



RESEARCH ARTICLE

POLITICAL PLURALISM AND SUSTAINABLE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA: STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR DRIVING REGIONAL GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

This study interrogates political pluralism as a strategic pathway for sustaining peace and driving long-term growth in Africa. It specifically examines how pluralistic political systems can address the root causes of violent conflicts, including political exclusion, ethnic marginalization, weak institutions, and unequal access to resources, as well as economic, political, social, and religious tensions. This focus is informed by the premise that political pluralism, despite its structural and systemic challenges, has significantly contributed to peace, inclusivity, and social cohesion in many countries across the world, and that Africa should not be an exception. Against this backdrop, the study explores whether pluralism can sustainably resolve conflicts in African states, integrate multiple centres of power, and stimulate regional growth. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative document analysis of unstructured secondary data, employing a non-experimental and non-empirical research design. The analysis is anchored in the structural pluralism theoretical framework, and assumes that inclusive political arrangements enhance legitimacy, foster civic engagement, create sustainable channels for peace, and institutionalize life-long living values that limit the recurrence of conflict. The findings indicate that pluralism constitutes an inclusive political framework with inherent mechanisms, theoretical insights, and practical capacities for resolving domestic, regional, and extra-national conflicts, while simultaneously promoting good governance and economic development. The study further identifies strategic policy options for advancing regional growth in Africa, including the strengthening of democratic institutions, decentralization and power-sharing arrangements, inclusive policymaking and feedback mechanisms, regional peace-building and mediation structures, platforms for active civil society participation and restoration of mass power, institutions of reorientation, dissemination of shared values and ordinate practice of pluralism. The study concludes that political pluralism enhances governance quality, promotes equitable political development, and contributes to a more secure and less conflict-prone society through national integration and sustainable peace-building.

Keywords: Pluralism, political pluralism, conflict resolution, peace building, regional growth, Africa

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

The substance of power cannot be exactly assumed or presumed in absolute terms of exclusive domain. A relationship of power however, can easily be recognized or ascertained in terms of direction and observed effect. The total power of society in fact exists in diverse structures of levels and strata, or what Domhoff (2005) refers to as the “multiple centres of power”. The existence of these multiple centres or diverse structures of power does not foreclose the place of legitimate institution with sovereign capacity to steer and integrate all levels of power into a “functional equilibrium” or stability. The concern of pluralists therefore, particularly the political, is how to harness the potentials of multiple structures of power of society to evolve lifelong living values for all sector development.

The society in this regard through the functional support of structures of power, would enthrone values and ordinate processes for increased citizenry political participation and protection of given mandate, in a culture of fair and periodic power succession. In this way, the various centres of power of society would cooperate to achieve greater and fairer political development requisite for sustainable national development. The understanding is that a virile and stable political system is a salient condition for all sector development, which pluralism seems to provide. The crux of political pluralism in most countries of the world is how to effectively manage these different centres of power for development that would endure and ameliorate lives in the polity. The observation in most countries is that some of these centres of power have degenerated to restiveness, violence, crises, terrorism, militancy and insurgency; and as such, are major threats to development.

Africa is not immune of the above degenerations of the centres of power and their associated vices. Africa continues to face persistent conflicts and governance challenges that undermine peace, development, and regional integration. These conflicts are often driven by political exclusion, ethnic and religious marginalization, weak institutions, and unequal access to resources, resulting in fragile states and recurrent instability. Despite democratic transitions in some African countries, the inability to manage diversity and competing interests inclusively remains a major obstacle to sustainable growth and peace. Political pluralism offers a framework for accommodating diversity through inclusive governance, multiple centres of power, and participatory political institutions.

By providing legitimate channels for representation, dialogue, and negotiation, pluralism can reduce the likelihood of violent conflict and enhance state legitimacy. While pluralistic arrangements have contributed to stability and development in other regions, their application in Africa has produced mixed outcomes, largely due to institutional weaknesses and exclusionary political practices. This study examines political pluralism as a strategic pathway for sustainable conflict resolution and regional growth in Africa. Using a qualitative document-based approach and anchored in the structural pluralism framework, the study explores how inclusive political systems can address the root causes of conflict, strengthen governance, and promote long-term peace and development across the continent.

