Fragmenting Nationalism and Institutionalizing Conflict and Underdevelopment in Africa

John Tor Tsuwa, PhD

Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria
jtsuwa@bsum.edu.ng
Google Scholar link: https://bit.ly/3TUAewA
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7090-5556

Abstract

African nationalists had forged a unified ideology towards decolonization and development irrespective of culture, religion, and ethnicity. This helped them to gain independence and mobilized resources for collective development. Conversely, post-independent African leaders in their bid to capture, use, and retain power have destroyed the nationalist ideology and introduced fragmentalism. This paper using secondary data and analyzing the data within the arguments of the social-conflict analysis paradigm discovered that the post-colonial elite have developed religious, economic, cultural, and ethnic identities to fragment their citizens. This new strategy of divide and rule has paved the way for them to personalize governmental resources. This has affected Africa's effective participation in the globalization process irrespective of its comparative advantage. The paper also discovered that African leaders have continued to fuel conflicts and underdevelopment to perpetually keep the fragmented people poor. Based on these realities and findings, the paper recommends that African societies should initiate strong Indigenous leadership ideologies and business sectors based on their comparative advantage. This will change the ownership of the means of production and the social relations of production from a personalized elite group to a community-based approach of inclusion that will help solve the conflicts and underdevelopment challenges that have bedeviled the African continent.

Keywords: Nationalism, Conflict, Underdevelopment, Insecurity, Elites, Identity, Fragmentation.

Introduction

The African continent has in recent times witnessed more divisive events among its various nationalities. This has negatively affected the nature and character of intergroup relations, the collective efforts to mobilize resources for development, and the synergy to build resilience against challenges. These divisions here conceptualized as fragmented nationalism have not only increased the contestable avenues of the various groups over the resources of the continent within their perceived catchment areas but have also introduced the creeping in of external forces who desires these resources. This situation has also reinforced the challenge of failure of the African leadership and followership thereby cementing fragile governance and national solidarity indices in most African countries. It is wont to recall that, the African continent is one of the most brutalized as a result of its brutal plunder by European powers in their scramble to control the human and natural resources on the continent. From the mercantilist period to slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism, the African continent and her citizenry have been reduced to a constructed people prized by their role to supply the "advanced" world with human and natural resources and consume goods produced in Europe and America thereby inspiring growth and development in foreign land while impoverishing African societies. To this, the origin and history of Africans and their societies have been fabricated for them; their countries are named by foreign imperialists, their economies are run by multinational

corporations without commensurate benefits and their security architecture is controlled by foreign governments and their capitalist business elites.

The African society is therefore constructed by internal inequality and failure and watered by Western suppression and oppression. As Rodney (1972) argued, African social inequalities were fostered by the creation of a local elite that reinforced the inequality among Africans, while at the same time developing a stronger Europe. As Spaulding and Beswick (2010) elaborated on Rodney's argument, Africans were reduced to helpless children, victims of vast and evil plots imposed by aliens endowed with diabolically mature intelligence and continentally unheard-of military and socio-economic powers. What we can deduce from Rodney's analogy is that, after this encounter, what was left of Africa was a group of fragmented people with fragmented mentality and livelihoods. As Cannadine (2013) argued, African societies became weaved in the international trinity of class consciousness, gender awareness, and racial solidarity which has made it difficult for a collective identity for Africa and Africans with devastating consequences on development and security. This paper examines the nature and consequences of fragmented nationalism on the African people especially as it relates to the failure of collective nationalism which has led to the institutionalization of conflict and underdevelopment in Africa.

Methodological and Theoretical Framing

Methodologically, this paper is descriptive and relies basically on secondary sources of data. The nature and character of fragmentation or what we interchangeably call stratification or factionalism and its potency of creating and institutionalizing conflict in African societies can best be understood within the framing of social conflict perspective. The foundational bases of this theory stem from the consideration of the economy as the base and other aspects of social life in society as the superstructures. Karl Marx who is considered to be the father of this perspective insisted that individuals in a society are either capitalists (owners of the means of production) or members of the proletariat (workers in factories and other areas), a situation that inevitably creates conflict.

From Marx's foundation, other scholars such as Max Weber (1864–1920), Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), Ralf Dahrendorf (1929–2009), and Randel Collins (2008) used conflict theory to analyze the causalities of conflicts, war, and revolutions in societies. The core of all their arguments is that the behavior of all in society is based on their social positions and privileges in that society. This means that actors in each society are separated based on class, race, ethnicity, and religion, and within their stratification, some are dominant and superior while others are dominated and discriminated based on their position on the stratification ladder. The competition in society therefore takes place between groups where power games are exploited and as Schaefer (1993) argues, in most cases the weak are ignored in the distribution chain and manipulated against their own "weak" group for the interest of their "powerful" group.

