns related to human rights and sustainable development. However, some experts argued that the European Union could have done more than just declarative gestures and should have pressed the Colombian government more forcefully at high-level summits to address human rights violations.

The impact of trade cooperation and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that Colombia signed with the European Union in 2012 has also had mixed results. Although diversifying Colombia's exports to include agricultural products helped create job opportunities, civil society organizations criticized the European institutions' monitoring of the agreement. They pointed out that the European Commission did not focus enough on sustainable development. Moreover, although the European Parliament played an active role in defending human rights networks and vulnerable groups, civil society organizations hoped for a stronger demand from the Parliament on respect for human rights.

In contrast, despite their small size and unexplored impact on the overall resolution of the conflict in Colombia, Peace Labs have contributed to institutional changes at the local, national, and international levels. As the European Commission's Strategic Evaluation emphasized, "The main achievements of the European Commission's contribution have been in creating platforms for dialogue between different actors present in the region, in strengthening networks and civil society organizations, in encouraging the creation of alliances between public and private actors, and in supporting activities Productivity to achieve social and economic stability in the region. However, the initiative also highlights the difficulties of establishing an international presence in conflict environments.

One of the biggest challenges faced in implementing Peace Labs is that they were developed as a mechanism to support the peace process at a time and in areas where there is no peace and negotiations are not progressing. This means that the activities of the European Union were affected by factors that were beyond its control, namely

armed confrontations, tense relations with neighboring countries, the access of local organizations to armed actors and drug trafficking, and the insufficient capacity of local organizations, among other issues. The EU has been criticized for its "heavy, slow, inflexible and highly bureaucratic" procedures, which underestimate its positive impact.

However, it cannot be overlooked that these laboratories led to strengthening state institutions (administrative and judicial reform) and helping victims of the conflict. With the start of the laboratories, an estimated €35 million was allocated to co-finance non-governmental organizations, improve the conditions of internally displaced persons, promote human rights, and the fields of science and technology. Since 2010, the Emergency Fund has allocated 13 direct grants to human rights defenders from Colombia and their families (the maximum grant is €10,000 per case).

The European Commission's strategic assessment for this period also speaks of key contributions to protecting internally displaced persons' territories, strengthening the capacity of victims and human rights organizations to participate in the transitional justice process, and maintaining a high level of activity in favor of defending and promoting human rights (Hameed, 2020). The report believes that European Union development cooperation also contributed to strengthening local actors as active parties in the process of conflict resolution and Peacebuilding. It has helped subnational bodies to strengthen participatory budgeting and focus public service delivery according to social and regional needs, partly helped by building technical capacity and fighting corruption.

Communicating and supporting with human rights organizations and human rights defenders has been one of the European Union's primary concerns. Since 2014, the European Union has provided funds amounting to an average of €1 million per year through the EIDHR to civil society organizations, to strengthen the defense of human rights in Colombia. Between 2013 and 2015, the European Union funded a project (worth €553,000) on women's empowerment in the Colombian province of Guajira, to provide legal advisory services and inform international partners of the challenges facing this community. In 2015, the European Union provided financial support to several NGO-run projects aimed at improving the human rights situation, focusing on the situation of human rights defenders and other activists at risk, victims of conflict and gender-based violence, and children in Armed conflicts.

Regarding labor issues, the European Union, through its various strategies, was able to provide financial support to the National Trade Union School, which is one of the main bodies active in workers' rights and protecting union leaders. In addition, since its establishment in 2015, the EU Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (administered by a consortium of 12 specialized NGOs) has allocated 30 direct grants and organized 32 training activities for human rights defenders at risk (individuals and organizations). Legal and psychological support, medical assistance, improved security, and emergency transportation were also provided to human rights defenders. Many

EIDHR-funded projects have addressed the critical needs of indigenous communities, who have been directly and indirectly affected by internal conflict, through anti-discrimination support and capacity building to enable them to engage in dialogues with public institutions and authorities about their rights and issues (Lazarou, & Perchoc, 2019).

Also, the European Union has worked on the issue of gender equality and in combating discrimination and organized crime (Ali, & Tatar, 2018). The EU has also worked to strengthen social cohesion through EUROsociAL and citizen security through El PacCTO (Assistance Program against Transnational Organized Crime).

In tandem, the European Union, through its strategies and tools employed in Colombia, was able to assist in building the administrative capacities of Colombian institutions. In this context, for example, the European Union delegation in Colombia supported prior consultations on respect for human rights and followed up on several issues related to violations of human rights defenders and the rights of indigenous communities, and discussed this issue periodically with the National Indigenous Organization. In addition, the European Union and several of its Member States assisted the Colombian government in formulating and implementing its National Action Plan, on business and human rights. Further support was allocated to the implementation of a regional project on business and human rights covering issues related to prior consultation (Mucke, 2017). The European Union has also funded projects to empower indigenous people in their relationship with companies, for example, promoting human rights and social and corporate advocacy through local Wayuu women's initiatives. In addition, the project called "Transnational corporations and guiding principles: Towards effective mechanisms for the protection of human rights in Latin America" funded actions related to consultation among actors in Colombia, as well as its contribution to improving the implementation of the International Labor Organization Convention No. (169) on non-discrimination (Abofarha & Nasreldein, 2022).

As part of its vision for conflict resolution and peacemaking in Colombia, the European Union has provided humanitarian aid for more than two decades. The Union provided €202 million worth of humanitarian aid between 1994 and 2014, and Colombia became the second largest beneficiary of humanitarian aid provided by the European Commission in the Latin American and Caribbean region, after Haiti. This aid covered the needs of internally displaced persons, assisted Colombian refugees in neighboring countries, primarily Ecuador and Venezuela (€184.4 million), responded to natural disasters (€11.4 million), and funded projects to better prepare local, national and regional communities and institutions, to confront risks and reduce vulnerability (5.6 million euros) (Ali, 2023). Part of the peace laboratories was funded through this budget item. In this context, the ECHO Office of the European Commission has been actively coordinating with the Victims Unit (UARIV), the Presidential Agency for Refugees, the International Cooperation Office (APCl), and the National Unit for Disaster Risk

Management (UNGRD), to address humanitarian needs in remote areas of the country, where armed actors obstruct public services and response (OECD, 2017).

Concerning the areas of economics and development, here we should point out a very important issue, which is that before the establishment of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), in 1992, and the signing of the trade agreement between the European Union, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador EU–Colombia–Peru–Ecuador Trade Agreement On June 26, 2012, Colombia faced significant economic insecurity, making it difficult for the Colombian economy to thrive due to a lack of trust in government institutions, extreme income inequality, and many other problems resulting from fear of violence from rebel groups. However, signing the above-mentioned agreement changed Colombia's economic path.

Conclusions

The European Union in particular is a major donor to Colombia and has focused its international cooperation on addressing the causes and consequences of armed conflict in the country. For more than two decades, EU cooperation has focused on Peacebuilding, even in the midst of armed conflict, leading it to implement actions with multiple actors and perspectives. Hence, it worked alongside civil society organizations, and local authorities to implement a regional vision and different bodies of the national government. At the same time, and perhaps due to the particularities of the Colombian case, the country served as a favorable environment in which the EU was able to apply many different strategies. In this sense, the Peace Labs gave the European Union the first opportunity to learn about the regions and their characteristics and to start a learning process to search for and apply new tools.

To maintain its position regarding Peacebuilding, the European Union has also been able to adapt to the different visions of successive Colombian governments, some of which, such as those of (Pastrana) or (Santos), were committed to dialogue to overcome the armed conflict, and others were opposed, such as (Uribe), like this dialogue, supports direct confrontation with the rebels. This continued support allowed the European Union to work in particular with civil society, which was already implementing local Peacebuilding processes. Supporting the social processes underway in different regions has been one of the major contributions of European intervention in Colombia. The regional and differential approach has allowed the EU to adapt its peacebuilding efforts, taking into account that the conflict has developed differently in the country and has particularly affected fragile areas that lack a state presence or are environmentally vulnerable.

The search for new intervention strategies, such as a cooperation mandate, budgetary support, and a trust fund, reflects the lessons that the European Union has learned in its work to resolve conflict and Peacebuilding in Colombia. This included seeking to

make future interventions more flexible and, at the same time, more sustainable by engaging the state as a key actor in the processes it supports. While the EU was initially particularly active in working with civil society, it later played an important role as a mediator between different actors in the region.

It can be said that the European Union was able, through its various strategies, to achieve important achievements - but limited impact - in transforming the paths of the Colombian conflict, paving the way for its resolution, and enhancing the opportunities for Peacebuilding there). The European Union and its member states have emphasized the importance of Colombia to them, through their formulation and employment of several strategies (economic, political, security, social, humanitarian, etc. Relief, rehabilitation, and development activities have been linked for a more focused and joint response to Colombia's post-conflict needs and Peacebuilding efforts. The European Union, through the Trust Fund, was also able to rebuild the social and economic fabric of the country, especially at the local level, focusing on the most affected rural areas, which are the areas that suffered most from illegal activities and violence. However, the challenges facing the work of the European Union hindered the process of resolving the conflict and Peacebuilding as required.

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The Methodological and Epistemological Developments in Conflict and Peace Studies

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Abstract: Conflict and peace studies is a field of knowledge and a contemporary academic discipline whose theories and concepts were formed in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the phenomenon of conflict is considered one of the oldest human phenomena. This article seeks to study and analyze the emergence and development of conflict and peace studies as a new scientific field, from its beginnings in post-World War II to the present time. In other words, this article deals with the progress of this scientific field through a review of all the basic stages that this field of knowledge has gone through. In its approach, this study resorted to the method of surveying many Western political references in the field of conflict and peace studies. Next, the study broke down the process of starting up and growing in this scientific field into specific periods that have basic elements. These include figuring out how important each stage is, how long it takes for this scientific specialization to become established, and what the most important ideas are at each stage. Finally, we compared these stages to discover the nature of the change and development in this scientific field.

Keywords: Conflict, peace, studies, methodological, epistemological developments.

Introduction

Just as conflict is an ancient phenomenon linked to human existence, studies of conflict have historical roots extending back to ancient times, such as the studies of the Greek historian Thucydides in his book "The History of the Peloponnesian War" (431 BC), and the Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu in his book "The Art of War". However, the actual development of this field occurred in the contemporary period. Most specialists consider that this field has its own

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characteristics and theoretical foundations and was based on methodological studies in the twentieth century, with its most important scientific results emerging during the second half of the twentieth century.

In the modern era, the First and Second World Wars (fascism and Nazism) undermined people's belief that democracy and economic development would lead to peaceful co-existence. Therefore, researchers began to study revolutions, socio-class conflicts, and organizational conflicts such as the conflict between workers and employers, and to analyze the causes of specific wars. Some of the first social and psychological analyses of the conflict were conducted, as well as research into methods for developing human relations and social equality models as theoretical approaches to resolving conflicts. A set of analytical theories has emerged that explain the stages of conflict, its level of intensity, and ways to limit and resolve it, such as Friedrich Glasl's model of conflict escalation, the Johan Galtung Triangle, the Michael Lund Curve, the Wheel of Conflict, the Conflict Tree, and other analytical models.

After the Cold War, the field of conflict and peace studies expanded its focus to include conflict prevention and post-settlement reconciliation. The nature of international conflicts has changed in the post-Cold War world, and researchers have begun to study and analyze the dynamics of the new world and understand the causes of non-traditional conflicts. Preventive diplomacy has also been designed and used to prevent the outbreak of conflict, early warning systems to detect conflict, analysis of the nature of identity conflicts, institutional conflicts, individual conflict within society and the family, and ways to address the psychological aspects of conflict. Conflict resolution practices have extended to new environments and become increasingly institutionalized, especially in the United States of America. At the international level, researchers working in the fields of peace and conflict studies have made significant contributions to policies used by non-governmental organizations, development agencies, international financial institutions, and the United Nations system, in the specific areas of conflict resolution, citizen diplomacy, development, politics, social and economic reform, peacekeeping, mediation, and early warning, prevention, Peacebuilding, and state building. The interest of researchers and specialists was not limited to the conflict aspect only, but rather they were directed towards dealing with the underlying reasons behind people fighting among themselves in the first place, in addition to supporting societies to manage their differences and conflicts without resorting to violence (Peacebuilding).

This subject represented a shift in interest from the approach of Conflict management oriented towards “negative peace” to conflict resolution and Peacebuilding approaches aimed at “positive peace”. These developments have been summarized in the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, entitled “An Agenda for Peace” in 1992. Indeed, it can be said that much of the mechanics of what several scholars have called “liberal Peacebuilding” and “state-building” depends largely on

the work that has been carried out in this field. Many scholars have called for a more "liberal" form of Peacebuilding, based on "responsibility to protect" (R2P), human security, local ownership, and participation in such processes, especially after the limited success of liberal Peacebuilding.

Studying the beginnings of the emergence and development of this field of knowledge (conflict and peace studies) is considered a scientific necessity to understand the history of this science on one side, how it originated and developed on the other side, and to know the nature of the change and development that occurred in this field of knowledge on the third side.

Such studies will undoubtedly help us understand the factors influencing the development of this field of knowledge, as well as the challenges and problems it faced. By doing so, we can then benefit from this knowledge in studying the future of this field and how to guide its future direction to avoid repeating many of the problems and challenges of the past. Additionally, understanding the development process of this field greatly aids in shaping its future and maximizing the benefit of this science in its applied aspects. This includes developing the ability to use scientific methodological methods in analyzing and resolving conflicts and promoting positive peace in general, and in our Arab society in particular.

Therefore, this study attempts to observe and monitor the most important developments and stages that conflict and peace studies have gone through, and to identify the most important cognitive and methodological transformations in this field of knowledge, given its importance, spread, and interest in studying it. In addition to mention the most important contributions made by this field of knowledge to resolve conflicts and Peacebuilding around the world, and clarifying the most important criticisms directed at this specialty.

The Emergence of Conflict and Peace Studies

Conflict studies have historical roots in antiquity, such as the studies of the Greek historian Thucydides, in his book "The History of the Peloponnesian War" (431 BC). Also, Aristotle's studies on revolution in Greek civilization, and Sun Tzu on the art of war. However, the actual development of this field occurred in the contemporary period. Most of the specialists in this field consider that this field has its characteristics and characteristics, and is based on methodological studies that were in the twentieth century and that its most important scientific results were in the second half of the twentieth century (Schellenberg, 1996).

One of the most important scholars of conflict and peace studies, Johan Galtung, points out in his latest scientific book published in 2009 in this scientific field, that the developments and progress of conflict and peace studies during the past fifty years have

been astonishing. Among these indications is the use of the term peace, which since the fifties has been associated with communist claims and propaganda and the acceptance of submission to the red threat, and the use of the term in those periods from the Western point of view was embarrassing. While the reality has completely changed today (Kaldor, 2005; Galtung & Webel, 2009; Campbell, MacKinnon & Stevens, 2010).