The enormity and spread of insecurity arising from dissatisfied groups in the society have made the following question pertinent: can African states be able to organize their multiple power centres for inclusive and stable regional growth? Or simply can political pluralism lead to sustainable resolution of conflicts in Africa for regional growth? The objective of this paper therefore is to explore a theoretical perspective to show that political pluralism can lead to sustainable resolution of conflicts



in Africa and offer strategic policy options for inclusive and enduring growth. This it seeks to achieve through clarification of relevant concepts, consideration of theoretical construct of structural pluralism, and relevant analysis of qualitative data. This paper hopes to lend voice and add value to many other scholarly works and views on political pluralism and conflict resolution and regional growth.

2.0 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Clarification of Concepts

The Concept of Pluralism

The concept of pluralism has been viewed in various magnitudes by different social scientists. Russbot (2014), opines that in political philosophy, pluralism is the recognition and affirmation of diversity within a political body, which permits the peaceful co-existence of different interests, convictions and lifestyles. Berlin (2002) in an arch pluralist, believes that pluralism encourages members of society to accommodate their differences by avoiding extremism i.e. adhering solely to one value or refusing to recognize others as legitimate and engage in good faith dialogue. Lijphart, (2012), defines pluralism as “a system in which diverse social groups; such as political parties, ethnic communities, interest groups, and civil society organizations; are recognized as legitimate actors and are able to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes”.

This view of pluralism explains it as an ideology that embraces unity in diversity by integrating different and differing groups towards social cohesion an inclusive participation of humans and non-human entities in the society or state. Kymlick (2015), shares in this view with the understanding that pluralism is “a normative principle that promotes inclusiveness, tolerance, power-sharing, and institutional checks, ensuring that minority interests are protected against domination by majorities or elites”.

There is clear indication that pluralism as a political theory advocates for moderation of discrete values, recognition and an affirmation of diversity within a political system and encourages members of society to accommodate their differences through the avoidance of extremism. This portrays the fact that most Nations of the world are not yet opening up to the true ideas of pluralism as a political philosophy. They are clenching to factionalism which Madison during his reign in America advised against, because it is a clog in the wheels of pluralism. Again, most societies embrace sentimentalism, which also fights against the philosophy of pluralism. Pluralism assures that diversity is beneficial to society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by desperate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations and ethnic minorities.

In essence, the change of mindset and the values attached to any idea or ideas against true pluralism should be relinquished in a political system for optimal National integration, unity and peace in diversity. This position is strongly situated by the contention of Mohammed (2019), while delivering the 2019 Annual Pluralism lecture at Lishon, thus; “pluralism is the only way I believe that we can leave no one behind and effectively address the global challenges we face and further peace and prosperity for everyone”. Beyond Mohammed’s declaration, our conviction is further strengthened by Heywood (2021), submission that, pluralism emphasizes the acceptance of diversity and the belief that political stability and good governance are best achieved when multiple interests are allowed to organize, compete, and influence public policy within democratic rules.



Political Pluralism

Political pluralism signifies an ideology and system of governance and societal organization, which allows power to be reasonably shared or distributed among multiple political groups (parties), institutions, relevant social groups, and not concentrated in a single entity. It equally means a theoretical and practical skill, an idea and a body of knowledge in which diverse entities and actors participate meaningfully in political activities and processes. It is widely associated with the identification, acceptance and integration of diverse groups or entities in the state and society. These groups cover; political parties, interest groups, religious groups, ethnic groups, and civil society groups.

Held (2006), accepts the role of the state as a pluralist political organization to include “an impartial arbiter that balances competing through inclusive institutions, rule of law, and participatory mechanisms”. The implication is that the state serves as an umpire or referee who ensures in political pluralist spirit that no single entity or group hold sway perpetually, within a framework of order. Dahl, Dahl (1982), appreciates the importance of conflict resolution role of political pluralism in achieving legitimacy, stability and good governance, such that “no single group permanently dominates the political process.” political pluralism, therefore, is an ideology and a system of governance in which diverse social groups, entities and interests are legally recognized, politically represented, and allowed to compete peacefully for influence over public policy within a shared constitutional framework (Dahl, 1971; Truman, 1951; Laski, 1917; Held, 2006).

Political pluralism is important because, it leads to improved governance, greater and fairer political development and a more secured world. It favours widely dispersal of power in the society rather than concentrated into few hands. It gives audience to the views of the minority groups and advocates for impartial response to the demands of different popular pressures. That is to say no single group can possibly dominate in the society: hence it encourages popular political participation and gives the people opportunity to contribute to decision making in the society.

