

# **West Africa's Trouble Spots and the Imperative for Peace-Building**

**Osita Agbu**

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### **Monograph Series**

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To Isaac Nwakor Agbu  
For leaving us with a legacy of simplicity and thirst for knowledge



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# List of Abbreviations

AAFC	Allied Armed Forces of the Community
ACRI	African Crisis Response Initiative
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFRC	Armed Forces Ruling Council
ANAD	<i>Accord de Non Agression et d'Assistance en matière de Défense</i>
APC	Arewa Peoples Congress
AU	African Union
CAP	Children Assistance Programme
CEAO	<i>Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest</i>
CNE	<i>Commission Nationale Electorale</i>
CNSP	<i>Comité National du Salut Public</i>
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
COMANET	Conflict Management Network
CPLP	<i>Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa</i>
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
EWARNET	Early Warning Network
FPI	<i>Front Populaire Ivoirien</i>
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
IRCSL	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MFDC	<i>Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance</i>
MISAB	Inter-African Stabilization Mission in Bangui
MODEL	Mandingo Organised for Democracy in Liberia (Movement for Democracy in Liberia)
MPCI	<i>Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire</i>
MPIGO	<i>Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest</i>
MRU	Mano River Union
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontiers

NCCP	National Co-ordinating Committee for Peace
NIIA	Nigerian Institute of International Affairs
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ONUSAL	UN Observer Group to El Salvador
OPC	Oodua Peoples Congress
PCASED	Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development
PDCI	<i>Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire</i>
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PMAD	Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence
PRONACO	Pro-National Conference Organization
PSO	Peace Support Operations
PSR	Party for Social Renewal
RDR	<i>Rassemblement des Républicains</i>
RECAMP	Reinforcement of African Capacity for Peace-Keeping
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLPP	Sierra Leone Peoples Party
SLWMP	Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace
SNC	Sovereign National Conference
ULIMO	United Liberian Movement for Democracy in Liberia
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
UNOGBIS	United Nations Peace Building Office in Guinea
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WILPF	Women International League for Peace and Freetown
WMP	Women's Movement for Peace
WOMEN	Women Organised for a Morally Enlightened Nation



# Foreword

This work is a comprehensive examination of the state of conflicts and the post-conflict environment in West Africa. It is outstanding in its analysis of the causes and interconnection between conflicts in the various trouble spots in the region. The monograph deals with the challenges of peace-building and is refreshing in its prescription of the need to effectively move away from traditional peacekeeping to the more durable peace-building strategy as the long-term solution for regional conflicts.

The study should be appreciated against the background of numerous conflicts of low-intensity and deadly dimensions going on in Africa. In West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, Guinea Bissau and Mauritania have the potential for violent crises and recurring conflicts and even wars. The failure of post-conflict resolution mechanisms makes it imperative to give serious thought to Osita Agbu's case in favour of regional peace-building as a sustainable solution to the conflicts in the West African region. I consider this monograph a major contribution to the literature on post-conflict peace-building. It is highly recommended as a worthy source of information.

Professor Adebayo Olukoshi  
Executive Secretary  
CODESRIA

# Preface and Acknowledgement

This monograph is written with the intention to highlight the necessity for taking preventive measures in the form of peace-building as a sustainable and long-term solution to conflicts in the West African sub-region, with a special focus on the Mano River Union countries. Apart from the Mano River Union countries, efforts at resolving other conflicts in say, Guinea Bissau, Senegal/Casamance, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria have suffered from a lack of attention on the post-conflict imperatives of building peace in order to ensure that sustainable peace is achieved. Given the often intractable and inter-related nature of conflicts in this region, I argue for the need to revisit the existing mechanisms of conflict resolution in the sub-region with a view to canvassing a stronger case for stakeholders towards adopting the peace-building strategy as a more practical and sustainable way of avoiding wars in the sub-region.