Conflict and peace studies have gone through four phases of time, as follows:

The Preliminary Stage (1918–1945)

This stage is considered a preliminary phase, rather than a foundational stage, for the field of conflict and peace studies. The scientific contributions and efforts of researchers during this era served as a preliminary introduction to the establishment of the field. These efforts constituted precursors to the pre-establishment stage and originated from studies and specialization in international relations. Additionally, the emergence of certain international changes and developments acted as harbingers and prompted an interest in establishing this academic field and conducting scientific research within it. These international developments created a strong sense of necessity to establish this scientific field. Among the most important of these international developments are:

- The occurrence of the First and Second World Wars resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of people and massive economic and social devastation. The occurrence of the First and Second World Wars, resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of people, and massive economic and social devastation.
- The emergence of Nazi and fascist ideologies, and their association with nationalist and racist feelings, expansion, and hegemony, each at the expense of the other (Lederach, 2005).

These international developments have prompted movement and efforts in terms of research and study of wars and conflicts, and collective international efforts in practice to find institutional frameworks and mechanisms to achieve peace and prevent the recurrence of such two world wars. Among these mechanisms is the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920, which later collapsed, and then the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 to achieve international peace and security and resolve disputes by peaceful means. The global humanitarian catastrophe caused by these wars also created strong motivations at the academic and research level to study wars to prevent the recurrence of these world wars and any future wars, "Peace Science" and interest in peace as a general science. One of the scholars of conflict and peace studies, Kenneth Boulding, refers in 1957 to the reasons or motives for establishing this field of knowledge, summarizing them in two elements, as Wiberg (1990), Hassan (2017), Gutsul and Khrul (2017) or Alwan, Qati and Ali (2021) did on their turn:

- The practical problem facing international relations (at that time) in particular was the prevention of a world war.

- To achieve intellectual progress in this field, international relations must be studied, as a project and derive its discourse from all social sciences (interdisciplinary) or as an interdisciplinary scientific field.

The Foundation Stage (1945–1960)

It is possible to consider the period of the fifties and sixties of the last century as the stage in which the foundations, theories, concepts, and methods of the field of conflict and peace studies were laid, and thus this period constituted the foundational stage for this scientific field (Dungen, 1996).

In the preliminary stage, we mentioned some of the international and regional developments that played an important role in creating basic motives for interest and revitalizing of conflict and peace studies. The most important of these developments were the Second World War and the disasters it caused to the human community, as well as the spread of resistance, liberation, and national independence movements against colonialism during the Foundation stage (1945–1960). In addition, the emergence of the Cold War, the arms race, and the dangers of nuclear weapons. Conflict and peace studies in this era are a reactive response to risks, human disasters, and wars directly affected by the West, and not a proactive process (Rogers, 2007; Dar, 2017).

These developments prompted a growing interest in conflict and peace studies, and the establishment of institutions, research centers, and scientific programs in the field of conflict and peace studies, taking advantage of other scientific fields previously mentioned, such as political science, sociology, international relations, and others.

The Consolidation and Development Stage (1970–1989)

This stage constituted an expansive extension and consolidation of the sixties. This expansion was primarily characterized by horizontal growth, signifying the quantitative expansion of the scientific field. It was evident in the increased number of researchers and specialists in conflict and peace studies, as seen in the expanded membership of scientific associations and unions dedicated to this field, such as the International Peace Research Consortium (IPRC) and IPRA, for example.

Furthermore, this expansion manifested in the proliferation of research institutions and scientific programs specializing in conflict and peace studies, with a notable increase in presence across many European countries and particularly in Japan. Additionally, there was a growth in scientific societies at national and regional levels focusing on conflict, security, and peace studies. Later in this discussion, we will present some numerical indicators in this field.

This horizontal expansion of researchers, scientific institutions, and research centers specialized in peace studies was accompanied by an accumulation of knowledge, both

vertically and horizontally. This was reflected in the substantial intellectual output of research and scientific literature, including a large number of specialized scientific publications in the form of books, encyclopedias, research papers in specialized scientific journals, and presentations at scientific conferences.

It is worth noting that during this stage, scientific contributions in this field were primarily made by research institutions and collaborative teamwork, leading to a decline in the individual role of researchers and scientists in building knowledge within this scientific field, as was the case during its founding phase in the fifties and sixties. However, the importance of individual scientific production and publication for researchers remained significant in driving scientific research and publishing in the field of conflict and peace studies (Wiberg, 1988; Lasica, 2009).

The Global Expansion and Spread (1990–2010)

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the end of the Cold War and the arms race, which formed one of the most important motives for the emergence of conflict and peace studies and the development of this scientific field, it is difficult to separate the beginnings of this stage from the second half of the eighties (in which fundamental changes began in The Soviet Union under President Gorbachev ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union) (Askerov, 2021; Ndeche & Iroye, 2022).

The significance of this stage lies in the completion of the development of conflict and peace studies, which was evident through the rapid and substantial proliferation of this field across most parts of the world. This expansion was observed in various aspects, including the increase in the number of scientific institutions and research centers, the establishment of academic programs specializing in this field, and the growth in the number of scientific periodicals. Furthermore, there was a notable increase in specialists, academics, and practitioners in this scientific domain. Finally, the expansion resulted in a significant increase in scientific production, research agendas, and subfields within this discipline. This surge in activity encompassed conferences, seminars, research projects, publications, and other scholarly endeavors (Matyók, 2011; Udegbunam, 2017).

Conflict and Peace Studies: Ideas and Institutions

The different periods that conflict and peace studies have gone through have produced a variety of new ideas related to the concepts of conflict and peace and their stages, as well as many scientific institutions specialized in this field of knowledge, which would have developed this new science, and laid its theoretical and methodological foundations, which later became the basis for this science. Therefore, we find it necessary, shortly and quickly, to research the most important basic ideas produced by this science, and its most prominent specialized intellectual and cognitive institutions.

The Ideas

The period from 1950 to 1970 is considered the stage of the actual establishment of this scientific field, as work has been done to lay the foundations and theoretical and cognitive frameworks for its scientific system, the basic scientific theories have been developed in addition to building and developing curricula and basic models for this scientific field (Eldrige, 1994; Crosby & Soest, 1997; Assafi & Aziz, 2022).

At this stage, the features of conflict and peace studies began to emerge as a science. At this stage, attention was paid to the development and use of the quantitative method, especially in America, which was very active in the study of international relations in general, which had a clear reflection on the conflict studies approach, where the academic group began to use the quantitative approach in analyzing conflicts, especially at the University of Michigan, and this quantitative trend in conflict studies had a clear impact on the first scientific periodical specialized in conflict studies, which is "The Journal of Conflict Resolution", which was previously referred to it (Pruitt, & Rubin, 1986; Weiss, 1993).

At this stage, the controversy between the realist school and the idealist school in international relations was reflected in the academic community of conflict and peace studies. On one hand, the idealist school promoted conflict and peace studies, emphasizing the need to settle conflicts by peaceful means, and showed interest in conflict prevention and achieving positive peace. On the other hand, supporters of the realist school in international relations stressed the importance of paying attention to force and using it when necessary to settle conflicts or prevent their occurrence. Consequently, this school focused on the need to build strength, leading to the generation of pessimistic trends towards peace and conflict research among academic groups in this field (Curle, 1971).

The studies and literature presented by the scholars and founders, whom we refer to as the most important ones based on the nature of their publications and scientific interests, indicate that their efforts were primarily focused on studying the causes of wars and conflicts rather than on studying peace. However, this focus is considered a natural part of the development process of this field. The concept of peace involves justice and cooperation and is more comprehensive than merely the absence of violence and conflict, known as negative peace (Paul, 2007; Al-Khazandar, 2014).

During the seventies and eighties of the last century, studies and research in the field of conflict and peace studies aimed for deeper exploration of conflict and peace theories and the practical application of these theories. Efforts were made to develop curricula and scientific approaches for this field, focusing on practical applications of theoretical frameworks and attempting to emphasize the scientific aspects of dimensions with practical application possibilities. Consequently, studies dealing with dispute resolution methods such as negotiations and mediation, along with scientific techniques

and methods concerned with these aspects, experienced significant growth (Lipsitz & Kritzer, 1975; Katz, 1989; Abu-Nimer, 2013).

Although negotiation and mediation are ancient processes associated with human life and have evolved over time in connection with diplomatic activities of nation-states and international organizations such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies, a significant number of scholars in the field of conflict studies, especially in the 1980s, believed that there was a deficiency in critical studies of mediation and that it still lacked systematic analysis (Hoffman, 1992; Jeong, 1995; Mughamis & Kadhim, 2023).

Several studies have appeared in this era that focus on the subject of negotiations and mediation, in theory and practice. Among them were special contributions that sought to institutionalize the mediation process and the role of mediators in the conflict (Wallensteen & Harbom, 2009; Levine, 1996; Coleman, 2007). Also, at this stage, scientific approaches and schools for conflict resolution appeared, such as the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), a school that relies on legal mechanisms and frameworks for settling disputes and conflicts, as well as developing the Harvard School curriculum for solving problems (Levine, 1996; Coleman, 2007; Schirch, 2005; Wallensteen & Harbom, 2009).

With the onset of the 1990s, significant events unfolded, perhaps the most notable being the end of the Cold War and the subsequent disarmament, which had profound implications for conflict and peace studies. This was evident in the emergence of new conflicts and shifts in their nature, as well as changes in the research agenda.

In terms of the evolving nature of conflicts and their participants, the collapse of the Soviet Union gave rise to new conflicts, including those in Russia (Chechnya), Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, the Gulf War, the occupation of Iraq, and Timor/Indonesia. Additionally, the international war on terrorism initiated by the United States in 2001 emerged as a significant global concern. Studies conducted by the Norwegian PRIO and the Uppsala Conflict Institute database indicate a decline in interstate armed conflicts in the post-Cold War era, with a rise in civil wars and intrastate conflicts. During this period, conflicts primarily revolved around power struggles and territorial disputes, particularly ethnic conflicts and movements for independence or autonomy (Wallensteen, 2011).

Regarding the research agenda and conflict issues in the post-Cold War era, there was a shift away from issues related to the arms race towards more specialized and diversified directions. Various specialized fields emerged within conflict and peace studies, with the United States taking a leading role in both official and academic domains. The focus of conflict and peace studies expanded to encompass non-traditional areas such as human security, conflicts involving religious and ethnic minorities, clash of civilizations, environmental and water issues, human rights, peace processes, state and economic

issues, international terrorism, peace culture, and education. Additionally, research interests in peace studies extended to areas such as early warning systems, conflict prevention strategies, and peacebuilding efforts (Kumar, Cousens, & Wermester, 2001; Tshigiri, 2004; Wallensteen & Harbom, 2009).

Scientific Research Institutions

In the preliminary period, there were no independent research or university institutions dedicated to conflict and peace studies. The only exception was the emergence of an American association called the Massachusetts Peace Association, founded between 1817 and 1819 by Noah Worcester. It was the sole organization of its kind globally and conducted a study on the human toll of wars since Adam and Eve, as well as delving into military expenditures and their connections to civilian objectives. Worcester also established the first quarterly journal in the field of peace studies, titled "Friends of Peace," in 1815. However, the initial studies in this scientific field did not originate from this association; rather, they emerged from the realm of international relations studies and institutions, which had its foundational beginnings during the same period.

During that era, scientific studies of international relations and affairs began to take a scientific turn with the emergence of research or academic institutions focused on international issues and problems. In the 1930s, the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, commonly known as Chatham House, was among the first of these institutions, established in 1923. Additionally, organizations such as The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) were established, along with similar institutions in Germany and other European countries. The first university chair dedicated to teaching international politics was established in Wales in 1919 at Aberystwyth College (Lund, 1996; Abd, 2016; Inass, 2023).

In Europe, the first research center specialized in peace studies was established in Norway, known as the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), in 1959. It stands as one of the oldest research institutes in peace and conflict studies and has been associated with one of the oldest and most significant journals dedicated to this scientific field since 1964—the "Journal of Peace Research." It was the inaugural periodical of its kind to be published in Europe (Dungen, 1996; De Reuck, 2001; Hikmat, 2020).

Furthermore, research and academic institutes focusing on this scientific field emerged in several European countries. For instance, the Pomological Institute at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands was established in 1962. In France, the Institute for War Studies was founded in 1970, and in Britain, the Lancaster Center for Peace Studies, also known as The Richardson Institute, was established at Lancaster University in 1959. Other notable institutions include the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), founded in 1966, and the Tampere Institute in Finland in 1969 (Kenneth, 1996). It is noteworthy that the Scandinavian countries exhibited greater interest in the field of

conflict and peace studies during this era compared to other European nations (Ali & Tatar, 2018).

On the other hand, it may be appropriate to refer to a special international movement in the field of security and peace after World War II, which resulted in an institutional mechanism that works to achieve international peace and security based on resolving disputes by peaceful means. This institutional mechanism was represented by the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, as well as at the Arab regional level, the League of Arab States was established several months before the United Nations; To contribute to achieving a set of goals, including settling Arab conflicts by peaceful means, and contributing in maintaining Arab national security (Ryan, 2003).

In the stage of growth and expansion (the 1980s), the proliferation of scientific institutions focused on conflict and peace studies experienced a horizontal expansion, encompassing not only America but also all European countries, along with many Asian and some African nations. For instance, the UNESCO IPRA Directory indicates the establishment of nearly 500 institutes, research centers, unions, or associations during this period, extending until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Academic programs specializing in conflict and peace studies became widespread across universities worldwide.

For example, the Department of Conflict and Peace Studies at Uppsala University was founded in 1971, offering various scientific degrees and training programs. In Northern Ireland, the University of Belfast was established, and in South Africa, the Center for Conflict Resolution was founded at the University of Cape Town in 1968. The Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom was established in 1973. In the United States of America, numerous scientific institutions and research centers emerged, including the United States Institute of Peace in 1984, which is affiliated with Congress and dedicated to issues of peace and conflict (Inass, 2023).

In the stage of spread and consolidation (1990–2010), this scientific field expanded widely across various countries worldwide. This expansion manifested at multiple levels, including the establishment of institutions, research centers, and scientific periodicals, as well as the exploration of diverse fields, issues, and research agendas. Furthermore, there was a notable increase in study programs specializing in this field, along with a significant rise in the number of specialized researchers, academics, and practitioners/activists.

Despite the end of the Cold War and the arms race, which served as significant catalysts for the development of ideas and research agendas in conflict and peace studies, this period saw an increase in issues related to minorities and human rights. Additionally, civil wars and ethnic conflicts proliferated, accompanied by a shift in the parties involved in conflicts, with a growing role observed among non-state actors in armed conflicts (Thomas, 2001; Heikki, 2001; Ryan, 2003).

During this period, research centers and academic departments were established in universities all over the world, and they took various specialized forms and directions in this field, whether under security in its broad and comprehensive concept (Security) or methods of conflict management and conflict resolution, including issues of minority protection and peace education and conflict prevention, and others. Many universities now offer bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in the field of conflict studies, or a short-term training diploma in this scientific field (Ryan, 2003; Harris & Shuster, 2006).