Conflict

Conflicts are part of human society as air is inevitable in the existence and sustenance of human life. This means that conflict is inevitable among human collectivities and societies, though not so essential to society as air is to life. The point at issue is that conflict, however ruinous or destructive to society, possesses essential seeds of transformation and development of society if properly managed. Francis (2006), defines it as a situation of hostility, between individuals, groups or states resulting from competition over resources, power or opposing interests in other areas.” Merlijin (2024), defines conflict as collision between people and their truth. The position of this scholar is that conflict is present in a situation of doubt, suspicion or disagreement over what two or more people or groups hold as the true knowledge / information.

Oporum and Dibia (2022:194), extensively explained the implications of proper management or mismanagement of conflict, thus; "Indeed, conflict is a constant variable and a radiant vector of change in any given community where it is managed or resolved. It can be a clog in the wheel of community harmony and progress where it is mismanaged or ignored". The term conflict signifies disharmony, and rivalries of interests, opinions or desires. It suggests the existence of opponents or parties in relation to values in dispute. Where conflict is present there is obvious disagreement,



contests and unhealthy competitions that would if resolved yield peace, cooperation and development. It explains a situation where the individual/ group 'A', holds information "X" as truth, whereas the individual/ group 'B' doubts or disagrees with "X" as true information, rather holds "Y" as the true information indeed the illustrated situation, is a clear case of conflict where "X" and "Y" represent information, knowledge, interests, opinions, desires or values, among others. Wallenstein (2018), presents a broad understanding of conflict, as a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible goals, interests, values, or identities, leading to tension, opposition, or confrontation that may manifest at interpersonal, societal, national, or international levels.

Types of conflicts

Conflicts have been classified into several types properly or otherwise by scholars. The common types of conflicts include;

a. Base conflicts: this is also known as root conflict or causal conflicts. Base conflicts represent those unwholesome attitude, actions, inactions, negligence or non-compromising stance that leads to serious quarrel, misunderstanding; doubt or even breakdown of law and order. For instance, the action of establishing interest groups and political parties or even supervisory market masters in the state can be potent source of conflicts. The same way negligence of feedback elements; public opinion, feelings of sufferings of the people and mass exclusion from programmes of leadership or governance are essential base conflicts

b. Civil Conflicts: these conflicts are the result of interactions of the people in their ordinary socio-political life and free from the interference forces of the government and market institutions/ agencies. Civil conflicts are equally free and not part of military and paramilitary conflict and influences.

c. Statocratic Conflict: these are associated with disturbances, rivalries oppositions or mutiny in the barracks or in the course of functional relationship of the military or paramilitary personnel. Statocratic conflicts are also known as defence or military conflicts.

d. Entropic Conflicts: also called imperative or inherent conflicts. Every human system organization or environment possesses internal contradictions which are inherent and which complex interaction can lead to their destruction or reconstruction. Entropic conflicts are inherent systemic values, interests or traits that cause doubt, oppositions rivalries, competitions and wars in the society or state.

e. Socio-Political Conflicts: Oporum and Dibia (2022), opine that socio-political conflicts are the outcome of the irreconcilable and contradictory values, interests or interactions which are manifest in man's core and flux nature. Man's desire or quest to dominate others but not to be dominated; or to be visibly recognized by others and to vehemently resist being disregarded could be attributed as the root of socio-political conflict. Socio-political conflicts to then, are all manners of divergent interests in the society or community, resulting from interactions of power, status, faith, pecuniary considerations, and of cultural space and traits leading to either hostility or peaceful living (pages; 194-197).

Oporum and Dibia (2022:197) assert that "most conflicts of the society or community are essentially socio-political conflicts, irrespective of their coloration, nomenclature or design". They further defined socio-political conflicts as "all manners of divergent interests in the society or community, resulting from interactions of power, status, faith, pecuniary considerations and of cultural space and



traits, leading to either hostile or peaceful living. We therefore add that; conflict whether socio-political or otherwise is signal to plurality of views, interests, opinions or powers. And where there is multiplicity of groups or power centers, conflict is inevitable, which only credible aspiration is its prevention, management, transformation, mediation or resolution. Resolution is therefore, the ultimately credible and excellent expectation of every conflict situation.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is a process and a method of managing or addressing conflicts so as to prevent their escalation or possible recurrence, to achieve lasting peace and harmony in the society or state. Lederach (1997), believes that conflict resolution involves the use of peaceful mechanisms such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration, dialogue, and institutional reforms to transform destructive conflicts into constructive relationships. Conflict resolution involves the creation of inclusive political and legal frameworks that provide legitimate channels for managing competing interests and grievances without resort to violence (UNDP, 2022). The dimensions of conflict in terms of transformative essence (change) or destructive tendency (damage), should be a measure of extent of its resolution.