What we can deduced from this argument is that, for the powerful to retain the grip on power over the weak, they need to disorganize, dehumanize, fragment and reconstruct the condition of the weak to achieve maximum docility and set them against themselves within the matrix of self-destruction. Mobilization through emotions and symbols is also employed in this stratification process. Evidence from the slave trade, colonialism, neocolonialism, and globalization have shown the stratification process between African countries and their partners in the global environment. The utilization of this theory here shows how the unequal contact and interaction between Africa and the Western world through these phases has stratified and fragmented Africa via ethnicity, citizenship, religion, culture, race, and economy to create, deepen, and sustain inequality, injustice and by extension enemy images between the various groups who had hitherto co-existed peacefully with their egalitarian nature as exemplified in trade by barter system, consensual decision making to the point that they were referred to as stateless societies by the Europeans. It also shows how these

fragmentations have created conditions that have institutionalized the causality factors of conflicts and underdevelopment and various groups.

Conceptualizing Nationalism and Fragmented Nationalism

According to Otegwu and Bala (2016), the gregarious nature of man situates all communities in a plural setting based on ethnicity, religion, and language. Nationalism is therefore an instrument of patriotism that is used to foist this diversity together for nationhood. In simple terms, nationalism connotes loyalty and devotion to a nation especially as it is expressed in glorifying one's nation above all others and stressing the promotion of its culture and interests. Historically, Smith (1971) had conceptualized nationalism as a threefold action and event. To him, it first means securing fraternity and equality among co-nationalists or citizens; by integrating them into a homogeneous unit. Secondly, it connotes a unification in a single nation-state of extra-territorial co-nationals. Thirdly, it connotes the stressing of cultural individuality through the accentuation of national differences. With the metamorphosis of society, Smith codified his conceptualization of nationalism as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity for a population that some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential "nation".

Negedu and Atabor (2015) deducing from Smiths analogies seem to look at nationalism politically. According to them, nationalism is the sense of political togetherness that invokes a spirit of patriotism and 'we feeling' in people towards their country and one another and which distinguishes a group from other groups. As an ideology, nationalism holds that the nation should be the primary political identity of individuals". This is in line with Griller's (1983:13) position that considers nationalism as being "a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state should not separate the power holders from the rest."

From this argument, nationalism therefore centers around three basic goals of autonomy, national unity and national identity. We can therefore argue in line with McGregor (2010) who used Kohn's 1965 opinion and conceptualized nationalism from Western and Eastern perspectives. To McGregor, eastern nationalism conceived the nation as an organic community united by culture, language and descent while Western nationalism is a civic type of nationalism. To him, it is a political and civic community held together by voluntary adherence to democratic norms.

The above assertions reveal that; nationalism homogenizes the state. That is, it turns a state to 'nation state' by blurring its ethno-cultural cleavages and develops among its population a strong attachment to the 'state' rather than their various etic nationalities. However, Olusola, Oladeji and Ijeoma (2017) contend that, contemporary African nationalism is tied to ethnic and religious cleavages and mostly elite induced and that, at the controllable level, nationalism in this sense may involve a call to restructure a state in such ways that more power and resources are redistributed downward to sub-national politico-administrative units, which may or may not coincide with dominant ethnic boundaries. A good example is the demand for restructuring in Nigeria. At the extreme, it calls for the secession of a group from a state to form own sovereign state. The Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) in Nigeria, South Sudan from Sudan, Southern Cameroon from Cameroun, and Eritrea from Ethiopia are relevant examples.

From the above definitions, we can argue that nationalism covers all areas of identity. Political, cultural, religious and economic. The central argument should therefore be a sense of solidarity that a group of people share towards their collective identity, safety and mobilization towards protecting such identity from invasion and destruction. Whether societies are Western or Eastern, democratic or non-democratic, they need collective survival and nationalism gives them that assurance of survival and maintenance of their dignity and identity. When this form of collective solidarity is threatened, nationalism becomes fragmented.