Whether in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire or in Nigeria people desire long-lasting peace without which even minimal development is impossible. As conceptualised and presented in detail in this book, peace-building in consonance with its infrastructure is a more sustainable approach to ensuring regional peace and stability and, therefore, ensuring development for the peoples of West Africa.

I am greatly indebted to many who have contributed to what is written in this book: - scholars, statesmen, activists, libraries and Non-governmental organisations. In particular, I wish to acknowledge Ebrima Sall and other scholars at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala; and my colleagues at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos, in particular Cyril Obi, Charles Dokubo and S.B. Peters. I also, extend my appreciation to the two assessors who went through the manuscript for their incisive suggestions. Their comments went a long way in improving the quality of this book. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the financial contributions of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Senegal and the NIIA, Lagos for ensuring that this project is completed.

Osita Agbu  
February 2005

## Introduction

The various low-intensity and deadly conflicts going on in Africa have serious implications for development and it is imperative that long lasting solutions are sought. Given that these conflicts raged on and off for many years in the West African sub-region, for example in Liberia, Sierra Leone and in the Casamance region of Senegal, it is time for African leaders and various stakeholders to begin designing sustainable solutions to these conflicts. It is to the Mano River Union (MRU) that this enquiry principally focuses on, though other parts of West Africa with long-standing or recurrent conflicts are also examined. The MRU was established in 1973 with the objective of achieving economic integration amongst the member countries of the Union. The Union aimed to establish a customs union amongst the member states, but, rather than achieving this aim, it has been bedevilled by intractable conflicts beginning from the early 1990s. Perhaps it is time to consider a long term solution to the situation, by designing peace-building initiatives and implementing these in a collaborative manner.

In West Africa, there have been alarming incidences of medium and high intensity conflicts with the attendant consequences of deaths, instability, displacements and refugees. This situation has given rise to serious breakdown of law and order in many societies, bringing in its wake immense insecurity and human suffering of grave dimensions, especially in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and even in Côte d'Ivoire. The fairly common view of many statesmen and scholars especially in the west, of cases of virtual state collapse and incapacity to engender development in Africa require that serious attention be focused on how to permanently address the incessant and unending civil wars in the sub-region as the situation has contributed significantly to Africa's inability to really embark on the path of development.

West Africa is indeed quite varied in terms of the political composition of countries in the sub-region. Note for instance, the differences in size, the differences in colonially inherited languages and norms, in levels of economic endowment and development, and the diversity of external linkages<sup>1</sup>. There are sixteen countries in West Africa, while nine are collectively referred to as Franco-phone; five are Anglophone and two Lusophone. However, Mauritania pulled out of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the umbrella economic and political organization in the sub-region leaving fifteen countries. Such a mixture of colonial tutelage and experiences led to a situation in which diverse regional multilateral co-operation arrangements and institutions emerged after the independence period of the 1960s. The problem this has created in recent times is the difficulty of co-ordinating peace efforts and regional corporation in the region. The existing conflicts with roots in a multiplicity of factors- historical, political, economic as well as ecological/ environmental and ethnic/communal create and recreate contradictions and cleavages that have simply refused to recede or abate.

The 'Post-cold war' transition period has been significantly characterised by the drive towards democratisation on the one hand, and the re-emergence of ethnic nationalism on the other. Both of which have contributed significantly to exacerbating some of the low-intensity conflicts in the region, an example of which is the Nigerian case. This is neither to say that democracy is undesirable nor a justifiable end in itself.<sup>2</sup> Since the end of the cold war, conflicts have been increasingly intra-state rather than inter-state in nature. Oftentimes, these conflicts involve a very high level of brutality, mostly against civilians, and often by both conventional and unconventional forces, and methods.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes these conflicts spill across national borders, either in the form of combatants exporting the wars, or refugees seeking safe havens outside the theatre of war thus leading to sub-regional insecurity and, therefore demanding a sub- regional resolution effort rather than just a national solution. It is significant to note that of 82 medium to high intensity conflicts between 1992 and 1995 which involved the loss of at least 1000 lives, all but three were intra-state conflicts or civil wars.<sup>4</sup> Also, of a hundred armed conflicts around the world between 1990 and the year 2000, all but six occurred within states.<sup>5</sup>