Forsyth and Donelson (2009), define. conflict resolution in terms of conflict reconciliation, and presented as the methods, and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. Adam and Carton (2009: ed.), contend that conflict resolution is a term interchangeably used with dispute resolution where arbitration and litigation processes are critically involved. It is equally their opinion that conflict resolution can be thought to encompass the use of non-violent resistant measures by conflicting parties in an attempt to promote effective resolution. We believe that conflict resolution involves a systematic framework, methods, strategies, processes and a set of skills employed to build peace, discontinue rivalries, demobilize or disarm armed groups and strengthen ties and bonds in the social relationship of man.

Conflict resolution creates harmony through concerted action among different centres of power Goldfien and Robbenolt (2007) identified five conflict resolution strategies, to include.

- a. Conflict Avoidance: conscious effort to ignore or avoid confronting high conflict situations to check their escalation.
- b. Conflict Yielding: this entails conflict accommodating style that shows high level of concern or regard for others and less concern or regard for oneself, in order to maintain healthy social relationship.
- c. Conflict competitiveness: this is also known as the conflict fighting strategy. It is competitive power tactics that promotes individual firmness and action and undermine the action of others through obvious intimidation strategies.
- d. Conflict cooperation: this involves the use of interpersonal relationship, communication and collaboration to find a lasting solution that will favourably satisfy all the parties or groups involved in the dispute or conflicts. This strategy of resolving conflicts is considered the most effective, and result oriented, and most likely to bring a happy ending to conflict situation, in a way that all stakeholders will appreciate.



e. Conflict Reconciliation: places high premium on compromise and forbearance to resolve disputes. Parties in conflict will be ready to make sacrifices shift grounds to accommodate the interest and position of others so that peace shall reign, even in their state or condition of losses and unhappiness.

Peacebuilding

Peace building is obviously not the same as peacemaking and not peacekeeping. Peace building is the process of establishing durable peace by addressing the underlying drivers of violence, rebuilding effective governance institutions, and promoting social trust in post-conflict societies (Barnett et al., 2007). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), explains peacebuilding as actions undertaken to prevent violent conflict and sustain peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and supporting inclusive political processes, economic recovery, and social cohesion (OECD, 2011). The OECD's view, understands peacebuilding basically as a process of prevention of violent conflict, sustenance of peace and support of inclusive systems by addressing the root causes of conflicts. According to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, peacebuilding consists of actions taken to identify and support structures that will strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict after peace agreements have been reached (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

Boutros-Ghali's definition, which emphasized on creation of solid structures to strengthen peace so as to avoid its degeneration to conflict, was latter expanded by the United Nations Organization in 2007, to include strengthening peace processes, actions and measures for sustainability and development The United Nations defines peacebuilding as a range of measures undertaken to reduce the risk of relapse into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management and by laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development (United Nations, 2007). Ultimately, whereas peacemaking (involves ending violence) and peacekeeping (involves maintaining ceasefires), peacebuilding involves measures to remove the structural conditions—such as injustice, inequality, exclusion, and weak institutions; that generate conflict (Johan Galtung, 1976).

Regional Growth

A region represents a sub-national group of component units or entities sharing similar historical and cultural identity within a sovereign national territory, or a group of sovereign nations interacting within a continental or sub-continental spaces. Regional growth, as a concept is a condition of sustained improvement in the standard of living and environmental wellbeing of a given region, essentially marked by vigorous expansion of production capacity, strengthened institutions of service delivery, and enhanced structures of equitable welfare. Todaro and Smith (2020), define the term, simply as the process through which regions improve their social and economic structures, reduce poverty, and enhance human development through investment in education, health, and institutions.

According to OECD (2009), regional growth is “the outcome of deliberate public and private actions aimed at promoting balanced territorial development, reducing regional disparities, and strengthening regional competitiveness”. The implication of this definition is that regional growth remains a product of qualitative policy making and implementation mechanisms, with inputs from public and private policy environments. The World Bank's explanation of the term is an emphasis on interdependence and cooperation, through a significant policy and economic interaction; regional growth denotes collective economic and developmental advancement among neighboring states achieved through cooperation, trade integration, shared infrastructure, and coordinated policies (World Bank, 2020).



The indicators of regional growth include; (i) Economic viability through massive production capacity, equitable resource distribution, consumption and robust investment (ii) Sustainable dividends of governance and inclusive allocation of political values (iii) Qualitative conflict management, peacebuilding and policy making mechanisms (iv) Strong institutions, strong state entities and liberated mass power over strong individuals and groups (v) Credible regional security architecture (vi) Strong regional voice and influence over global affairs. The focus region in this regard is Africa, as constituted by its territorial nations, institutions and relevant power centres.