Fragmentation literary means a process or a state of breaking into fragments the various parts of the society into a collection of interest groups. Nationalism desires an autonomous society, but when it is fragmented, it creates an absence or underdevelopment of connections between a society and the grouping of its members. These connections that are disconnected in many cases pitch groups against each other, especially in areas of ethnicity, culture, occupation and social status or class and religion. It is worthy to argue here that African nationalism was situated within the collective and consensual political ideology of collective identification of the political, economic, cultural and social identity of all Africans irrespective of religion, culture and ethnicity. The ideology was subsumed into the struggle for liberation from the imperialist. All that African nationalist were concerned was to get their African "Political Kingdom" first with the belief that all other things shall follow. The first ideology that majority of blacks and African people conceived as politics was responding to western colonization, imperialism and slavery (Chan 2023). African intellectuals such as DuBois, who conversed against the excesses of colonialism in Africa and called for abolition of slave conditions and capital punishment on colonial plantations motivated other Africans such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria and Hastings Banda of Malawi amongst others to demand a new world order of independent African states and a creation of Pan-Africanism (Chan 2023).

From the above, we can notice that African nationalism has therefore passed through the process of motivation, the process of implementing the motivation for liberation, to establish a "pure" Africa. These stages and changes have changed the African nationalist ideology of egalitarianism and communism into an individualistic and fragmented ideology of self-preservation. It is based on the above that Sabanadze (2010) posits that fragmented nationalism is a corrupt form of democracy that becomes divorced from the citizenry. This is because the state is separated from society, it is an opposition to the state created out of the internal crisis where people seek for community and identity. Castells (1997) describes this situation as that which is more oriented towards the defense of already institutionalized culture than towards the construction or defense of a state. We can therefore argue that this is an elite-induced tendency that separates people within a society so that the cohesion that engendered national unity across ethnic, religious, and linguistic boundaries is reduced or eliminated which leads to suspicion, contestation and conflict.

Conceptualizing Conflict

Conceptualizing conflict is dicey and contestable due to the meandering and fluid nature of its occurrence, causes, nature, dimension, stages, and impact. Conflict can be ideological, religious, ethnic, racial, territorial, or resource-oriented. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that Nations and individuals come to blows over ideology, territory, and the quest for resources. All these constitute a conflict. This is why Andrews (2022) argues that conflict is a difference of opinion between nations, people, or political movements that involve the use of deadly violence. Andrew's definition could be seen as apt because even within the same religious belief system, a difference in opinion as it is between the Sunni and Shia could become conflictual making us believe in Samuel Huntington's argument of the potency of conflict residing with a clash of perspective which is simply the tension between cultures.

We can also agree with Tsuwa (2014) that conflict is contestation over emotions, ideologies, goals and even perceived interest between people who consider these points of contestation so dear to them and are not ready to relinquish them to any opponent. Tsuwa insists that these contestations alone do not translate to conflict, but they metamorphose into confrontations that may become conflictual. Tsuwa (2023) therefore summarized conflict as the dislocation of social and intergroup relations. This then rolled us into Coser's definition of conflict. Coser (1913-2003) who is considered one of the earliest scholars who tried to understand conflicts and their causality factors defined

conflicts as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the opponents aim to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals". Coser's argument in 1956 shows that conflict is omnipresent and instinctual in all human societies and all living beings and nature. To him, conflict is a normal and functional part of human life. Conflict therefore not only generates new norms*, and* new institutions but also stimulates the economic and technological realm. However, he also pointed out that, the destructive aspect of conflict should not be ignored but strategic measures be taken to prevent it through careful management of the actors and their interests.

Conflict therefore becomes synonymous with diverse societies that suffer according to Mounk (2022) from three serious shortcomings of domination, anarchy, and fragmentation. This is because conflict entrepreneurs often encourage ethnicity and majorities to raise their interest before it is too late. He argues further that these profiteers use divisive identities championed by ethnic, religious, economic, cultural, or political elites who desire to perpetually keep the minority fragmented for easy exclusion and exploitation from public policy and its gains. As Ripley (2021) argued, conflict has become so central to modern societies to the level that living without conflict is like living without love. He insists that fragmented societies are bound to experience what he calls "high conflict". To him, high conflict is magnetic and it manifests into *good versus evil*, a kind of conflict that creates the *we vs them* scenario. High conflict therefore is a state where each encounter with the other side, whether literal or virtual becomes more charged. He points out that good conflict on the other hand can be stressful and heated but it keeps dignity intact and does not make caricatures of the parties. We can therefore conclude that conflict in fragmented societies is initiated within the thinking of intolerance of differences.

Conceptualizing Underdevelopment

Conceptualizing underdevelopment is as problematic as conceptualizing development itself. This is because the parameters that define underdevelopment are not static but vary based on the indicators applied to judge what it is. While others refer to it as the low-level development characterized by low level per capita income, widespread poverty, lower level of illiteracy, lower life expectancy, and underutilization of resources, others consider it as a condition of extreme poverty, disparity in delivery of social services and an environment of physical insecurity. This is why Mills (2014) on his part situates underdevelopment within political democratic analysis. He argues that it is a situation where a society's democratic institutions that are supposed to provide representation and ensure effective governance structure are weak. The import of this is that the government is supposed to implement public policy that will ensure that the various groups in the society are fully represented in the governance structure and the mobilization of resources towards collective development which will eventually reinforce their collective solidarity. When this fails, the society is considered underdeveloped.