Conclusions

According to the aforementioned, we can say that conflict and peace studies, although it is a modern science, its practice is old with the age and existence of man and human civilizations, and this field is part of a process of human knowledge accumulation in which the efforts of multiple civilizations and cultures contributed, although Western efforts in general and American efforts in particular contributed to its emergence as a field or scientific specialization within the context of the contemporary scientific development experienced by the Western world in the various fields of social, human and applied sciences.

Most academics in the Arab region argue that peace studies approach and theories are not objective, drawn primarily from leftist or non-expert sources, are not practical, support violence rather than reject it, or have not led to political developments. Moreover, they noted that the development of policies of the United Nations and major donors (including the European Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom, as well as many other countries including Japan, Canada, Norway, etc.) towards conflict and post-conflict countries, has been Severe negative impact.

However, these accusations and criticisms are not true, because these institutions and governments have developed and adopted a set of major policies and responses during the past decades to deal with conflicts and establish peace. In the work of the United Nations, we find that there are several serious steps adopted in this regard, such as the "peace agenda," "development agenda," and "transformation agenda" Democratization and the Millennium Development Goals, the Responsibility to Protect, and the Report of the High-Level Panel.

Conflict and peace studies have significantly influenced the operational procedures of international and regional organizations, particularly in terms of addressing and resolving conflicts and initiating multiple peace-building processes across various regions globally. In today's world, prominent international organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the International Committee of the Red Cross play pivotal roles in maintaining, creating, and fostering peace. They achieve this by enhancing communication between opposing factions, facilitating humanitarian cooperation, and fostering dialogue. Additionally,

these organizations engage in civilian-military coordination, provide essential services, cater to the needs of civilian populations, and advocate for the adherence to and implementation of international humanitarian law principles. With their regional or global perspectives, international organizations are also adept at identifying issues and trends that may signal escalating tensions or conflicts before hostilities erupt. They serve as early warning mechanisms and offer conflict resolution and quiet diplomacy services.

Currently, the field is characterized by both areas of broad consensus and sharp disagreement. Scholars concur that different strategies are appropriate for varying types and stages of conflicts. They emphasize the influence of adversarial parties on conflict escalation and de-escalation. There is also increasing recognition that social conflicts involve multiple parties and issues, often interlocked. However, scholars still widely differ in their emphasis on conflict resolution or dispute settlement. Their approaches to power and force vary; some perceive coercion as an inevitable element of any resolution, while others regard force as antithetical to genuine conflict resolution. Moreover, there is disagreement over which strategies are suitable for different types and stages of conflict.

Although the fields of conflict resolution and international relations are converging in some areas, they should remain distinct (yet complementary) in others. Both fields share an emphasis on seeking win/win outcomes. International case studies have enhanced both fields' understanding of mediation, while institutional studies have improved their understanding of achieving a durable conflict outcome. The rise of non-state actors on the international scene has also brought the fields closer together. In practice, the fields of conflict resolution and international relations often complement each other. Unofficial Track Two diplomacy provides a valuable supplement to official diplomacy.

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Zimbabwe: Teaching Peace in Challenging Environments. Lessons from the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Bulawayo

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Abstract: Although the United Nations, governments, and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are putting efforts into promoting peace education in Africa, challenges remain due to "challenging environments". A "challenging environment," as defined in this paper, is an environment that neither fully permits nor bars the teaching of peace. This is typical of environments where peace is introduced, especially in third world countries. When the UN and prominent NGOs advocate for peace education, governments are often willing and quick to comply, but numerous challenges hinder the teaching of peace. Based on practical experiences in establishing a peace course across faculties, the authors draw several lessons from the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) experience. Tasked with the mammoth goal of establishing peace programs, the authors faced challenges including: (1) an unstable economic and political environment; (2) student demonstrations linked to economic challenges; (3) large classes and few lecturers; (4) a lack of teaching materials; and (5) being housed under a different department. Experience has shown that it is possible to teach peace in such environments, provided certain tactics, such as being creative in sourcing material, are used. Peace education has limited teaching materials, and even if the materials were to be purchased, acquiring enough books for a large number remains a challenge. As noted by the authors, they resorted to creative ways of finding teaching materials, including assigning different topics to students and then combining the re-

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search to create a material base, using newspaper articles to test conflict resolution skills in students, etc. Creative teaching methods include adopting a student-centered approach rather than a lecturer-centered one and transforming the environment through engagement in conflict transformation programs. As part of community engagement, the lecturers participated in transforming campus conflicts through the NUST Campus Dialogue Initiative, as well as providing community training in churches and government institutions.

Keywords: Teaching, peace, challenging environments, lessons, NUST.

Objectives and Motivation

The authors wrote this paper with these objectives in mind:

1. To identify the challenges faced by lecturers teaching peace in challenging environments;
2. To examine the various creative methods of teaching peace in challenging environments;
3. To demonstrate how peace educators can actively be involved in transforming challenging environments.

The Need for Peace Education in Africa and Zimbabwe

The need for peace education in Africa is universally accepted. According to Sane (2021), peace education is key to establishing consensual and sustainable peace worldwide, and nothing replaces the value of peace education. Currently, Africa is home to protracted conflicts like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia, where generations have been born without experiencing peace. War has erupted in Sudan, and there is ongoing fighting without hope for a ceasefire. The Rwandan genocide, which killed thousands of people, will always remain fresh in the memories of most Africans. Similarly, Zimbabwe needs peace education; the protracted war of liberation left the nation racially and tribally divided, with incidents such as the Matabeleland massacres, the land issue, and continued polarization in politics and other spheres all pointing to the need for tolerance and coexistence. Although the government is making efforts through the Peace and Reconciliation Commission to bring the nation together, there is a need for a long-term solution, which can only be achieved through peace education. Education is known to play a key role in ending the cycle of violence (Kitala & De Cupis, 2018). Therefore, peace education is necessary as it fosters a culture of dealing with conflict without resorting to violence. Values are instilled, especially in children, which include coexistence, tolerance, and patience, as well as skills such as mediation, negotiation, conflict analysis, and resolution, all of which can guarantee a peaceful future.

Aims and Objectives of Peace Education

Peace education worldwide has three major objectives: (1) preparing the world for children and youth by making it better, healthy, peaceful, united, and safe, and preparing the children for such a world; (2) Encouraging the search for alternatives as well as possible nonviolent skills and sharpening the awareness of the existence of holistic relationships between countries, individuals, and groups of people; and (3) Helping the people involved in creating an all-inclusive civilization

A Brief History of Peace Education

The field of peace and conflict studies originated from an amalgamation of many disciplines and has evolved over several years. As shall be noted below, in Africa, the field is relatively new, but in the developed world, it has been established for a long time. Although conflict resolution can be traced as far back as the beginning of humanity, the study of conflict and peace can only be traced back a few decades. Its origins can be traced to discrepancies within the field of political thought, where scholars failed to explain some aspects such as justifying war and peace (Askerov, 2021). The same author notes that Peace and Conflict studies continued to grow through conferences generating central ideas tied to peace and conflict, as well as bodies of work around these areas. Notable scholars include Angell, Marx, Gandhi, and many others. Developments in history also propelled the idea of peace education, especially the world wars. The 1914 First World War, which resulted in more than 10 million deaths, highlighted humanity's need for peace and thus, the need for peace education. The Second World War saw not only more casualties but also the use of more dangerous weapons like nuclear weapons. Thus, the first peace issues revolved around the use of nuclear weapons. With time, peace issues expanded to other areas such as human rights and environmental issues. Due to these developments, peace education covers a broad range of topics from leadership to governance, as well as conflict issues.

Peace Education in Zimbabwe

It wasn’t until well after independence that peace education was introduced in Zimbabwe, with Africa University setting the pace by introducing a Master's in Peace and Governance, plus a Diploma in the same area. This attracted many students not only from Zimbabwe but from the whole of Africa to study peace. After Africa University, Solusi University, a small private Adventist university, followed suit with a Bachelor's in Peace Studies, thereby becoming the first university to offer peace at the undergraduate level. With time, The National University of Science and Technology became the first government/state university to offer peace education in the form of a university-wide course offered to all those pursuing their first degrees for two semesters, i.e., the first year of study. As noted above, the course was taught during the first and second

semesters of part one for every first-degree student. However, the course was later trimmed to one semester and was, until recently, compulsory for all part-one students. After NUST, Bindura University of Science Education went on to introduce its Master's in Peace and Governance. Today, almost every university has a Peace course running. The only remaining challenge is bringing peace education further down to primary and secondary schools, a mammoth task that is currently facing every peace practitioner, including the government. However, the efforts made to promote education in Zimbabwe so far are highly commendable.

Lessons From NUST

Finding themselves working in difficult environments, the authors strongly believe that peace education is the key to peaceful environments. Even though teaching peace is not given as much priority as other well-established subjects in universities, it is necessary and must be taught regardless of the challenges. This motivated the authors who have wide experience in peacebuilding to think outside the box and devise methods of teaching peace. The authors have gone further than just being resourceful to the extent of writing and are still in the process of writing a book that tries to cover the current syllabus of peace to ease the pressure of resources. From their experience, the authors felt it important to encourage others in similar situations to also think alike and continue teaching peace instead of giving up.

1. **Unstable economic and political environment**

Teaching peace is different from activism in the sense that it implies imparting peace values to the students and fellow lecturers; one must be the peace that they teach, and the environment and the classroom must be peaceful. Teaching peace at NUST in 2009 was a challenge due to economic upheavals. The students had paid fees in Zimbabwean dollars, but from January to February 2009, there was dollarization. All those who had paid fees and those who were in the process found themselves at zero as they had to pay fees afresh. Thus, the economic situation became tough for students who were not allowed to write their exams if they had not completed paying their fees. There was also pressure on lecturers to check whether the students in class had paid before commencing lectures. With large numbers, as each of the three lecturers taught a faculty on their own, this proved very difficult, leading to the lecturers being labeled uncooperative. Unfortunately, the Peace examination paper was the first to be written because it was a university-wide course with all those doing their first degrees being compelled to do it. On the very day peace was supposed to be written, students rioted, and the standard response from the authorities was to call the armed riot police who descended mercilessly on the students. Some colleagues ended up joking that "Peace was written at gunpoint". When they realized that they had no chance of fighting back, the students fled from the administration block and retreated downwards.

As they retreated, they smashed windows and windscreens of vehicles, especially in the Transport Department where vehicles are parked. Thinking that the students had dispersed, the administrators were shocked to receive a devastating report that except for those vehicles that were out, those which were parked had been damaged. In the end, the students who demonstrated missed the exam and had to write a supplementary one, but the problem remained.

A. **The Campus Dialogue 2010**

To resolve the standoff between students and members of the administration the three peace lecturers decided to carry out a campus dialogue with the assistance of a non-governmental organization (NGO), the Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT) based in Harare. The lecturers proposed and the NGO funded the program. The first step was stakeholder analysis as it was necessary to bring all the concerned people on board. The students were represented by the members of the student representative council, about two of them. Every department on campus was represented, the registrar's office, the bursars,' the secretaries, the groundsmen, campus security, and the police were represented by a certain police inspector. The idea was to create a platform where every concerned sector would say their views and feelings in a relaxed manner. The lecturers not only facilitated but also presented on conflicts and their dynamics and what to expect during the conflict, including the tactics each of the warring parties was using. There was an interesting exchange, for example, tactics in a conflict consist of the actions being taken and the words being spoken by a certain group. Asked what tactics were being used by the administration, the students were quick to note that the administration was using the police as a tactic, "whenever they mess up they call the police to beat us up and disperse us instead of talking to us so that we can address the issues". The student representative went on to say, "We should be allowed to call the police as well whenever we feel there is a problem and the police must come". This provoked a quick reaction from the inspector who was shocked to hear that thereby responding, "You calling the police in what capacity?". The student went on to say in their capacity as students they should be allowed to call the police because the police should protect everyone. Such a fair exchange revealed the different attitudes and suspicions the different groups had. The dialogue lasted more than a month of weekly meetings with the last dialogue being done off campus. As a result, the administration and students agreed that students should have payment plans since the problem was not because they did not want to pay but rather due to economic hardships the funds were limited. In the end for close to a decade, there were no student demonstrations on campus. One cannot pin the success to the campus dialogue alone but it played a crucial role. The lesson is that teaching peace should not end in the classroom but taking an extra mile to deal with conflicts within the environment can help people understand the need for teaching peace in the first place.

The campus dialogue, however, was not a walk in the park and many challenges led to its termination. It was a mechanism that was supposed to be used whenever there was a challenge there was supposed to be a meeting of all stakeholders, as the scenario above portrays demonstrations came back again but this time the lecturers demonstrated first and students had to demonstrate due to lecturers not attending to them. The major challenge was that of lack of sincerity from the top management who were sending juniors to attend the dialogue sessions while they excused themselves. Unfortunately, these juniors had no power to make decisions thereby stifling the progress of the dialogue. It was supposed to be a standing mechanism but it later collapsed due to lack of commitment from the administration. There were also challenges with resources as the dialogue was supposed to be a prolonged one. Though the first and second meetings were held on campus other preceding ones according to the plan as stakeholders got used to each other it was necessary to meet outside the campus in resort areas so that people would feel relaxed and ready to discuss their issues. Dialoguing is not about presenting the most convincing argument or being very eloquent, it involves empathy where you have to put yourself in the shoes of someone and feel how they feel to understand why they acted in the way they did. There is a need for space and room to understand each other though you may not be seeing the same way. Money was needed to sustain this dialogue project and to some extent, this became a limitation.

B. **Other Conflict transformation programs in the community**

Another lesson learned is that peace should not end in the classroom with students but peace education should spread to communities in one way or the other to transform the environment. The lecturers engaged in activities targeting the community and besides the campus dialogue that transformed the NUST community, there was also a conflict management program that was conducted targeting the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), first as a Departmental initiative with the backing of the faculty. There was later support from a local NGO so that these trainings could be carried out in all police provinces. This program, how it spread and the impact it had on the ZRP is an article on its own but it serves as an example of the effort made to transform the environment. Another community program was rolled out on a low scale targeting churches two examples being the Training of African Apostolic Faith Mission Overseers at Troutbeck Inn in Nyanga and the Training of Family of God Church trainee pastors from Bethel Mission and another regular training of church leaders in conflict management. The two were carried out with the support of the churches concerned. The environments where peace education is introduced also require transformation and the peace lecturers had to involve themselves. It is also interesting to note that a lecturer at that time before Education 5.0 was expected to fulfill three domains: (1) teaching in the classroom; (2) researching; and (3) community service or engagements, the lecturers were thus also acting within their university expectations, these actions were part of their effort to transform the environment.