Africa

Africa is one of the world's known continents, that is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, which separates it from Europe and the Red Sea, that separates it from Middle East. It is widely accepted to lie at the center of the world's landmasses, spanning both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres as well as the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Africa is located within a comfort zone, of broad range of climatic features which permit the Equator, Tropic of Cancer, and Tropic of Capricorn pass through it, (De Blij & Muller, 2014; Knox & Marston, 2016). The continent is home to not less than 54 sovereign nations with very rich and diverse social, economic, cultural and political history. Africa is the second largest continent in the world, after Asia which is the largest. Africa has also, estimated 30% of the Global Industrial Raw Material Reserves, and estimated 3% of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP), based on IMF/World Bank figures for 2025.

This exactly situates Africa as a land of ironical jeopardy, dwelling in rich and huge resources, but abysmally wallows in abject poverty, inequality, dependency, underdevelopment and prolonged inter-cum intra- state conflicts, due to bad leadership. Africa is equally reputed for being home to the earth's cradle of human civilization with very remarkable political, economic, cultural and historical identity. Walter Rodney was right in his argument as contained in the book; *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*; with the assertion that the continent's historical trajectory was profoundly altered by slavery, colonialism, and imperial domination, which reshaped its political boundaries and socio-economic structures (Rodney, 1972). Ake (1996), shared the view of Rodney (1972), with the submission that "the legacy of colonial rule, including artificial borders and centralized state structures, continues to influence political instability, conflicts, and struggles for democratic consolidation".

Africa has rich ideological heritage that is rooted in Pan-Africanism, which, Adi and Sherwood (2003), define as "a unifying ideological framework emphasizing shared identity, solidarity, and collective self-reliance among Africans and peoples of African descent". This ideology is applied through the functional provisions of certain organizations and institutions like the Organization of Africa's Unity, (OAU), which later became the African Union (AU), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), African High Command, and African Parliament among other sub-regional blocs, organizations and institutions. It is based on this reality of conceptualization of Africa, that we accept the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 2019), position that Africa has prospects for transformation through improved governance, regional integration, peacebuilding, and sustainable development strategies. The continent therefore, has numerous institutions, structures or power centres for resolution of conflicts.



2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of structural pluralism is adopted in this paper to examine pluralism and **sustainable** development. Structural pluralism as explained by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) cited in De Lisel (2006) is the degree of differentiation in the social system along institutional and specialized interest group lines, in a way that determines the potential sources of organized social power. Structural pluralism is what makes civil communities a unique form of civil society (Morton 2000). The assumptions of structural pluralism include (a) Power in human society is diversely distributed, dynamic and significantly competitive, hence not concentrated in a single entity or power centre (b) Profoundly organized multiple groups deeply influence decision making, processes and actions through inclusive structures (c) Conflicts are part of human society, it is inevitable, and however ruinous or destructive to society, possesses essential seeds of transformation and development (d) Groups are core and basic actors in all political interactions and processes, hence agreements among and within groups leads to stability and development (e) Plural institutions or structures promotes social cohesion, group interests and popular participation (f) A plural framework is very able to resolve conflicts and disagreements involving individuals and groups in the society.

This theory explains the way societies are structured. It represents the comprehensiveness in which a community integrates with structures that allow minority opinions to be heard when addressing community problems. Communities, however, are explained in ways of having common institutions like Political bodies, economic, educational and religious institutions and how equality and tolerance amongst varying groups could help in maintaining social order in the community. This paper invariably sticks on this notion and advocates for accommodation and tolerance of different units and values, which promotes unity, consolidation, progress and democratic governance of society for sustainable growth.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, which utilized a non-experimental and non-empirical research design. It relied on unstructured secondary data obtained from scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and reports of relevant international and regional institutions. Data were collected through documentary analysis, that focused on issues of political pluralism, power distribution, conflict dynamics, peace-building mechanisms, and regional development in Africa. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content and thematic analysis, through which recurring patterns and ideas relating to political inclusion, institutional legitimacy, conflict resolution, and governance were systematically examined and interpreted.

The study is anchored in the structural pluralism theoretical framework, which emphasizes the existence of multiple centres of power within society and the need for inclusive institutional arrangements to integrate these power structures into a functional equilibrium. The framework provided the analytical basis for explaining how pluralistic political systems can enhance legitimacy, reduce conflict, promote sustainable peace, and stimulate regional growth in Africa. The aim of this methodology is not to achieve generalizeable knowledge through empiricism, but to add to, or arrive at valid knowledge through value judgment.