Modernist scholars in their conceptualization of underdevelopment categorized human societies into two. Traditional societies are timid, primitive and with attributes that make them incapable of mobilizing resources for development because of their uncivilized nature. For these underdeveloped countries located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to develop, they must modernize and to modernize, they must be Westernized. To westernize, they must shed off their primitive religious, cultural and economic practices. Offiong (1980) captured this succinctly when he argued that, modernization is a total transformation of traditional or pre-modern societies into modern societies with a wave of modern technology that user in development.

The dependents scholars on the other hand insist that the stereotyping of African, Asian, and Latin American countries as traditional societies that lack what it takes to develop is a fallacy. They argued that these countries were not traditional, barbaric and timid, but they were actually on the path of development before their contact with the so-ascribed "modern" states. They argued that, it

was the exploitation of these modernist against the dependentists that has led the people of Africa, Asia and Latin America to their present condition of poverty and underdeveloped. The conclusion here is that, underdevelopment depicts a condition of powerlessness that manifest in the people's inability to have a viable purchasing power, poor infrastructure, low level health, educational and infrastructural facilities. This condition is exacerbated by high levels of social and economic inequality which is reinforced injustice.

From the above, we can argue that, the African condition of underdevelopment is peculiar and considered in many areas. For instance, Eugene and Ajeli, (2018) conceptualized African underdevelopment based on the conditions prevalent in African countries. To them, an underdeveloped country is characterized by (i) massive poverty which is chronic and not the result of temporary misfortune, and (ii) obsolete methods of production and social organization, which means that the poverty is not due to poor natural resources and hence could presumably be lessened by methods already proved in other countries. These societies have a low capacity to utilize their natural resources due to low infrastructural development, weak human resource capital, high levels of inequality, and the inability of the political system to aggregate the needs of the people and resolve the division that arises as a result of ideological, cultural and social differences of the society.

Historicizing Fragmented Nationalism

The fragmentation of the indigenous African societies by the colonial imperialists is historically traced as it took place through various periods, means, and strategies. For instance, Thomson (2005) pointed out that, the British Empire created three competing conceptions carefully designed to fragment African societies. First was an 'empire of privilege' espoused by the aristocratic and landed gentry. Second, an 'empire of merit' espoused by the professional middle class, and third, an 'empire of profit', espoused by the entrepreneurs. Consequently, these empires created conflicts between an aristocratic view of governance, where authority was hereditary and exercised by men born to rule, and between the colonial civil servants who were considered as snobbish to anti-capitalist posture and the entrepreneurs. The civil servants saw the empire as a matter of duty and tended to look down on the businessmen for whom it was a matter of making money. The society was therefore fragmented between these groups with each fighting for its survival at the detriment of the collective.

The slave trade period also came with its nature of fragmentations. Spaulding and Beswick (2010) pointed out that, the slave trade in Africa created self-sustaining slave-based predatory movements. With this, African independence and its discontents gave birth to new and highly destructive political and cultural movements fueled by the carefully manufactured and manipulated wrath to create heavily armed African children for mayhem along enemy lines. The colonial imperialists relied on this to create fragmented societies along majority-minority lines. Minorities which are subordinate in terms of power and privilege to the majority, may be in the form of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. As Schaefer (1993) earlier argued, a minority group is a subordinate group whose members have significantly less power over their own lives than the members of the dominant or majority group. The colonialist therefore stratified African societies along these lines with the minority not only having narrowed opportunities in terms of access to basic societal resources but also in policy making and implementation. Schaefer therefore identified six types and consequences of subordination created as a result of fragmenting a group as including (a) extermination; a situation where a group in itself is eliminated; (b) expulsion; where a group is forced to vacate an area they have occupied over a long period; (c) secession; were a group is forced or decides to secede to form a new nation; (d) segregation; were there is a physical separation of two groups which is usually imposed by dominant group on a subordinate group; (e) fusion, where a minority and a majority group combine to form a new group, and (f) assimilation, where a

subordinate individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant group and is eventually accepted as part of the group. From Schaefer's classification above, we can deduce central elements of prejudice and discrimination designed to identify and separate groups, pitching them against each other. The consequence is to enshrine competition over resources already conscripted and shared between and among the colonialists. At the center of this competition is the institutionalization of conflict among the various groups.