There is little doubt that democratisation has in recent times created new opportunities as well as new uncertainties. These uncertainties have sometimes led to serious disputes. In some instances, like in Nigeria, democracy and democratisation have instead of releasing the necessary energies for development and the strengthening of the polity, resulted in a rather unbridled display of ethnic identity struggles. These struggles include jostling for ethnic

advantages in accessing political offices as well as resource control rights. It is therefore, instructive to observe the relationship between democratisation and the increase in agitations for resource control. As expected, and in line with what has been observed elsewhere, namely in Ghana and Sierra Leone, these agitations have led to low-intensity conflicts, especially in Nigeria's Niger Delta area. Further, most of the wars in Africa have been fought over or are being fought over the control of mineral wealth like the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The implication of this is that the Post-colonial state in Africa is seen as being increasingly attractive as a source of 'mining' public resources. It also means that these conflicts tend to quickly exacerbate affecting civilian populations in ways that were not so before. As Hyden<sup>6</sup> noted, African conflicts are typically over resources rather than identity; they are usually triggered off by competitive politics associated with the election systems but invariably take on cultural and ethnic dimensions.

Though, various methods of conflict management and resolution, both formal and informal have been used in trying to resolve some of Africa's intractable conflicts, the results have not been satisfactory. Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remain cases in point. Instead of the conflicts being finally resolved what is often more common is some kind of resurgence. This means that there maybe something wrong with the approaches so far applied in addressing these conflicts. This is not, however, to ignore the fact that the particular forms of tensions generated by 'new wars' and their specific characteristics may also have made resolution difficult. By 'new wars', we mean wars like the Sierra Leone civil war, where conflicts are characterized by struggles between armed factions that contend for resources amidst the collapse of state institutions, rather than mass-based political movements that fight to promote particular visions or ideologies. Recognising the apparent shortcomings in the conflict resolution efforts, the United Nations has in recent times resorted to the use of Peace Support Operations (PSOs) in instances where this is applicable. Even at this, since 1995 only three UN PSOs have been mandated in contrast to over forty years of the use of interpositioning logic as the mode of peacekeeping,<sup>7</sup> i.e. deploying UN peacekeepers between the conflicting parties in order to achieve a cease-fire, after which further negotiations for settlement continue. Generally recognised therefore, is the need for the longer-term task of reconstruction and reconciliation, sometimes referred to as peace-building as an alternative strategy both for addressing the post-war demands of conflicts and building a basis for containing future conflicts. Here, there is logically the necessity for ensuring human security which is very

important considering the weak nature of political and economic institutions in Africa.<sup>8</sup> There is indeed growing consensus that a regional approach to seeking solutions to the kinds of conflicts that exist in Africa will be a more effective and sustainable strategy. This is in tandem with the observation by Adeniji,<sup>9</sup> that global security in the Post-war world compels each state to conceive its security and stability as being closely linked with those of its neighbours. In fact, Barry Buzan originally presented this perspective as 'security complexes'. This now leads us towards presenting a theoretical foundation for the idea being canvassed in this study. And this is the idea of managing conflicts in the West African sub-region through a focus on regional peace-building measures. By sub-region, is meant a focus on the geographical space known as West Africa, that is characterized by interactions between various actors and institutions. A key feature here being the cooperation between the states in the territory.