4.0. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

4.1. Political Pluralism and Sustainable Resolution of Conflicts in Africa

Political pluralism represents a system and framework of governance in which diverse social groups, interests, and identities are legally recognized and politically permitted to compete peacefully for voice and influence within a shared constitutional order. It is widely acknowledged as an important theoretical and practical tool for sustainable conflict resolution. This is because pluralism is anchored on the assumption that diversity is not a threat to stability but an essential catalyst for social, political, and economic development. It further assumes that groups and multiple power centres require reasonable autonomy in decision-making to promote integration, cooperation, and harmony.

By promoting inclusivity within diversity, pluralism ensures peaceful coexistence among groups within the state. Africa naturally reflects these structural values of pluralism through its political, ethnic, religious, regional, and ideological diversity. When effectively managed, this diversity can serve as a pathway for conflict management and sustainable regional growth. The central issue, however, is that pluralism emphasizes political inclusion rather than exclusion. Many of Africa's persistent conflicts are rooted in political marginalization, unequal access to resources, and relative deprivation. Political pluralism seeks to redress these challenges by opening political space and transforming grievances into dialogue, and competition into peaceful participation.

Pluralism also promotes conflict management, transformation, and peacebuilding through the meaningful involvement of diverse institutional actors and multiple centres of power. These include state institutions such as the executive, legislature, and judiciary; traditional authorities; ethnic and communal structures; religious institutions; political parties; civil society organizations; economic actors; and regional and continental bodies such as the African Union, ECOWAS, SADC, and AfCFTA. Through these platforms, pluralism enhances consultation, negotiation, mediation, and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, thereby strengthening institutional capacity for sustainable peace.

Essentially, political pluralism encourages power negotiation, equitable distribution, and decentralization, particularly within Africa's multi-ethnic societies. Inclusive power-sharing frameworks reduce domination by single groups, discourage monopolization of political and economic resources, and promote healthy competition. These processes enhance legitimacy, recognition, and acceptance of diverse interests, while building public trust in governance systems. Effective communication, dialogue, and negotiation mechanisms are strengthened, enabling sustainable conflict resolution and regional cooperation. Increased integration and mutual engagement among African states help reduce fear, hostility, and rivalry—conditions necessary for long-term growth and social progress.

Supporting this view, the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed, emphasizes that for pluralism to advance sustainable development, a fundamental paradigm shift is required. This includes moving away from accumulation by a few toward interdependence among people and the environment; replacing zero-sum policy approaches with mutual gains; and redefining security away from militarization toward resilient societies based on mutual respect (Annual Pluralism Lecture, 2019, Lisbon). These principles align closely with Africa's need for inclusive



governance and cooperative development frameworks. Reidy (2001) similarly argues that liberal and plural political systems can adequately address the complex relationships between group membership, identity, and self-understanding without requiring radical transformation or social disintegration. The sustainability of pluralism depends on recognizing diversity as a source of collective strength when properly protected and moderated through democracy and good governance. In this context, discrete values must be balanced rather than suppressed.

The World Bank (2015) defines sustainable development as growth that is inclusive and environmentally sound, capable of reducing poverty while meeting present needs without compromising future generations. Political pluralism supports this goal through adherence to core pluralist conditions—equality, accommodation of differences, moderation of competing values, and inclusive participation. These principles promote unity in diversity, nation-building, and the development of political systems that ensure both present stability and future resilience. Nevertheless, ethnic diversity may constitute an impediment to pluralism if not carefully managed. Kekes' (1993) theory of pluralism, as cited by the Centre for International Forestry Research (2005), identifies six elements relevant to conflict resolution.

He argues that moral progress occurs in societies that encourage plural values, acknowledging that conflicts among values are inevitable because not all choices can be realized simultaneously. Economic growth, for example, may conflict with social order, making value comparison difficult. However, such conflicts can be resolved by appealing to shared interests and collective aspirations for well-being (Wollenberg, Anderson & Lopez, 2005). This reinforces the idea that pluralism is viable only where political systems allow multiple autonomous actors to legally express divergent interests and perspectives.