Historically, we can identify some world fragmentations that resulted in the institutionalization of conflict. The first case to be cited here is that of Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia (1945-1980). In his bid to weaken the political power of the Serbs, he divided Yugoslavia into six Republics namely: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. According to Walter (2022), Tito's style was a brilliant divide-and-rule strategy. This action gave the minority Serb a hold on power at the national level. Expectedly, it exacerbated ethnic resentment from non-Serbs against the Serbian ruling class and from the have-not Serbian republic against the more well-off republics of Slovenia and Croatia. In Serbia, as Walter argued further, Slobodan Milošević who was President of Serbia (1989-1997) utilized the hitherto created ethnic divisions of Tito to concretize ethnic identity and ideology instead of political ideology. He rewrote Serbia's constitution to undermine Kosovo's autonomy, envisioning a Yugoslavia in which Serbs would finally be in charge. Milošević's creation of a Serb nationalist agenda that fragmented the other republics culminated in events that led to a situation where a once united Yugoslavia would violently disintegrate, creating the world's first vocabulary of "ethnic cleansing". The consequence of this was the emergence of a predatory state that became very brutal. For three years, Serbs and Croats raped, massacred, and exiled thousands of Bosniaks as a result of the enemy images created for them through their fragmentation.

The Political Instability Task Force (PITF) in its report of 2021 argued from its findings that conflicts are institutionalized as a result of an acute form of political polarization. This polarization they call "factionalism". Their argument was anchored on the conclusion that countries that are factionalized have political parties based on ethnic, religious, or racial identities, rather than ideology; and these parties then seek to rule at the exclusion and expense of others. Wimmer (2013) agreed with this and argued that the biggest warning sign of a civil war is when a country is in the zone of factionalism. He argues that countries that are factionalized have groups that compete not only for scarce resources, but for balance of power, which is mostly done relying on the law of oligarchy". This means that there is an ethnically oriented "cult figure" desirous of power who seeks to ethnic nationalism to gain support and legitimacy. Walter (2022) expanding on this position argues that factionalism is a major character of fragmentation that is unyielding, grasping, identity-based politics and it is often a precursor to war for the majority of third-world countries because emanates from their foundational imperialist formation.

We can therefore argue in line with Gubbler and Selway (2012), as supported by Walter (2022), that in factionalized countries, there is a clear pattern that leads to the institutionalization of conflicts. To them, there is first an elite, and supporters of a particular groups with a sense of an opportunity, or weakness in a regime that increases the grievances or vulnerability of such a group. These elites therefore rally loyalty around identity, even including the usage of symbols; and "hate speeches". This creates tension, and if the faction in power uses force as a repressive instrument, the tension escalates to groupings of ethnic militia. Consequently, political parties begin to coalesce around ethnic, racial, or religious identities, rather than policies. This condition has been seen in many countries of the world and Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Ethiopia among others in Africa.

It is worth noting here that we do not have only political actors that fragment nationalism. We also have business elites, who seek brand loyalty, religious elites who seek expansion of their

John Tor Tsuwa, 2025, 10(1):1-12

congregation, media elites who seek to grow their revenue and audience, as well as those who are loyal to those in power. As Martin (2001) argues, national and transnational companies in their bid for wealth generation have become global destabilizers. Financing weapons and fighters, especially around resource-rich but poor citizenry has become a major source of global sources of conflicts. Ethno-nationalists have risen to pull citizens away from policy and social ideals toward identity politics. For instance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, a member of the Bharatiya Janeta party which promoted Hindutva in a bid to fragment his country embraced an identity of the political culture of Hindu superiority with Hindu pride and referred to the Muslims as a "crop of two-legged animals that needed to be excluded from the center of political authority. Modi introduced a citizenship law. The Citizenship Amendment Act (2019) enacted by Modi was to provide a pathway to citizenship for non-Muslim refugees from neighboring countries. Despite the agitations against this Act especially from the large Muslim population, he used brutal force to enforce it.

In Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro capitalized on colour differentiation to fragment the country into Africans, Asians, Indigenous Indians or multiracial groups. These ethnic and racial lines became his foundation for discriminatory lawlessness as he even referred to African refugees as "the scum of the earth". This fragmentation has become one of the major problems in intergroup relations in the country.