Barry Buzan introduced a discourse on the security concept in *People, States and Fear*<sup>10</sup> where he problematized both the realist and liberal approaches to understanding security. For him, as a system model, the balance of power theory offers no more enlightenment on national security problem than do other power structure models. He argues for a perspective on security that goes beyond the questions of power and peace. In extending the discussion on security, Buzan argues that the security concept itself provides an important analytical approach to the understanding of behaviour. Accordingly, Buzan defines the security complex as a group of states whose primary security concerns are linked together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another.<sup>11</sup> The mutual feeling of a high level of threat among two or more states in a region is the key factor in motivating a collective action. This idea of the security complex was further developed by Barry Buzan, Jaap de Wilde and Ole Weaver in 'Security: a New framework for Analysis, with the introduction of a sectoral perspective to the security complex theory'. In elaborating a sector approach to security, Barry Buzan et al. sees security as consisting of five sectors: military, political, societal, economic, and ecological.<sup>12</sup>

In explicating the security complex theory, Buzan cited the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, pointing out that South Asia as a whole provides a relatively clear example of an important, middle level security by complex. He observes that what binds the South Asian security complex together is the dominant role of local issues and relations in defining the national security priorities of the states within it. For Buzan, security complexes are a typical product of an anarchic international structure, which closely reflects the operating environment of national security policy-makers than do higher-level

abstractions about the distribution of power in the system. In his understanding, almost every country will be able to relate its security perspectives to one or more complexes. Hence, the concept provides a useful tool for organising patterns of relations, and for arranging them into lateral and hierarchical categories.<sup>13</sup>

Analytically, security complexes offer an approach to security, which requires attention to both the macro-level of great power impact on the system, and the micro-level of local state relations. In drawing attention to both levels, security complexes emphasize the mutuality of impact between them, with external influences tending to amplify local problems, and local problems shaping and constraining external entanglements and influences.<sup>14</sup> Generally, security complexes can be used as either static or a dynamic mode of analysis. As a static framework, the idea generates a perspective and a set of questions that can be applied to any situational analysis. As a dynamic framework, security complexes offer a class of durable entities whose patterns and processes of evolution are of as much theoretical, and perhaps more practical interest as those of the power structures of the system as a whole.<sup>15</sup> It is from this angle that this study extrapolates from the basic features of security complexes in applying its analytical usefulness to exploring possibilities of enhancing human security through regional peace-building in the mode of 'security community'<sup>15</sup> rather than just state-centered measures at peace-building.

It is in this light that a reconceptualization of African security away from the usual focus on state control or preoccupation with regime stability is fundamental. This re-focusing could greatly reduce citizen alienation from the state while creating a benign attitude to social and political development. Hence, the alternative strategy to addressing conflicts in Africa is to focus as much as possible on preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-building. Peace-building invariably becomes a mechanism for achieving human security in an environment that is bedevilled by insecurity as a result of unmitigated conflicts.

Generally, peace-building as a strategy is all-embracing and leaves little room for the exclusion of parties or interests to conflicts,<sup>16</sup> the proposition being that there is the need for any conflict resolution mechanism to focus more on post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation and peace-building, which no doubt has a long-term impact. The expectation is that this process will develop simultaneously a culture of peace as opposed to that of aggression and violence in the West African sub-region. Peace-building, which entails thinking positively about conflicts and consciously building peace or harmony, is basically peace in action. It has been described as the power generated by the interactive triangle of peace, development and democracy.<sup>17</sup> It highlights and

assists people to be able to live together. In this wise, focus on post-conflict rehabilitation, democracy and growth of civil society institutions, demilitarisation and rehabilitation, peace education and a myriad of other short and long-term measures become imperative.