In practical conflict resolution, pluralism emphasizes inclusive representation of stakeholders, recognition of diverse opinions, negotiated compromises, and mutually accepted pathways to peace. It promotes healing through equality of rights, reconciliation, and institutional justice. Pluralists employ tools such as conflict identification, mapping, dialogue, negotiation, and problem-solving approaches to reconcile aggrieved groups and build durable peace structures. Despite its strengths, several socio-political constraints hinder the effective application of pluralist frameworks in Africa. Many states suffer from underdeveloped and politicized institutions, elite-captured governance structures, weak sovereignty, and fragile legitimacy. These conditions produce inconsistent rule enforcement, unequal resource distribution, limited citizen participation, and declining public trust.

Additional challenges include centralized post-colonial state systems, weak conflict-prevention mechanisms, rising insecurity, proliferation of armed non-state actors, poor pluralist governance culture, and negative political mind-sets toward inclusion. These constraints undermine coordination among multiple power centres and weaken mediation capacity, thereby limiting the ability of pluralism to deliver sustainable conflict resolution and regional growth. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate institutional reforms, inclusive political participation, strengthened peacebuilding mechanisms, and a renewed commitment to pluralist governance as a foundation for stability and development in Africa.



4.2. How African States Can Achieve Stable Regional Growth by Resolving Conflicts through political Pluralist Frameworks

African states are characterized by real and sustained diversity. This social condition manifests in the forms of serious political, ethnic, religious, and economic differences. The outcome of which is the existence of multiple centres of power within and across societies. While these plural power structures have often been associated with political instability and conflict, they can also become strong foundations for inclusive and sustainable regional growth if properly organized. The continent can achieve regional growth by sustainable resolution of conflicts through pluralist frameworks that promote political inclusion, institutional legitimacy, and peaceful competition among diverse social groups. This feat is possible as we demonstrate herewith.

Inclusive Citizen Political Engagement and Participation, reduces violent conflict significantly, by giving ethnic, religious, and regional groups legitimate avenues to pursue interests through dialogue rather than violence. Where pluralist institutions are functional, grievances are more likely to be negotiated peacefully, creating a stable environment necessary for investment, trade, and economic expansion (Lijphart, 1999; Stewart, 2010). Recognizing the legitimacy of diverse social groups, traditional authorities, civil society organizations, and political actors fosters harmony, coexistence and national cohesion.

Again, African states need Proactive Pluralist Governance Structures (PPGS), which strengthen state legitimacy and institutional trust. It is also essential for post-conflict recovery, peaceful expression of competing interests and sustainable growth. When institutions are perceived as fair and representative, citizens are more willing to comply with laws, pay taxes, and support development policies. Achieving this requires a shift from centralized-authoritarian domination to cooperative and inclusive governance, through effective coordination of relevant stake-holding power centres or groups.

African States should embrace Equitable Resource Distribution through Intensive Regional Integration and Development Programmes (IRIDP), both of which are critical for regional growth. Many African conflicts are rooted in unequal access to natural and unnatural resources (such as; land-mineral and industrial resources), including power resources. Little wonder why the former Commonwealth Secretary General, Emeka Anyaoku expressed in a speech titled “Democracy in Africa”: The challenges and the opportunities that democracy can help to prevent or eliminate divisive pluralism. He further expounds that every African nation is a multi-ethnic nation, which can be a source of strength if it is protected in the right way.

Pluralism could be sustained, if adequate arrangement and provision could be made for power-sharing in the constitution in a manner that no ethnic group can feel permanently excluded from government. Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (2008) suggests that there should be a complete overhaul of electoral system, which has proved, thus far, incapable of producing governments that are prepared and are able to address the roots of the social inequalities that have kept the majority of the populace excluded and in poverty. The implication is that the region should urgently embrace joint and integrated development policy formulation, planning and implementation through the political pluralist frameworks. Some pluralist scholars, have strongly supported this position. Boone, (2014), assumes that pluralist decision-making allows competing interests to be balanced transparently, reducing zero-sum politics and fostering cooperative economic



policy, across the expanse of their regions and borders. This creates conditions for effective regional integration through bodies such as African Union (AU), (AfCFTA), ASEAN, ECOWAS, and SADC, among others.

Institutionalized Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building Mechanisms, are very pertinent for peaceful co-existence and long-term stability. Early warning systems, mediation platforms, qualitative dialogue and effective feedback structures, help manage tensions before they escalate. Peace building should be preventive and should involve long- lasting confidence-sustaining beams, within governance structures rather than reactive actions. Conflict prevention and peace building structures, processes and strategies should be etched in strong institutions, as widely speculated; “that strong institutions reduce the likelihood of conflict relapse and enable regions to channel resources toward infrastructure, education, and productive sectors rather than security expenditures”.