Despite these conflagrations of fragmentation, the pains of brutal slavery and colonialism compelled "skin civilized" Africans, especially those who had the opportunity to serve the imperialists or attend schools in their "loved, secured and civilized" environment to begin forging a path to collective agitation for liberation. The nationalistic orientation of African leaders towards liberation became sacrosanct. Their major idea was to transform African colonies into independent states and to define the continent of Africa as a coherent nation despite the diversity in ethnicity, language, culture, and religion. It is therefore worthy to note that there was a collective ideology of the nationalist leaders to forge an understanding of African brotherhood to fight for African suffrage, political inclusivity, reduction of socio-economic inequalities, and abolition of racial discrimination and its consequences.

The Trajectories of African Elites, Fragmented Nationalism, and the Challenges of Conflicts and Development in Africa

With the imperative of independence, the emergence of an African state with its peculiar elite became inevitable. These two new creations came with their expected contradictions. Concerning the state, Ake (1996) argued that, the post-colonial state in Africa did not emerge as an objective public force rising above particular interests and groups to express the corporate identity of a particular society, but essentially the tool of those in power largely privatized to serve the interest of the new elite. Thus, apart from lacking autonomy, the typical post-independent state in Africa claimed near absolute power. On the side of the new elites, it became a cabal with the sole purpose of capturing, using and retaining power.

It is based on this that, immediately after independence, there was a decline in the prestige of the political parties that fought for independence. The elite had jettisoned the ideology and manifestoes of the parties and embraced their egoistic ideology weaved around ethnic, clannish, religious, and regional identities. The African political elite therefore reintroduced a new form of fragmentation that relied on the foundations laid by the colonial imperialists into the political and governance structure of African new states. This new form of fragmentation was not only brutal but created divisions that have continued to cause conflicts and challenge development on the continent.

Many examples abound to buttress this argument. In the Horn of Africa, Clapham (2023) argues that the states of Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea which had enjoyed homogeneity and egalitarianism under the non-colonized state of Ethiopia become part of a region that has been highly

fragmented and conflictual. He observed that, although each of the various ethnic groups of *Darood, Hawiye, Isaaq, Dir* and the *Rahanweyn* are generally Somali, they have been fragmented and each considers itself as the purest. He stated that, though each clan is broadly associated with a 'home', territory, the boundaries of such territories are constantly contested as a result of both the demands of life on the hoof, which creates regular migrations that bring clans into contact over the sources of wealth therefore conflicting with one another.

The dynamics from the above show that, the British who controlled Somali land after the Second World War introduced the "*Bevin Plan*" that grouped Somali land into the French and British Somali coasts. The Somali were *territorialized*, and as Ethiopia reclaimed control of its south-eastern region, Somali land was returned to Italy. This fragmentation was not only within Somali land, the Somali in Kenya and Ethiopia were also fragmented. This fragmentation was exacerbated by the incursion of Russia and the introduction of the Marxist ideology under the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party. This manipulation consolidated the clannish identity of Somali politics which Clapham referred to as the "fragmentation of Somali politics", which to him became a major source of sustained conflict in the region as the *territorialization* of ethnicity which members of the designated groups have at least an implicit status that is denied to those who do not belong to it.

The fragmentation of the West African sub-region has also been deepened by the post-colonial elites. For instance, Baum (1999) observed that among the Diolar peoples of Southern Senegal, an effective system of social subordination mediated by religious string supervised by slave priests was instituted and the slaves were considered kinless strangers within a kinship-based society where their main task was to supply labour based on coercion. In Nigeria and many other countries within the sub-region, the indirect rule system was introduced and societies without chiefs to enable this system were declared stateless and brutal force was required to create enemy images amongst them for easy control.

This is still manifesting as captured in the words of the French President, Emmanuel Macron who opined after the 2023 G20 summit in India that Africa is facing a "civilization challenge" because of the various divisions on Anglophone, Lusophone, and Francophone and weak institutions. It is however wont to remind Mr. Macron that this phenomenon alongside the circumvented border lines were created by the colonial imperils and reinforced by the post-colonial elites in connivance with the ex-colonist. Yabi (2023) argues that, the difficulties of Nigeria, the shyness of Ghana, the political and security fragility of Côte d'Ivoire and the small economic size of the other countries in the sub-region have offered, on a problematic scale, the region up on a silver platter to a long-lasting influence of external powers. This, coupled with the challenge of a fragile, weak and unproductive elite has exacerbated the intergroup, ethnic colouration, poverty and democratic challenge. The consequence is the decay of democracy, which recently has resulted to coups and countercoups in the region.