There were also other community engagements in the form of workshops to deal with peace issues affecting the community. One of them was the workshop on Gender mainstreaming in the security sector. It saw quite a number of workshops targeting the ZRP which were conducted at NUST with the help of (NGO), Zimbabwe Peace and Security Trust. The NGO did the funding while lecturers facilitated the workshop as well as coordinating it. In addition, two peace and conflict symposiums were held at NUST in the area of Conflict management.

C. **Designing a simple and relevant curriculum/course outline**

Peace education as the UN emphasises is a developmental issue in the sense that the young people who are taught peace values and principles will grow up into adults who understand and value peace. In the long run, society is likely to be peaceful as more and more people attain peace education. These peaceful norms include cooperation, and resolution of conflict by dialogue, negotiation, and nonviolence (Salomon, 2010).

The first port of call was designing a simple and relevant curriculum that fitted the situation, and level of the students as well as the objectives of the course. The first semester saw the teaching of Peace Leadership and Conflict Transformation (PLC1). The challenge of establishing a peace program sometimes stems from the pressure to include everything. What topic to include or to exclude is a function of the environment within which peace is being established and the aim of establishing it. Eventually, five topics were included but they were equally loaded topics considering the fact that peace was taught only once a week for two hours. The first topic was Concepts of Conflict and Peace. Under this topic the basics were included, definitions of conflict, definitions of peace, types of conflict, structure and dynamics of conflict as well as the link between peace and conflict. The second topic looked at the theories of conflict. The theories were further grouped into individual-level theories, societal-level theories as well and classical and modern structural theories of conflict. The third topic was on conflict analysis, which included conflict analysis tools. The fourth was on natural resources and conflict. This topic was necessitated by the fact that resources are at the centre of conflict in Africa and Zimbabwe is not an exception. The fifth and last topic was on gender and conflict, this topic explored the gendered dimension of conflict. The second semester saw the continuation of the same course but now Peace Leadership and Conflict Transformation (PLC II). The second semester focused on leadership from the definitions of leadership, theories of leadership, and styles of leadership as well as contemporary issues in leadership especially the challenges of women in accessing leadership positions and how such challenges can be overcome. Africa has always faced challenges in terms of leadership hence the relevance of leadership. The course however could not accommodate governance issues which are also peace issues due to pressure on time. However, some governance issues were covered under leadership but not as much as some critiques would have loved. Another consideration was the

fact that the course was being taught to part ones who at best had to appreciate these concepts, especially the basics.

2. **Shortage of teaching material**

Due to the way peace education was introduced in universities, there was a shortage of textbooks as well as reading material. To begin with, peace was introduced to undergraduates as a compulsory course. The old-school texts like Galtung and Lederach's writings proved to be a bit above them. Local literature on conflicts is yet to materialize in the form of textbooks. Although some documents could be found online, the internet itself proved to be a jungle where students needed guidance due to the existence of too many documents. The lecturers, therefore, had to be resourceful to teach the basic concepts such as the theories of peace, stages, levels, and ways to deal with conflict. One basic way of doing it was to look for case scenarios such as newspaper articles that were converted to use as a teaching aid in the absence of written books to demonstrate some aspects of conflict. The questions that followed the conflict scenario showed how the basics of conflict and peace concepts could be tested depending on what the examiner or lecturer wants students to focus on. Students can determine the level of conflict with justification thereof. The students were also tasked to identify a certain stage of conflict which could be the settlement, latent, manifest, escalation stage, etc., with justification depending on the scenario. One of the skills that is fundamental in teaching peace is the student's ability to analyze conflict. Conflict analysis is a process that brings in several tools that are used to analyze it. These tools include conflict mapping, ABC triangle, Conflict tree, and many others. To avoid confusion, normally students are asked to read about all the tools that are used, then they are asked to demonstrate the use of one tool in the exam.

The use of a conflict scenario is better than asking the students themselves to look at a conflict of their own choice, in the sense that sometimes students may come up with an ongoing conflict that may be so controversial that the lecturers or the students may end up being misquoted during the discussion. The newspaper article avoids further conflicts as anyone who feels the conflict was not reported well can actually either sue the newspaper or the relevant media house or complain directly to them. This again makes the newspaper article more useful as teaching aids in the sense that they report on current conflicts that are so contemporary that when students are asked to provide solutions for some of the challenges, they can even put suggestions which can contribute to the transformation of that conflict. In most areas, especially in management, people make use of case studies which are usually drawn from textbooks, mostly Western case studies. The use of newspapers with examples of local conflicts makes peace a subject very relevant to the students and their contexts. Another advantage also is the fact that peace being taught in different faculties and departments might require case studies that are not rigid but relevant to a particular department. For example, a conflict

scenario in sports can be used for Sports Science and Coaching students, whereas in engineering and other departments, similar case studies can be used depending on the faculty or department being taught, hence the case studies will always remain relevant to the students being taught, thereby arousing interests in the students who are being taught as they relate to conflicts in their fields. Besides demonstrating as a teaching aid, the article also helps students to understand the challenging environment they live in. Demonstrations, complaints, arrests, and uncertainties make teaching and learning very difficult. Either the students are demonstrating, or the lecturers are on a go-slow or demonstrating, as noted in the case above.

In response to the shortage of teaching material, the authors embarked on writing a book that could be useful in the basics of peace studies. The book is still being written and will go a long way to help students as it will be written with their needs in mind. The challenges of publishing remain as resources are still a challenge, and seem not to be improving. One way would be to use it like a module since it does not necessarily have to be published for it to be useful. To improve their writing skills and widen their research capabilities, all four lecturers had to pursue their PhDs, and all of them have now completed them (one studied in Britain, another in Zambia, and two with different South African universities, this variety in universities acted as a strength as it would give a fair view of how peace education can be established).

Another faster method of generating reading material was to assign students different case studies and then combine the different research and create a reader. This is not a new practice but it can help students read well-researched material on different areas and case studies faster than each student researching on their own. Another way of doing it was to make sure the students exchanged their research as they would have researched in different areas. This can assist in covering a wider area faster as the students would have covered a wider area by being assigned different topics to study and present on.

3. **Teaching classes that are too big**

When peace education was established, it was made compulsory for all those doing their first-year degrees across faculties and the result was classes that were too big. At one time the writers each taught a class of more than 250. Only three lecturers were to teach the whole university since the fourth lecturer joined later and the Peace Leadership and Conflict Transformation was taught for two semesters and thus was divided into PLC 1101 and PLC 1201. Since one lecturer would teach the whole faculty, this raised a lot of challenges. The first one was that of securing a venue which can accommodate all the students and at NUST such venues are not many. For one taking the commerce faculty, The Large Lecture Theatre popularly known as The Delta Lecture Theatre was the only venue suitable. Unfortunately, any function that involved the whole faculty or a lot of people was scheduled for the Delta Theatre, sometimes without prior communication

the Delta would be occupied and it would mean canceling the lectures thereby falling behind. Dividing the students into departments would not work either as this would imply the lecturer would teach Monday to Saturday without a break. There were also incidents of some lecturers with few students occupying the Delta and refusing to vacate, which would also mean the lecture would have to be canceled. Until the courses were withdrawn there were challenges with venues

Another challenge of big classes was that of too much marking. To deal with this problem, the lecturer would give some group work of 5–8 Students, which in a way reduced the marking but not much since there was also an in-class test. Tests had an advantage over assignments in the sense that the students were timed hence there was a limit as to how much they could write. Either way, there was a lot of marking. Besides trying to limit the marking, the authors had to increase their working speed when it comes to writing and marking work, this came naturally as an adjustment to too much work. Experiments on reducing marking done between marking essay questions and short questions revealed that actual essays were easier to mark and follow than short questions. The peace subject by nature requires students to reason, argue, compare and contrast thereby making multiple choice questions not very useful but essay questions. Multiple-choice questions were never considered.

Too big classes also paused the challenge of some students bunking lectures. In response to this challenge, the lecturers had to make the lectures exciting in many ways, including making different groups present and also inviting resource persons passionate about a particular topic. Although the marking of the register was the only way to make sure students attended, it would mean spending half the lecture on that. Sometimes loose registers that were blank would be issued to avoid a roll call but some students had a bad habit of taking the registers with them hence more creative ways of encouraging them to attend produced better results.

4. **Being housed under a different department**

According to university regulations, a new course or program has to be housed under an existing department until it is established as a department on its own. The Peace course at NUST was and still is housed under the Business Management Department which by that time consisted of two departments rolled into one, Management and Marketing then four new lecturers were added to teach the Peace course thereby making it the biggest department in commerce. It took time for the other members to accept both the new course and the new lecturers as being one. The first meetings were not very friendly with the newcomers at one time being described as "novices," "them" as opposed to "us." Although relations later on improved with time the sense of entitlement from the original departmental members continued. The fact that the three and later four lecturers had more work than others was overlooked and any plea for teaching assistance was snubbed and not even taken seriously by the then chairpersons of the day

who saw no need as they were not being involved in teaching large classes. No money was assigned for textbooks either and the authors had to be resourceful by reading documents and downloading relevant material from the net and then passing it on to the students. Another simple way was to assign students in their groups to research different topics and then ask them to compile their research in essay form, the groups would then exchange their assignments thereby making sure that they have enough to read, this is akin to compiling a reader which covers all the areas as noted above. The challenges did not end there, whereas peace as a subject involves attending conferences, presenting, and writing papers any attempt to do so was not much appreciated as some felt that the money in the departmental vote would be depleted. Thus, the department was not used to the humanities way of operating where people constantly write present and attend workshops. To deal with these challenges the lecturers had to be more useful as they ended up taking on other duties like supervising students' dissertations and going on industrial visits when asked to do so and they were first confined to local visits. This however is an international challenge, there are few universities, especially in the developing world with a real Department of Peace Studies, and most peace programs are housed under other departments like Sociology and Anthropology, Management, History, and Sometimes Geography.

Teaching peace in a challenging environment is very difficult as noted above. This is due to the fact that though challenging environments permit the teaching of peace, they do not allow peace to be taught as it ought to be due to challenges which include: (1) an unstable economic and political environment; (2) student demonstration linked to economic challenges; (3) big classes and few lecturers; (4) lack of teaching material; and (5) being housed under a different department. The authors' experience has proved that although there are many obstacles to teaching peace in those environments, it is still possible to teach peace provided the lecturers are resourceful, assist in transforming the environment, and maintain a positive attitude when dealing with students to demonstrate the peace that they teach.

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Central African Republic: The Politicization of Religion and Conflict

Robert Kosho NDIYUN

Abstract: The Central African Republic (CAR) has been a theater of hostilities for decades, including the Seleka rebellion in December 2012, which caused religious-based discrimination, especially between the Muslim minority and Christian majority. Opportunistic political leaders and armed groups have misused religion for political and egocentric gains in the CAR. The purpose of this qualitative content analysis research is to investigate the use of religion for political motives in the CAR and how such actions impact conflict and sectarian divides in the so-called phantom state. The paper recommends ways to mitigate political influence and the misuse of religion by political and armed group actors in the CAR. Very little or no literature on conflict in the CAR has specifically addressed the influence of politics on religion and how it contributes to fueling conflict in the country. This study fills the gaps in the literature by investigating the historical narratives of the CAR conflict while highlighting instances of political abuse of religion. A review of existing literature on the political manipulation of religion establishes the basis for a critical analysis of the influence of politics on religion in the CAR and its impact on conflict.

Keywords: Politics, religious identities, conflict, Central African Republic, anti-Balaka, Seleka.

Introduction

The Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced recurrent episodes of violence and political instability since gaining independence from France in 1960, with the most recent conflict beginning in December 2012. The conflicts in the CAR have been marked by an array of multifaceted factors, including political, economic, social, and historical elements.

One significant driver of the conflicts in CAR is the politicization of religion. The

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country's two major religions are Christianity and Islam, accounting for approximately 80% and 10% of the population, respectively. Unfortunately, religion is often exploited for political gains, resulting in violence between the two religious groups and leading to a bloody conflict in the country.

This paper seeks to explore how religion has been politicized in the CAR and how this has contributed to cycles of violence and conflict.

The politicization of religion is not a new phenomenon in the CAR and has been a feature of the country's political landscape for several decades (Bouquet, 2013). However, the current conflict has seen a sharp escalation in the degree to which religion has been politicized, with religious identity becoming a key marker of social and political affiliation, and religious leaders and institutions increasingly and publicly taking on political roles, as well as political leaders using religion for political motives (International Crisis Group, 2015).

Religious identities have orchestrated narratives of enduring religious-based segregation in the CAR, affecting especially the Muslim communities (McGrew, 2016). A majority of the overlapping hostilities in the CAR have been premised on identity, including the religious perspective between Christians and Muslims. A United Nations (UN) inquiry into the CAR in 2014 revealed the nature of the CAR conflict as ethnic and religious, unveiling that about 99% of the Muslims in Bangui were involuntarily displaced or murdered due to the conflict, inversely leading to a significant drop in the Muslim population in the CAR (Bukarti, 2017). According to McGrew (2016), Muslim Central Africans believe that a long practice of discrimination against Muslims by non-Muslims persists in the country. This religious-based segregation is further amplified by the interrogation of the citizenship of Muslims in the CAR, a demarche that seems to be backed by the CAR government through its hesitancy to grant official status to Muslim organizations in the country, due to the historical notion of the CAR as a state on the front of Christian sub-Saharan Africa (contrary to the Muslim north) (Ndiyun, 2022). The memories of the ill-treatment and suffering in the pre-colonial CAR ruled by the sultans, and the impending fear of a ploy to islamize the CAR with support from Sudan and Chad have also deepened this religious rhetoric, which has been a major feature of the political landscape in the CAR (Observatoire Pharos, 2014). The approach of non-Muslims towards the Muslims in the CAR remains that of distrust and violence.

While there is a growing body of literature on the role of religion in conflict, there remains a crucial need for more in-depth analysis of how religion has been politicized in the CAR and its contribution to fueling violence and instability. This paper seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between religion and conflict in the CAR, with a focus on how religious identity has been mobilized for political purposes. This subject matter has received very little or no attention in research, despite its role in triggering violence and sectarian divide in the CAR. The paper has two main objectives.

Firstly, it seeks to provide an overview of the politicization of religion in the CAR, including an analysis of the historical, social, and economic factors involved. Secondly, it seeks to examine how the politicization of religion has contributed to conflict in the CAR. The research is guided by the question of how was religion used for political motives in the CAR and what impact it yielded on the conflict in the country.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for conflict prevention and resolution in the CAR. By providing a deeper understanding of how religion has been mobilized for political purposes in the CAR, this research can inform the development of more nuanced and context-specific approaches to conflict prevention in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

Methodology

Methodology-wise, this qualitative research paper draws on a range of primary and secondary sources, including analysis of media reports, and other publicly available sources, and a review of relevant literature on the CAR, and the misuse of religion for political motives and conflict. The analysis is guided by a framework that combines a historical analysis of the politicization of religion in the CAR with a more contemporary analysis of how religious identity has been mobilized for political purposes in the CAR conflicts.