## **Review of the Causes and Nature of Conflicts in Africa**

Generally, scholars agree that conflict represents part of the inevitable dynamics of human relations.<sup>18</sup> According to Imobighe,<sup>19</sup> to satisfy their needs, human beings must of necessity interact with, and in the process make demands on their environment, their society and fellow human beings. In the process of such interactions, conflict could arise due to the incompatibility of the goals they pursue, or incompatibility of the means they use in pursuing their chosen goals. Oftentimes, it is difficult to establish the precise causes of conflicts largely because conflicts differ from each other in terms of the combination of factors that give rise to them, and also because conflicts are social phenomena involving human beings and are not necessarily given to rigid scientific explanations. Stedman<sup>20</sup> has for example, observed that crises and conflicts in Africa, especially at the national and sub-national levels, could be seen to revolve around the four important issues of identity, participation, distribution and legitimacy. Another school of thought sees economic decline as strongly associated with violent conflicts. The argument being that the nature of politics associated with a dwindling economy tends to be more ferocious than that associated with an economy that is growing or buoyant. Further, the process of political transitions to democracy in the continent has also been identified as providing a conducive environment for the eruption of conflicts.<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting to note that International Alert, one of the NGOs at the forefront of the efforts at peace-building in West Africa, observed that no one state in the region can be exempted from having suffered from conflict. However, it identifies four main conflict areas in the region: the Mano River Union (MRU), constituting Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry, and Côte d'Ivoire, which relates closely to the MRU conflict; Senegal and Guinea-Bissau; Mali and Niger; and Nigeria, whose conflicts are for now self-contained.<sup>22</sup> According to International Alert, conflicts in the region are expressed as the ethnicisation of politics; the use of religion as a means of mobilisation; the violent assertion of rights to self-determination; the collapse or near collapse of the state; resource conflicts and criminality through the trading of diamonds, oil and other precious minerals, arms, people and drugs in parallel markets. It sees structural causes of conflict in the region embodied in political legacies



and economic prescriptions as being exacerbated by politics of exclusion coupled with assimilationist policies that seek to suppress group identities.<sup>23</sup>

The literature is indeed rich in terms of the various views on the causes and character of conflicts in Africa, and West Africa in particular. For example, Joseph,<sup>24</sup> Nwokedi,<sup>25</sup> Young,<sup>26</sup> and Peters<sup>27</sup> analysed the causes of African conflicts by examining the character of the African State perceived as instrumental in fanning the embers of violence. Others like Yassim El-Ayouty<sup>28</sup> and Adetula<sup>29</sup> categorised African conflicts into major groups comprising boundary/territorial disputes, civil wars, colonial/racial wars, succession conflicts and political/ideological conflicts. Also, Bassey<sup>30</sup> identified some of the causes of conflicts as those pertaining to pressures of decolonization, widespread irredentism, civil disorder, vigilantism, coercive warfare and the diplomacy of violence. Some others see conflicts in West Africa as characterized by the machinations of warlords who battle 'strongmen' and 'political entrepreneurs' for control over mineral resources and access to markets against the increasing weakening of the neo-patrimonial state in Africa.<sup>31</sup> Some explanations of the root causes of conflict in Africa include the apocalyptic view,<sup>32</sup> the culturalist view,<sup>33</sup> neo-patrimonialism and civil wars,<sup>34</sup> and rational civil wars.<sup>35</sup> Whilst discussing all these is presently beyond my focus, it is important that we examine the economic perspective to wars in Africa.

Collier,<sup>36</sup> Grossman,<sup>37</sup> and Davies<sup>38</sup> examined the economic dimension of civil wars in Africa. Generally, the observation is that the risk of having increases in rebellion coincides with the opportunity for financing the rebellion, while it decreases with the level of rebel expenditure and the differential cost vis-à-vis government expenditure. The literature has also basically indicated three identifiable sources of rebel finance, as consisting of proceeds from extortion, donations from diaspora and subventions from hostile governments. Best,<sup>39</sup> Duffield,<sup>40</sup> and Mutisya<sup>41</sup> have studied other dimensions of conflict in the developing world, with Mutisya attributing the frequency of these conflicts to the phenomenon of failed states. Duffield noted for example, that the paradox of globalization lies in the prevalence of assumptions linking economic convergence with social and political order, while countervailing divisions and disorder capable of causing conflicts are being forcefully reproduced on the ground. However, this view has been critiqued by scholars who feel that the economic explanations for wars in Africa tended to be simplistic and underplayed the importance of the historical and political factors. For instance, in an article written in 2002, Thandika Mkandawire<sup>42</sup> pointed out that the recent focus on the means of financing rebel movements and the failure of most movements to coherently articulate, let alone achieve, their proclaimed objec-