Deriving from the above, we can argue that, the contemporary African state is not fundamentally different from its colonial precursor in terms of the use and abuse of power using the divide-and-rule strategy. In Nigeria just as elsewhere in Africa, dominant groups seem unsatisfied with what they have already cornered for themselves; minorities are in perpetual fear of losing what they perceive to be their fast-shrinking political and economic spaces. The tragic situation is that there is a rising tide of agitations and conflicts even within smaller communities for the reconstruction of identities or self-determination. The elites have continued to exploit these for their private individualistic gains. Meanwhile, the poor and the underprivileged continue to suffer on all sides of the parochial divide, giving birth to what Zaato (2013) described as the *"megalothymic* nature of the African elite.

We wish to conclude that; these conflicts have become a major source of the development challenge in Africa. African countries such as South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of

John Tor Tsuwa, 2025, 10(1):1-12

the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Sudan are all involved in one form of conflict or the other. The majority of these conflicts have their roots in the colonial conflagrations and the nature of fragmentation caused by both colonial policies and post-colonial elite manipulations. It is therefore to say that, one of the major challenges of conflict on development which has affected almost all regions of Africa is Displacement and Migration. Conflicts lead to dislocation in population and settlement patterns as large numbers of people are forced out of their homes. Table 1 below shows a summary of IDPs and Refugees in some selected countries in Africa.

S/No	Name of Country	No of IDPs	No of Refugees
1	Sudan	12.7M	1.8M
2	DRC	6.9M	5.3M
3	Ethiopia	3.5M	659,000
4	Somalia	3M	
5	Nigeria	3.5 M	88,279
6	Cameroon	453,000	1.2M

Source: Compiled by the author from different sources UNHRC, ADP etc. 2024

The above is just a selection of a few African states that have been bedevilled by the menace of high statistics of IDPs and Refugees emanating from conflicts within their territories. These displacements have caused high levels of social and Economic Disruption as they destroy infrastructure, disrupt trade, and deter foreign investment. As Collier et al, (2023) argued, prolonged civil war is development in reverse. Therefore, these African countries in conflict and their population are experiencing high levels of acute food, education, health, and social insecurity. Their Human Capital capacities have collapsed, leading to a lost generation with limited skills and opportunities. It is worth noting that during conflicts, opportunities are reduced and skilled labour is withdrawn, investments are stopped and economic engagements are weakened as people migrate. For instance, in 2023, it was estimated that roughly 476 million Africans, or about one-third of the continent's population, live in poverty, an increase of approximately 50 million since the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase reflects the continent's vulnerability to global economic disruptions and limited poverty-alleviation resources. Extreme poverty (living on less than $2.15 per day) is especially high in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 30 out of the world's 36 poorest nations are located. For instance, South Sudan and Somalia have rates above 80% of poverty, while Nigeria has an estimated 40% poverty rate, representing over 80 million people.

We can conclude with the arguments of Buvé, et al (2002) that, conflicts have made large populations of African people trapped in a vicious HIV-poverty cycle. This is because, conflict collapses the healthcare systems, resulting in higher mortality rates and disease outbreaks. During conflicts, civilians are often subjected to human rights abuses, sexual violence, criminality and drug abuse which results in dangerous health challenges for both members of the host communities and the IDPs, thereby expanding the poverty and underdevelopment nexus.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper critically examined the extent to which fragmented nationalism has institutionalized conflict and underdevelopment in Africa. The main argument is hinged on the fact that the problem of lack of national cohesion across the continent is caused by the nature and character of leadership that is weak, primordial, corny, wasteful and lacks legitimacy and collective developmental ideology. It therefore survives by fragmenting the people along religious, economic, linguistic, cultural and ethnic lines. This strategy of divide and rule enables the elites to exploit the ethnic or religious consciousness of the citizens in their struggle for and use of state power.

The paper also argues that, there is also a followership deficit as the marginalized people in political, economic and social status do not only sheepishly follow the rulers but are mentally weak to discern their corny and manipulative strategies. This has made their reward to be survival based without any meaningful impact on the total development of the entire society. The created colonial mentality has metamorphosed into a "cabal" mentality that is to be feared and worshipped for survival.

Resolving Africa's conflicts which were instituted as a result of the fragmentation of the indigenous people of Africa needs a more dynamic strategy of both state and nation building. It needs an approach that will reinvent both ideological and cultural realignment of all sectors of society. This consideration can be said to favour the hybridity arguments of Belloni (2012). Bellon's hybridity refers to the complex interactions and mutual fragmentations between interveners and local societies, identifying how liberal peace is not entirely successful in imposing its agenda. This argument rejects the liberal peace alternative which operates to resolve conflicts from top to bottom but instead advocates a bottom-up approach in line with Chandler's (2010) argument that hybridity is that peace-building approach that could be legitimate if it operates from the bottom-up, considering local customs and culture.