Peace building through pluralism enhances cross-border cooperation, which is vital for regional growth. Peaceful relations enable the development of shared infrastructure, trade corridors, energy projects, and labor mobility. The African Union’s emphasis on “African solutions to African problems” reflects a pluralist norm of collective security and cooperative governance aimed at linking peace, democracy, and development (North, Wallis & Weingast, 2009; Murithi, 2015).

Ultimately, a Conscious Mindset-Reset is Inevitable for Sustainable Resolution of Conflicts in Africa, via Pluralism. The pluralist model advocates for solution that reflects the peculiarity of the conflict environment by situating inputs and values of different groups and multiple power centres. It calls for practice of pluralism, through change of mindset that will be rooted in living conscience, responsive service, probity and accountability, as well as to abdicate all negative mannerisms to the practice of pluralism. This involves rejecting gratuitous attachment of values to ideas, which are harmful to genuine effort towards national integration for sustainable regional development. This will enable Africans to clearly understand the problems of Africa, much more than they do presently, so as to think Africa, live African and experience wellbeing in Africa. In this way, Africa can enjoy the pluralists’ advocacy of lifelong living values, improved governance, greater and fairer political development and more secured world, through national integration of component states in the region. This position is supported by the submission of Mohammed (2019), that pluralism is core to realizing the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Illustratively, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission remarkably utilized the pluralist strategies to resolve the apartheid conflict in 1995 with lasting peace. The pluralist strategy in this regard, uncovered the truth, identified human rights abuses/abusers, granted amnesty to human right violators and provided reparations to victims of human right abuses. The outcome of this pluralist approach was sustainable peace in view of South Africa that focused on mutually assured gain.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study examined political pluralism as a strategic framework for achieving the sustainable resolution of conflicts in Africa and advancing inclusive regional growth. The analysis established that many violent conflicts on the continent are rooted in political exclusion, weak institutions,



inequitable resource distribution, identity marginalization, and centralized state structures inherited from the colonial era. These conditions have continued to undermine national stability and regional integration. It argued that political pluralism offers a viable and contextually appropriate pathway for managing Africa's deep social diversity. By legally recognizing multiple power centres and providing institutional mechanisms for representation, dialogue, and peaceful competition, pluralism reduces the zero-sum nature of political contestation. When effectively practiced, it strengthens state legitimacy, enhances social cohesion, and transforms conflict from violent confrontation into institutional negotiation.

The study held that Political pluralism despite challenges is indeed vital to sustainable resolution of conflicts among African states and the global new states. This is so because the power of society can no longer be domiciled in a definite personnel, institution or authority, and no individual or group can ever have a quantum preserve of it. Multiplicity of power which it embodies is a synergy of values integrating, rather than dividing all social forces, positions and actions within and among nations towards improved lifelong living experiences and structures of governance. In the sense that the "degree of differentiation in the political system" has made modern nations very unique in discovering potential sources or knowledge of organizing man, material and institution of society, through the conditioning factors of equality, moderation of discrete values, accommodation of differences, healthy competition, consensus and mutual respect.

Furthermore, the study finds that sustainable peace is inseparable from social progress or growth. Stable political systems grounded in pluralist principles create an enabling environment for economic cooperation, regional integration, investment, and the effective functioning of continental frameworks such as the African Union and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). However, political pluralism can only achieve these outcomes when supported by strong institutions, accountable leadership, inclusive economic governance, and consistent implementation.

Conclusively, Africa's diversity is not the fundamental cause of conflict; rather, the failure to manage diversity through inclusive political systems remains the core challenge. Political pluralism, when deeply institutionalized, provides a durable foundation for peace building and long-term regional growth across the continent.

5.2. Recommendation

This paper, thus proposed the need to abdicate negative mannerism to the practice of pluralism, through change of mindset, to enhance sustainable resolution of conflicts among African States for regional growth. It is our position therefore, that pluralism leads to ultimate lifelong living values, improved governance, greater and fairer political development and more secured world, through inclusive political systems. Below are the summary points of the recommendation of this paper. African states should adopt

- 1 Conscience-driven mannerism in the practice of pluralism
- 2 Institutionalized conflict prevention and peace-building mechanisms,
- 3 Equitable resource distribution through intensive regional integration and development programmes



415

- 4 Inclusive Citizen Political Engagement and Participation,
5. Strong states, institutions and people as against strong individuals and groups.
- 6 Strong regional and continental organizations and institutions
- 7 Transparent and accountable Regional Development policy making, Planning and implementation

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.

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416



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