The paper is structured as follows: The first section provides an overview of the historical narrative of the conflict in the Central African Republic while the second section dwells on a review of literature on the use of religion for political motives. The third section examines how religious identity has been mobilized for political purposes in the CAR. The fourth section offers a critical appraisal of the misuse of religion for political gains and its impact on conflict. The final section concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings for conflict prevention and resolution in the CAR.

The Historical Narrative of the Use of Religion for Political Goals and Conflict in the Central African Republic

The CAR gained independence from France in 1960, and since then has experienced recurrent episodes of violence and instability, including multiple coups and rebellions. The country has a diverse population, with over 80 ethnic groups and a mix of Christian, Muslim and African traditional religions. The politicization of religion has been a feature of the secular state's political landscape for several decades and has contributed to the multiple conflicts that have plagued the country, including that which began in December 2012. Historically, the CAR has been marked by a complex relationship between religion and politics, with its leaders and politicians mixing both. During the colonial period, the French authorities supported Christian missions and provided them with resources and privileges, while at the same time suppressing Muslim practices

(Debos, 2011). This created a legacy of inequality and distrust between the Christian and Muslim communities that persists to this day.

After independence, the country experienced a period of political instability and conflict that was characterized by a series of coups and rebellions. The country's first president, Barthélémy Boganda was the first CAR Roman Catholic priest. Subsequent leaders in the country employed religious cards to foster their political interests. After his trial in 1986, Jean-Bedel Bokassa referred to himself as the thirteenth apostle. In the 1990s, the country transitioned to democratic rule, but this period was marked by corruption, economic inequality, and political marginalization of certain groups, including Muslims (Tièno, 2019). The politicization of religion continued during this period, with Christian and Muslim leaders and institutions taking on increasingly political roles. Patassé and Bokassa both deviously converted to Islam to gain financial assistance from Libyan leader, Qadhafi, although Bokassa returned to Christianity twenty-one years later (Filakota, 2009). Bozize also made his house of worship, the Celestial Church of Christ, a center of political power, taking inspiration from other African leaders like Boni Yayi of Benin and Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi. The strong popular mobilization of the Celestial Church of Christ added to the abortive coup in 2001 frightened President Patasse who suspended the church's activities based on illegal functioning. International Crisis Group (2015) reported that "many religious leaders are tempted to enter politics" (p. 21), citing the case of two pastors of the Alliance of Evangelicals in the Central African Republic who were expelled for constantly supporting the anti-Balaka.

The 2012 conflict in the CAR is rooted in a complex mix of political, economic, and social factors including the marginalization of certain groups, competition for resources, and the legacy of past conflicts (International Crisis Group, 2015). However, religion has been a key factor in the current conflict, with religious identity becoming a key marker of social and political affiliation, and religious leaders and institutions playing prominent roles in the conflict (Henderson & Mulo-Katamba, 2019). The clashes between the Muslim-dominated Seleka and the majority Christian anti-Balaka militia did not exhibit any religious connotation in the initial stage. Isaacs-Martin (2016) posits that the attacks against communities and individuals on account of religion erupted when the Seleka entered Bangui in 2013 and Djotodia subsequently resigned as head of state.

The religious undertone of the CAR hostilities was intensified in the first quarter of 2013, with the Seleka overthrow of Bozize, and their short stay in power, a period characterized by extra-judicial killings, massive looting, and setting ablaze and destruction of villages inhabited by Christians (International Crisis Group, 2013). Despite being formed as a self-defense tool against the Seleka attacks amid the security vacuum in the CAR, the anti-Balaka mostly in Christian communities transformed the hostilities in the country into a sectarian conflict (International Crisis Group, 2013). Ousted president Bozize on 28 December 2012 in a speech in Sango, invited Central Africans to resist

the Seleka rebellion, and "to be on their guard and be ready to defend their homes with arrows and machetes" (International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 4). This speech was followed with action, as machetes were distributed to youths in Bangui. Adhering to the politicized narrative of religion by Bozize and his entourage, the anti-Balaka considering Muslims as foreign invaders directed indiscriminate attacks against Muslims throughout the country, particularly in the west and Bangui, to terrorize them and cause them to run, and discard all signs of peaceful coexistence (Walheim, 2014; Amnesty International, 2014).

In January 2013, CAR Minister Josue Binoua, while triggering the feat of Islamist conspiracy theories and invaders, announced the presence of Jihadis propagandizing Wahhabism (International Crisis Group, 2015). The looting and other atrocities by the Seleka in Bangui in 2013 permitted opportunist politicians to equate it to slave raids by Muslims in the precolonial CAR. Central Africans considered Muslims as professional killers who moved with knives and hit people the same way as during the slave trade era (International Crisis Group, 2015). All this rhetoric especially by politicians promoted the stigmatization of Muslims and equated the Seleka to Muslim invaders. In some parts of the CAR, some citizens held the opinion that CAR identity cards be withdrawn from foreigners, especially Muslims, while anti-Balaka leaders at the Bangui Forum in 2015 requested the withdrawal of official identification documents and resident permits issued under the Seleka rule.

The politicized religious cards intensified clashes between the protagonists, leading to the commission of heinous and grave violations of human rights by the two opposing groups, with a high rate of civilian victims. The shift in conflict narrative and the clashes between Muslim and Christian communities have significantly obstructed and intricated the functional political mechanism of the country.

The Seleka was given a religious identity because a majority of its militants and leader, Djotodia were Muslims. As such, the Seleka attacks on civilians introduced a narrative that innocent Christian civilians were being targeted by Muslims. These also escalated into inter-communal clashes, leading to the establishment of Muslim settlements in the eastern part of the country as they fled for safety (Ndiyun, 2023). These intercommunal clashes resurrected the question of who should live and own land in the CAR. Ndiyun (2023) corroborates that the religious component of the conflict also emerged with Muslims being regarded as foreigners with no right to ownership in the CAR. Muslim residential areas in some neighborhoods of Bangui were looted, with houses demolished or set ablaze. International Crisis Group (2015) reported that over 30 mosques in Bangui and 400 in other parts of the CAR were destroyed.

The historical and social context of the politicization of religion in the CAR is complex and multifaceted and has contributed to the current conflict. Addressing this issue requires a nuanced understanding of how religion has been mobilized for political

purposes, as well as the broader historical and social context in which this process has taken place.

Literature Review:
The Influence of Politics on Religion and Conflict

Religion has played a great role in promoting social cohesion in societies by bringing people together socially and institutionally (Maoz & Henderson, 2020). As such, religion has been considered a pillar of both inner and social peace, as no contemporary religion encourages violence in its principles (Hall, 2003). Through this significant function in society, religion has become entangled with political power, as it offers a collective identity and sense of togetherness, which is essential to the success of any political leader (Echele, 2023). Religion significantly influences the way people interact with politics, especially its role in undermining or promoting legitimacy. As such, religion can serve as a base for both democratic leadership, as well as repressive and non-democratic regimes. According to Echele (2023), religious-based norms and institutions can maintain inequality and act as a tool to support repressive religious and political leaders.

The relationship between politics and religion is complex and can have significant implications for conflict and peace-building efforts. While Basedau et al. (2011) argue that there is little evidence to sustain the contention that the frequent politicization of religion automatically increases the chances of conflict, other authors (Moghadam, 2003; Fox, 2007) contend that the resurgence of religion in politics over the last years did not result in a corresponding escalation in religious conflicts. Haynes (2009) affirmed that the majority of violence leading to civil war in Africa is sourced from religious plurality. However, for religion to instigate conflict or stimulate its believers into violence, it must be politicized. Apart from this, other alternatives for religious politicization include the probably already prevailing inter-religious strains and feelings of discrimination by religious clusters (Basedau et al., 2011).

Putting religion in the African political context, Ahanotu (2012) holds that in Africa, religion is persistently part of talks on national issues, including leadership and mode of management of the state. Before the independence of South Sudan, religion alongside other elements like the fight over natural resources, marginalization, and democratic rule accounted for the war between South and North Sudan (Møller, 2006). The political unrest in Kenya during the rule of Daniel Arap Moi had a religious undertone, as it originated from the refusal of official recognition of the Islamic Party in Kenya (Ahanotu, 2012). Njepel (2013) also contends that religion has constantly been used by Nigerian politicians to attain their political motives. According to the author, during the reign of Goodluck Jonathan, the Nigerian political elite from the north mobilized religion to avert any politician from a different religious background from taking power, or using the Boko Haram conflict to blot his regime.

While some authors affirm that religious differences constitute the major source of conflict in Africa, others believe that religion is just a tool to galvanize support and participation in conflict with the goal of fighting inequality and other bad practices in society (Uzodike & Whetho, 2008; Marshall, 2009). Political actors have often sought to instrumentalize religion for their purposes, using religious identity to mobilize support and legitimize their actions. This has been the case in Sudan and Nigeria, where religion has been used for political motives, and as a weapon to gather supporters for conflict in the fight against political, economic, and social inequality in society (Njepel, 2013). Similarly, religious actors have often sought to influence political decision-making, using their moral authority to shape policy and promote their interests.

Political actors have often sought to instrumentalize religion in order to mobilize support and legitimize their actions. This can involve framing political issues in religious terms or using religious symbols and rhetoric to appeal to religious audiences. This instrumentalization of religion can contribute to the polarization of communities along religious lines and can make it more difficult to promote reconciliation. Understanding the influence of politics on religion, and the role of religious actors in conflict, is crucial for developing effective strategies for conflict prevention and resolution.

The use of religion for political motives can contribute to conflict by exacerbating divisions between communities and legitimizing violence against those perceived to be associated with the opposing religion. By framing political issues in religious terms political actors can exacerbate divisions between communities, and delegitimize the views of those who do not share their religious beliefs. This can contribute to the marginalization of certain groups and can make it more difficult to promote reconciliation. For example, in India, the use of Hindu nationalist rhetoric by political leaders has contributed to the marginalization of religious minorities and has fueled communal violence (Bhatt, 2017).

Religion has been used for political motives in the CAR in recent years, particularly during the December 2012 conflict in the country. The CAR is a predominantly Christian country with a significant Muslim minority, and religious differences have been manipulated by political leaders to gain power and control over resources. For example, the anti-Balaka justified their attacks on Muslim communities by claiming that they were defending Christianity and avenging the deaths of Christians at the hands of the Seleka. Similarly, the Seleka framed their rebellion as a struggle against Christian oppression and discrimination.

In addition to the conflict between the Seleka and anti-balaka, there have been other instances of religious tensions being exploited for political gain in the CAR. For example, in 2018, a dispute between Christian and Muslim communities over the location of a market in the town of Alindao led to violence that left dozens dead and thousands displaced. A similar massacre was perpetuated in the same town in November 2018 by

a Seleka off-shoot armed group – the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic assisted by armed Muslim civilians, leading to the death of between 70 to 100 residents (Amnesty International, 2018).

The use of religion for political purposes has had a devastating impact on the people of the CAR. The conflict has resulted in the displacement of over a million people and has left many communities divided along religious lines. According to the UN Panel of Experts, the persistence of fear and mistrust among communities in the country, as well as the incidence of hate speech, and the absence of significant social and economic opportunities all account for the protraction of the conflict in the CAR (UN, 2019).

Critical Appraisal of the Misuse of Religion for Political Motives and Impact on Conflict

The foregoing analysis affirms that religion and politics both have the goal of gathering people and preaching certain values and beliefs. They thus exert some influence over their followers. Many conflicts across the globe today are considered to be motivated by religion (Echele, 2023). Authors of politicizing religion use it to promote conflict and fortify their legitimacy and rule. In the CAR as discussed above, religious identity differences between the Christians and Muslims have been exploited for political motives by politicians and armed groups. The switch from ethnic identity to religious identity mobilization only gained grounds in the CAR after the Seleka had overthrew Bozize (Wieczorek, 2017).

The Seleka was launched in the Muslim-dominated northern part of the CAR, with its membership made up of mainly Muslims, including Michel Djotodia the group's leader who self-proclaimed himself as CAR President after the Seleka coup and ruled the country from August 2013 to January 2014 (Armed Conflict Location & Data [ACLED], 2015). Khaiko & Utas (2014) contend that the Seleka from the start of its hostilities, did not target other armed groups or civilians based on their religious inclinations. This is opposed to the anti-Balaka militias which perpetuated overt and intentional attacks targeting Muslims, with its commanders attesting that their attacks based on religious identity were aimed at defending Christians in the CAR (The New Humanitarian, 2014b). The anti-Balaka is believed to have links with the regime of Francois Bozize, as it was initially constituted of fighters from Francois Bozize's ethnic Gbaya group, before extending to other ethnic groups in the West of the CAR. The birth of the group immediately after Bozize launched a call on Central Africans to defend their country against foreign invaders (Muslims) corroborates this thesis. The deliberate attacks against Muslims were politicized and carried out to attract the sympathy of the West, with the media qualifying the CAR conflict as a religious one (Khaiko & Utas, 2014).

When the Seleka launched their attack against Bangui in early 2013, Bozize manipulated religion to sow the seeds of violence and mutual skepticism between the Muslim

and Christian Central Africans, when he warned Bangui inhabitants of the threats by the Muslims (Kilembe, 2014). He openly called on Central Africans to fight against the Muslim invaders. This carefully crafted message aimed at mobilizing the majority Christian population to back his political agenda and standing at loggerheads with the Muslim population. He intended to mobilize multi-ethnic support from the ethnic groups in the southern part of the country. Such mobilization could not be achieved on an ethnic identity basis due to the nepotism, corruption, and favoritism that characterized his regime, favoring his ethnic Gbaya to the disadvantage of other ethnic groups. As such, Bozize had to make recourse to religion to gain the support of the ethnic groups in the south of CAR.

The move by Bozize was adopted by his supporters, as the International Crisis Group (2015) reported a Bangui-based Christian politician who claimed that they welcomed the Muslims in the CAR but had betrayed them. To match action to the religious rhetoric, the Bozize government in February and March 2013, started distributing weapons to self-defense groups (mostly youths from the ruling party and Christians from the neighborhoods) in Bangui, in anticipation of the Seleka offensive (Smith, 2015). These armed groups attacked, harassed, detained, and even killed Muslims in Bangui for their suspected sympathy for the Seleka. This aroused fear among the Muslim population, and things got worse when barricades were raised in Muslim enclaves in Bangui. When the Seleka entered Bangui in March 2013, thousands of Muslims in Bangui were ready to integrate their ranks.

According to Human Rights Watch (2014) report, the Seleka only launched reprisal attacks on Christians based on their religion after the anti-Balaka continued with indiscriminate attacks against Muslims without distinction between civilian Muslims and armed Seleka Muslims. ACLED (2015) statistics revealed that 17% of violent incidents by the Seleka targeted Christians, while 21% of those perpetuated by the anti-Balaka against civilians targeted Muslims. These figures defeat the goal of the anti-Balaka stated above and also contradict the opinion of a religious conflict in the CAR. ACLED statistics validate the argument in this article that religion was used as a tool to achieve egocentric political goals, fueling sectarian conflict and disunity in the CAR by political actors.