We can conclude here that these conflicts in many cases involve resistance and exclusion, and struggle for identity in socio-economic and cultural engagements. Resolving them therefore needs an encounter with the local, internal and external actors with the calculated intention of co-opting the actors in a mutually beneficial outcome(s) that each party legitimately agrees to as not leading to their marginalization and disintegration.

Apart from this, we recommend a mental and moral rebirth of the followership in Africa. This will ensure the mental and moral liberation of a people that have engraved a slavish mentality that was banqueted to them by the colonialists and reinforced by an unprepared political and economic elite. This liberation will help promote a collective nationalist culture of naming and shaming those leaders who attempt to fragment the people and make them docile. It will promote the need for collective development that will translate into enhancing individual and institutional capacities to mobilise resources towards peaceful coexistence and development.

References

Andrews, J (2022) *The World in Conflict: Understanding the World's Trouble Spots.* The Economist

Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and development in Africa.* Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.

Baum, R.M. (1999) *Shrines of the Slave Trade: Diola Religion and Society in Precolonial Senegambia*. New York: Oxford University Press

Buvé, A, Bishikwabo-Nsarhaza, K, Mutangadura, G (2022) The spread and effect of HIV-1 Infection in Sub-Saharan Africa. *The Lancet Journal*. Vol. 359-9322.

Castells, M. (1997). *The Power of identity.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Canadine, D. (2013). *The Undivided Past: Humanity Beyond Our Differences.* Alfred A. Knoff.

Chan, S. (2023) *African Political Thought: An Intellectual History of the Quest for Freedom*. Hurst & Company.

Clapham (2023). *The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay*. Penguin Books.

Collier, P, Collier, P, Elliott, Hegre, H, Hoeffler,A, Reynal-Querol, Sambanis, N (2003) *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy.* Oxford University Press.

Coser, L (1956) *The Function of Social Conflict in London*. The Free Press

John Tor Tsuwa, 2025, 10(1):1-12

Eugene, A, and Ajeli, F, C (2018) Globalization and Development of Human Condition in Africa. *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development. 1 (2)*

Griller, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Gubler, J. R. and Selway, J. S. (2012). Horizontal Inequality, Crosscutting Cleavages, and Civil War. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 56 Z

Martin, K A. (2001) "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies." *Journal of African History* 42(1)

McGregor (2010). Different Definitions and Forms of Nationalism. Retrieved from https://www.ukessays.com

Mounk, Y (2022) *The Great Experiment: How to Make Diverse Democracies Work.* London. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Negedu, I. and Atabor, A. (2015). Nationalism in Nigeria: A case for patriotic citizenship. *In International Journal of Contemporary Research, 5*(3).

Offiong, E. A (1980) *Imperialism and Dependency*: Enugu. Fourth Dimension.

Olegwu, I. O. and Bala, A. M. (2016). *Ethno-Religious Identity & Indigeneship Question in Nigeria: Challenge for Nation Building,* in Wuam, T and Egwemi, V (eds) Governance and Leadership in Nigeria. Makurdi. Aboki

Ripley, A. (2021). *High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out*. Simon and Schuster.

Rodney, W (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. United Kingdom. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications

Sabarnadze, N. (2010). *Globalization and Nationalism.* Hongrie: Central European. University Press.

Schaefer, R. T. (1993). *Racial and Ethnic Groups*. HarperCollins College Publishers. New York.

Spaulding J. and Beswick S. (2010). *African System of Slavery* (eds). African World Press Inc. Asmara.

Smith, A. (1971). *Theories of Nationalism*. Harper and Row

Tsuwa, J. T (2014) *Understanding Conflict*, in George-Genyi (ed) Introduction to Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution. Makurdi. Gwatex

Tsuwa, J. T. (2023). Killed by the Lines: Interrogating Bloody Conflicts between the Tiv of Central Nigeria and their Neighbours, in *Journal of Peace Studies and Practice.3*(1)

Thomson, A (2005) *An Introduction to African Politics*. London. Routledge

Walter, B. F (2022) *How Civil War Starts and How to End Them*. London. Penguin Books.

Wimmer, A. (2013). *Waves of War: Nationalism, State Formation and Ethnic Exclusion in the Modern World.* Cambridge: University Press.

Yabi, G. O (2023). *The Specter of the Fragmentation of West Africa and the Recolonization of the Sahel*. Watlin, Publishers

Zaato, N.N. (2013). Fukuyana's Man's Desire for Recognition and the Historical Process: A Philosophical Evaluation. In Nwaneogbo, C.J., Omadachi, O. and Tsuwa, J.T. (Eds). *Discourse in governance, democracy and development in contemporary Nigeria.* Abuja: SAP Publishing House.

.