In early 2014, Bangui inhabitants and communities in the west of the country regarded the anti-Balaka militias as patriots, and coined their slogans in a "brutal pseudo-religious and nationalist" manner, declaring that the Seleka and their Muslim sympathizers were non-Central Africans to Islamize the CAR and as such, should be hunted and chased out (AI, 2014: 15). The resignation of Seleka leader Michel Djotodia as CAR leader in January 2014 further aggravated anti-Muslim resentment and violence, provoking the displacement of the Muslim population, with a majority fleeing to eastern Cameroon. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) (2014) cited anti-Muslim slogans by the anti-Balaka and sympathizing civilians like "Muslims must leave or die", attesting

that Muslims Central Africans regarded as foreigners were no longer needed in the CAR (p. 54). McGrew (2016) holds that the anti-Muslim feeling aroused among the ranks of the Seleka commanders the necessity to protect the Muslim population of the CAR. While clashes between armed groups of various religious identities portrayed the CAR conflict as sectarian involving Muslim versus Christian confrontations, the Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) (2018) reported that the recurrent exploitation of ethnic and religious divisions by political actors in the CAR has significantly accounted for political unrest, distrust and division in the defense forces, inevitably leading to multiple coups.

The names adopted by armed groups: Seleka and anti-Balaka also contributed to the religious rhetoric. The Seleka, a majority Muslim group with most of its militants from Vagaka province and speaking Sudanese Arabic adopted its name in Sango (the widely spoken language in the CAR) purposely to preclude the regional difference with southerners. The name Sango stands for “alliance", but the militants barely spoke the language, as Central Africans affirmed that the abusers spoke very little or no Sango (Amnesty International, 2014). The move of adopting a name in Sango was to present the group not as foreign invaders, but as Central African and gain more legitimacy. The anti-Balaka leaders were also strategic in adopting their name. While “Balaka” stands for Machete in the Gbaya language (Lombard, 2016), the name is also considered an incorporation of the Sango word AK (as in AK-47) and bullet (Wieczorek, 2017). This choice of name was purposely chosen to tally with an offensive against the Seleka who possessed Kalashnikov rifles and used machetes for some of their heinous atrocities. The “anti” attachment to the name reflected the defensive character of the group. As such, the rhetoric framed the Seleka as the aggressors and authors of violence, while the anti-Balaka stood as the defenders.

The religious rhetoric of the conflict persisted after the Seleka left power. Christian Central Africans in Bangui began referring to the period of the Seleka in power as “rizzia” a term used during the slave trade era to refer to slave raids perpetrated by Muslims from the North (ICG, 2015). Many Christian residents in Bangui indicated the fear of any foreign influence on the population and even went to the extent of writing the phrase “no more Mosques in CAR” on Muslim-owned facilities and establishments in Muslim residential areas in Bangui (Lombard, 2016). This move by the population in Bangui was the outcome of the elite framing of the Seleka and their insurgency as an invasion of the CAR by Muslim foreigners.

In 2012 with the imminent threat of the Seleka and their rebellious advances toward Bangui, President Bozize and his allies opted to politicize religion, and galvanize the support of the Christian majority in the CAR against the Seleka. The Bozize regime adopted religious narratives by requesting the CAR population to get prepared to defend their fatherland against Muslim invaders. Being in the era of social media and the internet,

this anti-Muslim hate speech is rapidly propagated particularly among non-Muslim Central Africans (ACLED, 2015). This call was answered with the birth of anti-Balaka militia who initially armed with machetes, took to both armed Seleka Muslims and unarmed Muslim civilians as their target.

The use of religion for political motives in the CAR did not occur when the Seleka started their insurgency but only became visible when they took over the city of Bangui. The Bozize regime sought to isolate the Seleka from any support from the southern part of the country by influencing the population with religious rhetoric. Given that the Seleka group's members mostly comprised of Muslims recruited from Vagaka Muslim-dominated region, religion became the only tool to be used to galvanize the Christians against the Seleka who were tagged as 'Muslim foreign invaders'. It is thus argued that without Bozize and his elite class, the CAR would not have witnessed the politicization of religion during the conflict.

The Seleka departed from power after pressure on its leader, Djotodia in January 2014. This led to the formation of a transitional government composed of a Christian President, Catherine Samba-Panza, and a Muslim Prime Minister, Mahamat Kamoun, both elected by the Parliament. This mixed government gradually quenched the mobilization of religion for political motives. This is in line with one of the arguments in this paper, that if a government comprised of both Muslims and Christians had existed in the CAR, then the incentive to galvanize religious identity would never have been a reality. Albeit the persistence of sectarian divide and violence in some parts of the CAR today, the religious undertone of the conflict has significantly dwindled after the Seleka insurgency.

The bond uniting the Seleka could not be sustained, as the group was disbanded by its leader, Djotodia in late 2013 due to reports of its atrocities on the population. While very few combatants returned home, others grouped themselves into factions[1] reflecting their pre-Seleka composition based largely on regional and ethnic backgrounds, and engaged in confrontations against the anti-Balaka (Wieczorek, 2017). These former Seleka factions did not only clash with the anti-Balaka militias but also with other Muslim-dominated militias composed of Muslims from Bangui and the Fulani ethnic group in the western part of the CAR. These new trends in the conflict in the CAR indicate that the religious rhetoric employed hitherto by the elite was to obtain the support of the masses for their political interest without any real religious intentions.

1 Particularly the Rassemblement Patriotique pour le Renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC), the Mouvement Patriotique Centrafricain (MPC) and the Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) with fighters from the Salamat. Gula and Runga ethnic groups in northeastern CAR and southeastern Chad.

The fracturing of the Seleka was also witnessed within the ranks of the anti-Balaka. The group also fractured based on regional and ethnic grounds. Most of the anti-Balaka militia groups had links with politicians who served as Ministers under President Ange-Felix Patasse and his successor, Bozize. This corroborates Herbert et al. (2013) who argue that at least two of the militia groups had links with the two former CAR presidents. Thus, the quest for position and alliance among the anti-Balaka Christian militias suggests that Christianity was only used by the elite as an umbrella when the Christian regime of Bozize was overthrown, but it did not go deep into the society.

At the end of the Bangui National Forum for Reconciliation and Peace in the CAR held in December 2015, stakeholders concluded that the country was experiencing a political conflict with a religious undertone, brought in by political maneuvers, which resulted in putting Muslims and Christians at loggerheads. This view is corroborated by the International Crisis Group (2013) report which affirmed that the country was experiencing sectarian violence and not a religious conflict, between the CAR government and the Seleka with a majority of its members from the north. The same report argued that religion played a marginal role in the CAR conflict before the Seleka rebellion and coup in early 2013, as most of the country's conflicts were perceived from the socio-political lens. ACLED (2015:19) report contests the religious conflict thesis in the CAR, as it argues that such a move will veil the real motive of the conflict which is “the contest for power between the political actors at different levels" with religion being used as a tool. This argument is supported by Christian and Muslim leaders in the CAR who contend that the armed groups fighting in the country do not represent their respective religious ideologies and that their goals are non-religious (The New Humanitarian, 2014a).

Lombard (2014) posits that religion is closely associated with other elements of social divides in the CAR, including the notion of 'foreignness'. This ideology, linked to old practices and parlance in the CAR is associated with CAR nationals whose ascendants were Chadian immigrants who settled in the north and has been used to encompass all Muslims in the country. While Check (2014) argues that Chad assisted the Seleka in their coup against Bozize in 2013, HRW (2014) reports that Chadians and Sudanese were part of the Seleka fighters, as some CAR victims of their atrocities affirmed that the fighters spoke Arabic and not the national Sango language.

Swain (2014) tilts his argument towards the concept of foreignness, as he holds that the anti-Muslim hostilities cannot only be accounted for on a religious basis but have their roots in other elements of division in the country, like the 'national versus foreigner' divide. With the politicization of religion, Christians have been coined as nationals while Muslims are viewed as foreigners from northern Muslim-dominant countries that share common borders with the CAR. Wilson (2014) in a similar line of argument suggests that the source of conflicts in the CAR is distrust, exhibited by foreignness, complexified

by poverty, and triggered by egocentric political agendas. The religious narrative of the CAR conflict ignited by Bozize and his allies, received by the sympathizers and misinterpreted by many Central Africans tends to hide the complexities and real nature of the conflict. The intricate political landscape of the CAR and the diverse actors in the country's conflict reveal that division along religious lines does not solely account for the socio-political instability. ACLED's (2015) report attests that out of 1300 political violent incidents registered in the CAR between 2012 and 2015, 40% had no links with any of the alleged religious armed groups – Seleka and anti-Balaka.

The post-Seleka conflict era witnessed the emergence of new militia coalitions within and between religious communities. In late 2016, the former Seleka factions – FPRC, MPC, and RPRC – formed a coalition with a pro-Bozize anti-Balaka militia (Herbert *et al.*, 2013). This coalition comprised armed group leaders who perpetrated heinous atrocities in both camps during the Seleka conflict, and became the largest and most well-equipped armed group in the CAR as opposed to the government forces, as it controlled mining sites (Herbert *et al.*, 2013). These alterations in the composition of armed groups and alliances are proof of the fact that religion was used for political motives with the outbreak of the Seleka insurgency and that with the formation of a unity government led by both Christian and Muslim politicians, CAR politicians and elite altered their strategies. This argument aligns with what Njepel (2013) posits in the case of Nigeria, that the crisis in Nigeria was not rooted in religion, but that religion was only used to gather popular support to promote instability for their selfish quest for power.

Despite the above shift in paradigm in the conflict rhetoric in the CAR, a few instances of sectarian violence persisted in the CAR. While President Samba-Panza and Prime Minister Kamoun appealed to both camps to drop their weapons in their inaugural speeches, some Central Africans ignored the calls, as some Christians carried out a riot in a Muslim neighborhood of Bangui a few days later, killing and incinerating the bodies of two Muslims (Cardwell, 2014). In the post-Seleka conflict CAR, just a few Mosques existed, as compared to hundreds of them before the conflict. This adds to the increased number of CAR refugees in neighboring countries after the Seleka departure in 2014, with a remarkable majority being Muslims who fled for safety. Although CAR elites may have shifted from religious identity, sectarian clashes and violence persist in the country as a result of the religion-based mobilization during the Seleka insurgency. The politicization of religion in the CAR affirms the arguments presented by Basedau *et al.* (2011), that the degree of inter-religious relations may designate the existing level of politicization or the sensitivity of various religious groups towards each other. Christian Central Africans have often considered their Muslim counterparts as foreign invaders and not “genuine" Central Africans. The Muslims on their part have decried political, economic, and social discrimination from the government for many decades. Just like ethnic discrimination, religious discrimination has the potential to trigger conflict.

Looking Forward to Nonrecurrence of Religious Mobilization for Political Gains

The above analysis has revealed the link between political mobilization of religion and conflict in the CAR. Such manipulation intensified conflict, further deepened ethnic cleavages, promoted intercommunal tensions, and fragmented the country's population. Also, the misuse of religion has significantly affected efforts to promote national unity, social cohesion, and rebuilding of the CAR's social fabric.

Between 2013 and 2014, the CAR conflict took a different dimension, operating between armed communities grouped along religious lines. The glaring aspects included the punitive violence ignited by aged-old hatred against Muslims, and conspiracy theories on a suspected attempt to forcibly Islamize the CAR. These religious arguments indicate the profound fractures in the CAR that have been sidelined for a long time. Some years after the hostilities on a religious basis, hatred towards Muslims persists, requiring the adoption of mechanisms to promote reconciliation, national cohesion, and unity. The interfaith massacre believed to occur in 2008 in the CAR with fears of politicians exploiting it, was finally witnessed in 2013.

The role of local authorities in mediating and promoting peace at the rural level cannot be disregarded. The state needs to empower these local actors and support them in their efforts to ease intercommunal and inter-religious tensions and promote reconciliation at the local levels. These authorities due to their proximity to the population, and the trust bestowed upon them in the absence of state institutions in the peripheries have easy access to the population and better understand the contextual realities of the conflict in the local areas and the actors involved. These authorities at the peak of the conflict, mediated between communities, between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as quelled tensions among armed groups. Such a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding, social cohesion, and reconciliation can have a greater impact if the state and its international partners provide more assistance.

Moreover, religious leaders also have the potential to quench the religious identity-based tensions in the CAR. Religious leaders are trained, and hold the trust of the people, live closer to the population, and in some situations, they assist in resolving disputes at the local levels in the absence of the state justice system. In the same vein, the effective use of interfaith religious platforms operating in the CAR has helped to promote reconciliation and social integration. In the course of the conflict, religious leaders including Priests, Pastors, and Imams who lived in areas besieged by armed groups have played a significant role as mediators in local peace and stabilization efforts, like negotiating freedom of movement deals with armed groups, local peace and security dialogue, and promoting inter-community mediation.

Equally, the activities of the Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Reconciliation Commission should effectively be decentralized and well-funded to permit its agents to have access

to the remote areas where victims of the conflict abound. The commission has a very limited mandate with a vast mission. To fully achieve its mission, the commission needs to be provided with the necessary funds and logistics to permit it to collate the necessary data from interviews of victims and evidence from the field

Conclusion

Political instability, inequality, nepotism, corruption, and other bad governance practices in the CAR have offered political elites in the CAR with strong motivations to adopt unorthodox strategies to attain political power. At different times in the history of the CAR, political elites used various identities in the CAR for political aims. Their raison d'etre of mobilizing identity has been to galvanize support for political achievements, by opting to use an identity with a wider mobilization. Before the Seleka rebellion, the political elite used ethnic identities to establish more proficient patronage links when they were in power. With the advent of the Seleka rebellion, the rebel leaders wanted to frame the rhetoric that they were Central Africans to obtain the support of the southern Central Africans, but this move was thwarted by the southern political elite who mobilized religion against the Seleka, branding them as foreign invaders.

This paradigm changed when a transitional government representing both Christians and Muslims was put in place, as the political elites sidelined religious mobilization in favor of ethnic and regional affinities. The findings of this research have corroborated the initial argument raised, that religious identity was never a major source of violence and tensions in the CAR, and that politicians only took advantage of playing religious cards to achieve their egocentric political goals. The study thus concludes that when the opportunistic politicians failed in their move, the notion of religious conflict between the CAR Muslims and the non-Muslim population faded.

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Ethiopia: Ethnic Conflict and Tragedy. A Comprehensive Analysis of the Hamar, Karo, and Arbore Communities

Temesgen Woza WONBERA

Abstract: Ethnic conflict is a prevalent issue in numerous countries worldwide, including Ethiopia. One common challenge faced by multi-ethnic federal states is the emergence of nationalism among ethnic-regional communities. Nevertheless, I contend that ethnic diversity alone is not typically the primary cause of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. Considering these factors, the study centered on ethnic conflict among the semi-pastoral communities of Hamar, Karo, and Arbore. This study adopted a qualitative research approach and used informant interviews and survey methods to collect primary data and examine relevant literature from secondary sources. As a result, the study found that the desire for self-determination, competition for resources, arms smuggling and marginalization, lack of good governance, poor cultural traditions, and political interests are the factors driving destructive ethnic conflicts in the study area.

Keywords: Conflict, Ethiopia, federalism, Karo, resources.

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Introduction

Various governments have ruled Ethiopia for centuries, but have failed to provide political and legal protection for the country's

core multicultural and multilingual realities. Ultimately, this led to the pursuit of national identity and demands for equal opportunity, justice, and self-determination. For example, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were created to liberate the people (Bekele, 2021).

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front (EPRF), which overthrew the military regime in 1991 and replaced the ruling government, established a new form of political governance called 'ethnic federalism'. Among the EPRF's reforms were the decentralization of the state, the protection of the rights of ethnic groups and nationalists, the liberalization of the command economic system, and the self-determination and democratization of political parties, which allowed for the creation of a pluralistic organization. Although the new reforms have made significant progress in the country, significant limitations remain. These include demands for equal benefits from national economic and infrastructural development, cross-border and cross-border issues, marginalization of minority groups, corruption, and poor governance. The introduction and acceptance of a new political system designed to provide answers to long-standing questions about ethnic identity and development has led to the birth of new problems of ethnic rivalry and conflict throughout the Federation (Sarah, 2004; Bekele, 2021).

The area around South Omo is one of the areas rich in mosaic culture and natural resources. The area is home to many pastoralists and agro-pastoralists and has a diverse landscape. There are 16 indigenous peoples living here. That is, the Ari, Maale, Hamar, Benna, Tsemai, Brail, Erbore, Karra, Murle, Koigu, Nyangatom, Dassenech, Bodi, Bacha, Mursi, Dime, and other peoples from Konso, Basketo, and Amhara lived together in different parts of the region. Economically, the region is extremely marginal and limited due to poor infrastructure (Central Statistical Authority [CSA], 2013).

The ethnic conflict that has dominated the country in general and the southern Omo region in particular since 1991 has been a legacy of ethnic federalism. Weak governance, corruption, low levels of development, and lifestyle characteristics combined with competing access to pastures and fresh water have exacerbated existing problems in the region (Yohannes *et al.*, 2005).

The Hamar, Erbore, and Karo ethnic groups inherited from the Hamar region have a common linguistic and cultural tradition, a history of conflict, drought and famine, and economic interdependence, and ethnic groups that share poor governance. As a result, the trends, nature, and behavior of ethnic conflicts vary across places and times, manifesting new forms and dynamics with negative consequences in the country. Studies by several scholars have shown that the ethnic conflict between the Hamar, Erbore, and Karo communities is a legacy of the inadequate implementation of the recently adopted government system of ethnic federalism. Despite attempts by ruling institutions to resolve and reduce ongoing conflicts, the situation in the region has at times worsened due

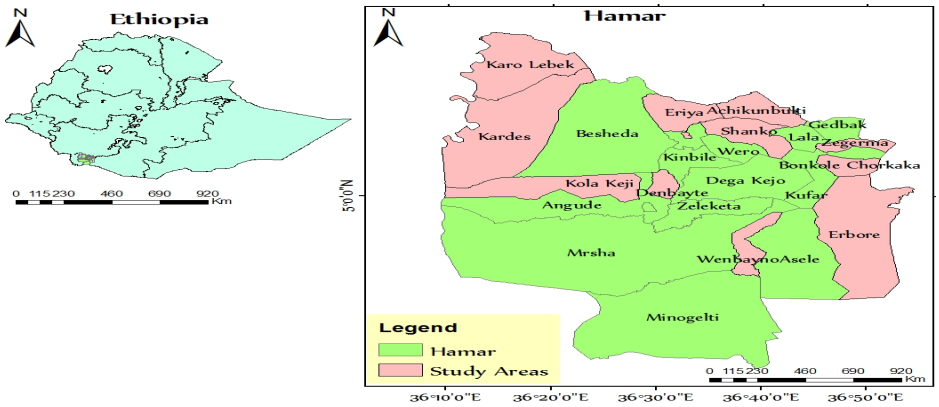

Figure 1: Map of the study area

Source: South Omo Zone Economics and Finance Department

to poor governance, competition for limited resources, involvement of multiple actors, and political interests. Escalation of inter-communal conflict, from simple confrontations using traditional weapons to modern firearms, results in high casualties, destruction of infrastructure, population displacement, and drought. Therefore, this study aimed to explore ethnic conflict, the experiences of the Hamar, Erbore, and Karo ethnic groups, and the challenges they face in the context of ethnic federalism. The study also examines the dynamics of the conflict and its root causes, aggravating factors, attempts to resolve the conflict, and its impact on the community.

Statement of the Problem

Like socialism, communism, and liberalism, federalism is an ideology that involves power sharing among autonomous nations and promotes the values of "unity in diversity". Ethiopia is a diverse country with cultural differences between its constituent ethnic groups. The adoption of federalism in Ethiopia in 1991 appears to have been driven by the need to find an appropriate government structure that could manage the country's complex ethnolinguistic diversity and serve as a tool to reduce conflict. The newly created institutions were developed in response to the demands of all citizens and nationalities for equal rights, self-determination, and equal interests in the national economy, while the development of public services created more problems at different levels of the country (Vaughan, 2003; Bekele, 2021).

Several studies conducted on the causes of ethnic conflict between ordinary and pastoral communities in Ethiopia have identified factors such as unclear border differentiation, lack of understanding of political authority, timely intervention and resolution, land disputes, lack of proper governance, and competition for resources. Rangelands continue to be hotspots for ethnic conflict among the country's pastoralists (Mekonnen, 2016;

Assefa, 2001; Bekele, 2021). Therefore, the nature and causes of conflict varied depending on the region. The above factors are similar in Ethiopia as a whole and in the study area in particular. However, this study is generally consistent with research conducted on the causes and management of ethnic conflict between surrounding communities in the South Omo region and the Hamar, Erbore, and Karo ethnic groups. Studies carried out by (Gebre *et al.*, 2005; Sagawa, 2010) are weak in understanding the fundamentally dynamic nature and provide a naive explanation of the complex factors behind ethnic conflict in the region. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to resolve ethnic conflicts by considering the country's broad socio-cultural, economic, and political mechanisms as well as historical and environmental factors. This study explores and examines the root causes and consequences of conflict between these three communities and various options for community-led peace-building through implementing ethnic federalism. The study used key informant interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions to achieve these goals. Attempts have also been made to explore and organize the lessons and experiences of communities directly and indirectly affected by the conflict to gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding and insight.

Methodology

The authors used a qualitative approach to conduct this study. Both primary and secondary data sources are used. Key informant interviews, document analysis, and archival material were also used. To collect the necessary data, the author followed the unstructured interview method.

Individuals, elders, representatives of religious institutions, government officials, and local appointees were interviewed. Articles, protocols, reports, and research papers were also evaluated. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with representatives from three purposively selected ethnic groups and each gender were conducted in four groups of eight people each. The researchers visited the research site from 8 November 2021 to 17 April 2021 and the Ethiopian Institute of Studies (IES) from 2–10 May 2021.

Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, qualitative and quantitative data analysis and interpretation were used to realize the purpose of the study. This includes narrative, content, and qualitative comparative analysis (insights such as case studies).

Discussion

Ethnic Conflicts, the Ethiopia Experience

More than 80 ethnic groups live in Ethiopia, each with its own unique culture and traditions. In Ethiopia, after the fall of the Derg regime and the TPLF/EPRD's return to power in 1991, territorial administration and political representation were reorganized

along ethnic lines. As for the ethnic question, not because it substantively addressed the issue, but because government policy for the first time officially recognized ethnicity as a major tool for protecting the rights of ethnic groups and as a government measure to resolve past problems. Injustice or lack of justice and ethnic identity are often used to create differences where none previously existed, logically implying that people who identify differently culturally and historically will act or choose to act based on their ethnicity (Temesgen, 2023).

The Constitution formally introduced a new federal policy called "ethnic federalism". The new Ethiopian Constitution represents a unique development in Africa, and perhaps globally, in its recognition of the rights of states, nationalities, and peoples (ethnic groups) to self-determination, including secession (Article 39 of the 1994 Constitution). Overall, the country's ethnic reorganization is causing ethnic conflict in various geographical areas of Ethiopia due to the ethnic political structure and lack of resources among various ethnic groups. Ethnic conflict is a major form of political instability in multi-ethnic societies such as Ethiopia and has become a global problem in the 21st century (Abbink, 1997).

The causes of conflict vary from country to country. For example, in northern Ethiopia around the former Shewa region, the causes of conflict were economic and social. In economic terms, land and other property are very important, and in social relationships, married partners fight against each other due to adultery, alcoholism, selfishness, insults, etc. (Admassu, 2019). In the South, people are fighting among themselves due to differences in religious doctrine, corruption, abuse of power, and lack of resources. Moreover, resource conflict is a major cause not only in the southern region but also in most regions of the country. The methods and procedures used to identify criminals also varied from region to region and society to society (Wondimu, 2008).

In the southernmost border areas, conflict arises due to a lack of resources. The scarcity of pasture and water or lack of pasture is reinforced by cattle rustling for marriage and sources of wealth accumulation, etc. First of all, for all ancestral peoples, living in permanent settlements has become one of the main problems of society. The issue has reached a peak and has become a major problem causing displacement of people from many parts of Ethiopia. In general, the main causes of conflict are the need for more power and land, inequality in development, the existence of various religions, and the biased perception of some religious leaders who believe that their religion is superior to others. For others, problems included the lack of clearly defined boundaries between regions and ethnic groups, marginalizing and discriminatory practices of local governments, lack of rule of law, lack of land use policies in pastoral areas, and provision of investment land for large plantation investors. Such discriminatory sentiments and actions have led to conflict situations and the forced displacement

of thousands of people. However, most conflicts in Ethiopia can be easily resolved at the grassroots level using society's local mechanisms without direct government intervention (Wondimu, 2008).

According to Awash (2005), different Ethiopian societies also have their own local institutions and conflict resolution mechanisms. They use traditional mechanisms to resolve inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts.

Historical Background of Hamar, Erbore, and Karo

Before discussing ethnic conflict, it is important to first understand human interaction, history, settlement patterns, and community traditions.

The Karo

Information obtained through oral reports indicates that the area currently occupied by the Karo is not their original homeland. There are two oral accounts of the early population movements of the Karo. According to the first reports, they came to the Omo River from southern Sudan. While one of the segments stayed behind to form Dassaneh, the rest moved to Woyito to form the Arbore. The remaining part reached modern territory via Hamar Bashada and Bodi. The second account suggests they came from three directions: southern Sudan, Dassaneh, and Arbore. They moved to the highlands of Hamar- Banna formed the Karo. Except for the Bashada, who is considered one of the settler groups, the rest of the people who made up the Karo moved to the lowlands and settled in their modern territory, where they lost their herds and populations to tsetse flies and sleeping sickness. These included smaller groups such as the Moguji and Bogudo who may have been in the area, and the Gomba who, like the Karo, claim to have come as one of the migratory groups. The Karo people are a settled agricultural people of the lower Omo Valley. The Karo people make a living by cultivating sorghum, corn, and beans (Informant: Agumo).

The social organization of the Karo is considered to be its pattern of settlement and interaction among its members. The basis of Karo's social organization is the transition of individuals from close-knit peer groups to integrated age groups. The formation of age groups consists of several procedures, during which the younger Karo must give the older ones gifts in the form of beer and goats. In the formation of age groups, the transformation of status by jumping across the cattle and relationships established through marriage and bridewealth transactions grant adult status to young people (Informants: Wondemagegn Abebe and Azemach Totoro).

Figure 2: Karo Youth and Karo Parliament House based on Generation and Age Set

Source: Photo taken by Researcher

The Hamar

According to oral reports, "The Omotic-speaking Hamars were originally inhabitants from the neighboring regions of Ari, Banna, Borana, Maale, Tsemai, and Alle (Informant: Shada Bulle). The "Boa" clan originated from the Gamu Goffa region, occupied the area south of present-day Turmi, and settled around Ghito, northeast of Fejej. Boas was a shepherd and later disappeared. Another tribe, the Boas, called the "Korre", came from a southern direction, probably from the north of Samburu (a place located in modern-day Kenya), and settled in territory previously occupied by the Boas.

They also exploited the entire grassland area that existed between the shores of Lake Stephanie and Lake Rudolph. Like most of their neighboring peoples in the South Omo region, the Hamar people are agricultural pastoralists and have long lived with a degree of autonomy in the region. Like the Oromo, the sociopolitical organization of Hamar society is egalitarian, dominant, or 'polycephalous' In other words, they live in a kind of "regulated anarchy" where there is no central leader, and seniority and investigative skills play important roles in daily activities and conflict resolution. They had two ceremonial leaders, locally called Bitta, one from the Gatta clan and the other from the Worla clan. They were responsible for the spiritual well-being of the country but had no political power. They have 24 exogamous clans under two moieties. During the reign of Emperor Menelik II (c. 1844–1913) and Emperor Haile Selassie (r. 1931–1974), Hamar became part of the Ethiopian monarchy. After the end of the constitutional monarchy, the socialist Derg regime (ruled from 1974 to 1991) developed schools, roads, market plans, and emergency relief programs. The fall of the Derg rule in 1991 paved the way for the emergence of ethnic federalism in the country. Likewise, each ethnic group had its own ethnic identity and territorial unit, which became one of the factors in the ethnic conflict with more than 80 ethnic groups across the country (Strecker, 2013).

The Erbore People

The Erbore/ Arbore are one of three ethnic groups living in the modern Hamar district. According to reflections received from local elders of Arbore... The name Arbore is a combination of two words: "Ar" and "Bore". "Ar" means a lively, rated Ox and symbolizes patriotism doing extraordinary things, while "Bore" refers to the gray soil on which the first settlers lived. The general meaning of Arbore is "land of the brave" or land of warriors. The Arbore consists of two parts or segments called "Ulde" and "Marle" (Informant: Hora Sora). They settled along the confluence of the Sagan-Woito River in the northern direction of Lake Stephanie or Lake Chu-Bakhir. Previously their number was about 3,000–3,500. However, this figure reached 6,840 (CSA, 2007). Regarding Arbore's sources, the informant's information reflects the following:

"Erbore originated from the northern region of Somalia. Their genealogy is rooted in the Cush family. They speak Aoho, a Cushitic language. The Arbore people consisted of two clans: Merla and Arbore. They were collectively called 'The Horror People'. Other people from Konso and Borena also joined Arebor and lived together for a long time. The Arbore people are believed to have first settled throughout Kenya. The pastoral lifestyle led people to move from Kenya to Dassenech and settle around the Woyito River. Because of their origin, they often came into conflict with the Hamar people".

Figure 3: Gnaar, Arbore Power Transition Ceremony

Source: Photo taken by Researcher

Arbore's social and political organization has three major community organizations: These include: A/ The Birr or clan organization; C/ Age Generation System; B/ "Lyuba" or Genealogical System. Arbore describes his clan as descendants of Borana, Gabra, and Rendille. These clans formed 20 exogamous patrilineal tribes that supported each other during marriage and dowry. Gabra (Kenya) settled in Arbor; Furto, Rees, Garora and Hasgaletch, Eabure, Hugussa and Feqaylle. The age organization system is organized

chronologically and genealogically, and this age organization is similar to the Gada system of the Oromo people. Arbore believes in a super-god named Waq, the English equivalent of the word "God" above. Kawat is responsible for the welfare of the community and ensures peace and abundance for the Arbore lands, residents, and livestock.

Findings

The Horn of Africa is home to the largest pastoral community in the world. It was estimated pastoralism covers 61% of Ethiopia's land area and 12% of its population. Pastoralism requires both extensive use of land and freedom of movement. The pastoral communities of the South Omo River, Boran, Afar, and Somali are the major ethnic groups living on the country's borders with neighboring countries. In addition to their role in promoting national growth, Ethiopian pastoralists face natural and human threats to their way of life and survival (Mohammud, 2005). According to most scholars' studies conducted in various pastoral communities in Ethiopia, the main causes of conflict among pastoral groups in Ethiopia are periodic and unpredictable resource shortages, increasing animal and human populations, recurrent droughts, lack of proper governance, climate change, and the ecosystem (Assefa, 2001; Admassu, 2019; Menbere *et al.*, 2013).

The Hamar, Erbore, and Karo pastoralists are people who live in the South Omo region of southern Ethiopia. For centuries they mingled and interacted with their neighbors in peaceful and friendly terms. Likewise, these three ethnic groups had constant conflicts between themselves and their neighbors. However, these communities have experienced frequent ethnic conflict over the past three decades. The causes of conflict between the three ethnic groups are multidimensional and dynamic. The Hamar community, located between the two clans, borders Karo to the north and Erbor to the east of the region. Hamara and Karo share family ties and common cultural values. Because of this relationship, conflicts are less frequent and less severe than those that existed between the Hamar and Arbore people. Therefore, this area is the site of the most frequent conflict between the Hamara and Arbore people. The Hamar-Banna clan is the best example of the widespread kinship between the Hamar and Karo ethnic groups. Whenever conflict arose between these clans, they tried to resolve the problem by using their commonalities. Therefore, the extent of engagement between Hamar and Karo is shorter than between Arbore and Hamar.

- **Causes of ethnic conflicts**

The conflict has many causes. The severity of each varies. The author argues that the heterogeneity of ethnic groups in the region cannot lead to ethnic conflict. This section explains what caused the crash. This study therefore raises important questions that need to be answered. What factors contribute to the emergence of ethnic conflict in the study area?

I. **Colonial impacts**

The history of ethnic conflict between the Hamar and Arbore people dates back to colonial times when Ethiopia was under Italian occupation. During the Italian occupation, Arbore land was one of the places where Italian military bases were stationed. After establishing a military base at Gondorob, the Italians established friendly relations with the Arbore residents. The Italians used some locals as directional signs and developed hostile relations with the Hamar community. Hamar accuses Erbore of bringing Italians to their land. According to my sources, the Italians had poorer relations with the Hamars than with Erbore. The Italians used the Hamars as a labor force and treated them as spies for Ethiopian patriots from central Ethiopia. When the Italians left the country after the bitter struggle of the patriots, the relations and good neighbors between Arbore and Hamar turned into hostility. Therefore, the emergence of ethnic conflicts in the region is also due to the continued impact of colonial rule, which was one of the main reasons and historical factors for the start of the existing hatred and hostility between the two ethnic groups.

II. **Resource**

In pastoral communities, the availability of land and rivers for drinking water is very important for animals. As the population grew and the number of animals each household owned increased, the demand for pasture increased. Especially during the dry season, grass loss forces communities to move to riverbanks where they can find small bags of green. Lack and unwise use of limited resources lead to brutal wars and violent conflicts. The map of ethnic conflict in the region is increasingly complex and anxious due to factors such as drought, chronic poverty, unemployment (especially among youth), unequal distribution of resources, and fierce competition for dispersed resources. According to the political map of the South Omo region, the Hammar region is located between the Woyito and Omo rivers. Arbore owns land along the Woyito River that extends to Chew Bahir and believes the green space around the river is theirs. They fought with their neighbors to protect their pastures. On the Hamar side, the growing demand for arable land and pastures is so high that these territories are sometimes openly encroached upon. It is therefore a resource factor that exacerbates ethnic conflict between the two ethnic groups in the region.

Another resource issue is territory. Territory is one of the most frequent conflict issues in the region. It was argued that when there is a conflict between individuals, groups of youth move to territorial borders, displacing people from border areas between conflicting ethnic groups. The border areas these groups claim are not legally known or defined by the government. For example, the Arbore claim that the lowland plateau that exists beneath Mount Hamar belongs to their ancestors. As a result of the conflict, Hamar retreated to the mountains, but this story was not accepted by the people of

Hamar. Pastures and territorial claims are therefore the main conflict issues between Hamar and Arbores.

III. **Politics and administrative quests**

Uneducated and irresponsible politicians take political positions, whether legal or illegal and always oppose the problems of other ethnic groups (neighboring ethnic groups) to protect the interests of their ethnic groups. This leads to inter-ethnic competition and sparks already existing inter-ethnic conflicts regarding resources in the study area. So, in most cases, the conflict in the area ends up giving rise to political problems rather than being perceived as normal as before. This shows that politicians' interests are always behind conflicts. Politicians and elites have also played a significant role in fomenting conflict by misrepresenting their political agendas to the public. As a tool, they hire and use militias to carry out violence on their behalf, simply polarizing the discourse against their opponents. When they lose acceptance from the administration, they join the community and further fan the flames of existing conflict. As the elders said, politicians often have a great influence on the violent mobilization of conflict dynamics. For example, by exploiting regional divisions to provoke violence to weaken internal opposition between groups and force them to stand together against other ethnic groups. Although the desire for self-determination has not been officially declared. Rumors spreading within the community, especially among leaders removed from local and district positions are another factor that promotes hatred between conflicting ethnic groups. In particular, Arbores elites believe that creating their district administration will solve all of the region's problems. This desire for administrative independence is widespread among young people and is also confirmed in official meetings. Some politicians who have been demoted are using this as a means to regain power. It therefore becomes a means of intense competition among elites even in stable political environments of rent-seeking. Imbalance in political appointments based on racial composition is another political factor in the conflict. In particular, Hamar's dominance in the administration of local administrations is one of the political issues raised by Arbores as a reason for pushing for an independent local administration. Hamar's ruling elite also laid claim to their region. Arbores finally brought together all the representatives of the region.

IV. **Animal raiding**

Cattle and goats are the main assets of lowland pastoral communities. Animals are everything to society. They are a source of food, a source of finances, and a way to gain the respect of the rich. A man with a huge herd of cows and goats has the goods because he treats the cows the same as cash. Under normal circumstances, cattle are not a cause of conflict. For centuries there has been a long tradition of rustling cattle for prestige and bride price. So this time, people travel to very distant villages to collect animals and raid them for bride price. This is one of the causes of conflict involving different

ethnic groups. Hamar, for example, is widely known for this practice. The victims of this culture are the Arbors, animals that Hamars regularly raid. Nowadays, animals are raided not only for social purposes such as prestige or bride price but also for sale to traders coming from the city. But this commercial cattle rustling, accompanied by excessive violence, is spreading hatred among city dwellers and herders. Local youths act as middlemen and sell animals in large quantities to defraud residents. The number of people involved in the large-scale trafficking of animals is increasing, and conflicts are increasing.

V. **Revenging**

The main reason why the problem persists in this region is actually because people are thinking of revenge and setting the stage for the coming reaction. The main factor that makes this so serious is that it is deeply rooted in the soul of the community. The community as a whole views other communities as enemies to some degree and must be punished by outside organizations or the next generation of the affected group. One of Arbore's respondents said he compared this to foreign invaders taking advantage of a community's resources. He also said that if the government does not try to stop them, the community will always take steps to keep them peaceful. The Revenge campaign is seasonal. Hamar is known to attack Arbore in the summer, but Arbore attacks Hamar every winter. The young men of Arbore promise each other to return the land taken by Hamar. According to my informant, Hora Sora, the Arbore and Hamar originally used bows and arrows, but when the Italians left their homeland, they left behind ancient pistols (old firearms) such as Minishir, Alben, and Demotfer. Arbore was the first to go armed. An Italian base camp was established at Gondorob, and some of the Arbore's men served the Italians as bandits and were recruited as infantry by the Italians. Few of the Arbore residents interacted with the patriots and secretly provided information about the Italian troops invading the colony. As a result, friendly relations between ethnic groups were distorted, and people began to suspect each other. Hamar attacked the Arbore in revenge after the Italians fled the country.

VI. **External actors**

Another important factor is accessibility to small arms or firearms trade from neighboring countries. The border between Ethiopia and Kenya is open and uncontrolled. Smuggling is therefore widespread in the region. Small armies secretly trade and exchange livestock. Ammunition trade is common in the study area. Ammunition is constantly supplied by smugglers. Sometimes replacements are provided to conflicting groups through sales or support from neighboring ethnic groups in Kenya. Merchants of each race have a mission to supply vital weapons to their communities. Merchants are the most loved and respected in the community. Merchants also take it upon themselves to teach and show small armies of buyers how to use them. Along with owning livestock, it is believed that having a small fire brigade and knowing how to use it is

vital for men to protect their families and communities. Therefore, the head of every household will own at least one firearm. Filming takes place in Konso and Borena. Unrest around the Konso region is another external factor. Additionally, external support for conflict parties can be considered another important factor. The support of neighboring pastoralist communities across the border and other pastoral neighbors in nearby areas, such as the Borena region in the Oromia region, has brought people into conflict, especially for Arbore. The Arbore community has more ethnic and historical ties with the Oromo community. Although there have been rare clashes with Borana, Arbores has received support from Borana while fighting Hamas. The Arbores either seek to join their northern neighbors, the Tsemai, or claim to be part of Oromia, with which they have historical links. For this, they spoke with Aba Geda.

Consequences of the Conflicts

Due to poor governance, frequent conflicts in Ethiopia have undermined the principles of peaceful coexistence, strengthened existing social bonds, and threatened national unity. Violence broke out in several parts of the region, forcing millions of citizens to flee their homes. In places where conflict and violence have occurred, government institutions and other infrastructure and social services, especially health, education, and electricity, have been destroyed and damaged (Mendo, 2023). According to the South Omo Region Peace Management Department, the conflict between Hamar and Arbore was caused by hostility, suspicion, deaths on two sides, livestock theft, and grazing, as mentioned above. Below is an example of the results of ethnic conflicts between the Hamar and Arbore tribes.

- These attacks result in human casualties and animals being abducted and killed.
- Conflicts affect livestock production by reducing the spatial redistribution of animals outside of conflict grazing areas, which exacerbates the problem of overgrazing on relatively safe lands and leads to land degradation due to overgrazing.
- Trade routes, market areas, and market prices were affected by the conflict. When conflict breaks out, markets are often destroyed and retail stores close. Food, medicine, water, and firewood are not available.
- Conflicts lead to the closure of sectors providing social services such as schools, health centers, projects, and other important economic services.
- Food insecurity has become a problem and people are dependent on food assistance. Let us discuss the consequences of racial conflict in detail.

• **Influence on human life**

Today, the dynamics of conflict are changing in such a way that every fight that occurs between individuals in society is becoming politicized and creating administrative difficulties. Every season, managers spend time resolving disputes. Security issues are another headache for regional administration. Local administrators primarily invest their

time and budget in conflict management. This has created challenges for leadership, especially in other development sectors. Compared to the relatively peaceful surrounding areas, this area is underdeveloped with poor infrastructure and poor educational facilities. As respondents repeatedly pointed out, especially from 2015 to the present, the color of the conflict has changed to pure politics, with conflict participants in the Arbore region demanding a new administrative structure (their independent district). Actors are provoking people to raise political issues to undermine other development activities taking place in the region. Some of the political issues people always raise about local administrators are when comparing the number of people holding public office at the local level. They recalculated their political positions and concluded that Hamar had been helped by local leadership during the conflict. This makes life difficult for local governments and weakens acceptance in society.

- **Influence on economy/property**

This area is a pastoral community where people live by following animals in a semi-arid region where water is scarce. They build small temporary villages where they stay for short periods. Even in winter, people are very busy. In particular, the period from January to June every year is a time when sparsely grown vegetables and serial plants dry out due to lack of water droplets. This season there is always conflict between neighboring Hamar and Arbores over control of the relatively green river base for grazing. During the conflict, the enemies burn the small village, taking all the food they had gathered to feed the children for months. Similarly, on other days, victims organize and demolish villages in other areas. This worsened poverty in the region and increased unwanted demands on informally organized groups, putting pressure on politicians. The large-scale depredation of enemy animals is another very distressing fact and shows how negatively the conflict affects the local economy and the wealth of the people. Animals are anything that is considered cash equivalent or equivalent to the people living in that area. Especially when conflict is too severe, young people travel to nearby settlements and bring back animals. This is especially true for poor people who invest everything they have in animals.

Conclusion

Ethnic conflict has been one of the persistent problems facing Ethiopia over the past three decades. Therefore, this study assesses ethnic conflict between the Hamar, Karo, and Arbore communities. The causes of ethnic conflict may vary from region to region. This study shows that one of the factors driving ethnic conflict between these semi-pastoral ethnic groups was greed and disregard for fair use of scarce resources that promote regional harmony and peaceful coexistence. Demands for autonomy are another factor sparking ethnic tensions in the region. Likewise, the hidden cause of the conflict was the elite's manipulation of ethnicity to satisfy their own needs, mainly

political goals. Including the above-listed factors, the causes of ethnic conflict among the people of the Hamar region, the above are socio-cultural practices such as rustling cows as symbols of heroes and killing neighbors. Problems of good governance and extreme corruption are other problems in the region. Gun smuggling has heightened tensions and sparked conflict, particularly between Hamar and Arbore. Several attempts were made to resolve the conflict. To resolve the escalating conflict, two forms of conflict management have been implemented: local mechanisms and mechanisms adopted by the formal judicial system. In traditional conflict mediation; Differences between ethnic groups were resolved through negotiations with local negotiators, elders, and notables. Sources suggest that traditional conflict resolution methods are more effective than government arbitration and formal court systems in the region. The latter is why society is reluctant to hand over criminals and the long process and remote location of local courts. Finally, the study recommends promoting peace and coexistence among the Hamar, Karo, and Arbore tribes by promoting the rule of law and accountability at various levels of the government structure. Likewise, independent civic groups that promote integration between ethnic groups should also strive for people's coexistence and peace. Additionally, it would be better for the government to create a platform to help all stakeholders and improve the social conditions of these communities.

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