tives have encouraged an easy dismissal of the politics of such movements and an inclination towards economistic, culturalist and militaristic interpretations of conflicts. He argues that to understand the actions of rebel movements and their violence in Africa, we must understand not only the elites and the intra-elite conflicts that produce their leaders, but also the actions and responses of the wider population.<sup>43</sup> Generally, Mkandawire makes the point that while economic explanations for the causes of war is important, it is not necessarily the cause of wars; secondly, that structural conditions that are propitious to insurgency, and the agency of individuals and social movements are important to understanding the terrible toll of rebel movements; and finally, that incoherent as the rebels' objectives may sound, they reflect a serious urban malaise that should not be lightly dismissed by reducing the members of these movements to simple criminals. He maintains that understanding the root causes of these conflicts is important for their resolution. This view cannot, but be more rational than simply criminalizing all conflicts in Africa.

Shortcomings relating to the inadequacies of the existing conflict resolution and management strategies have also been identified, and possible ways for improvement recommended. For example, Williams,<sup>44</sup> Bassey<sup>45</sup> and Vogts,<sup>46</sup> have all in their various contributions identified these shortcomings, with Vogts noting the formation in 1993 of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts by the OAU; which even though it superseded the previous commission on Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation did not achieve much. However, with the formation of African Union (AU) in 2000 as successor to the AU, it now has a Peace and Security Council (PSC), a body expected to oversee the implementation of efforts at ensuring peace in Africa. The success of this Council may invariably be determined by the availability of funds for its operations. Already the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan, which warranted the deployment of AU peacekeepers from Nigeria and Rwanda in 2004, is tasking the capacity of the newly formed PSC. The Council was not initially able to muster enough troops to police the very wide expanse of land in and around Darfur.

On post-conflict peace-building, many have noted the necessity to explore this dimension as a sustainable strategy for managing conflicts. According to Akindele,<sup>47</sup> in an increasingly interdependent world, peace like war have become absolutely indivisible, meaning that there is a need to focus more on seeking peaceful co-existence and on building the peace. Hence, Boutros Boutros-Ghali,<sup>48</sup> and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)<sup>49</sup> have tried to popularize this strategy of conflict management. For instance, Boutros-Ghali suggested that for peace-making and

peacekeeping operations to be truly successful they must include comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well being amongst the people. UNRISD even identified five dimensions, along which the process of post-conflict rebuilding must be pursued, classifying these as political rebuilding, social rebuilding, psychological rebuilding, judicial rebuilding and economic rebuilding. Others like Sklar,<sup>50</sup> Hubert,<sup>51</sup> the UNDP<sup>52</sup> and UNESCO<sup>53</sup> highlighted the necessity for democracy, human rights, and building a culture of peace in seeking solutions to conflicts in Africa. Also Namadi<sup>54</sup> and Hay<sup>55</sup> highlighted the individual and group dimensions of peace building. Namadi for instance, conceives of peace-building as the constructing of positive and constructive perceptions of conflicts in the minds of the people. This could be done, he maintained, by initially making conscious efforts to transform attitudes through a generational orientation, which should begin with the individual. Hay, in the same contribution sees the overarching goal of peace-building as the enhancement of the indigenous capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence. To him, ultimately, peace-building should aim at building human security, a concept that includes democratic governance, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, and equitable access to resources. Issues dealing with the peace concept and peace-building will be examined in the next chapter.

Though many recognised the need for this sort of approach (sustainable resolution of conflicts through peace-building measures), little has been done in terms of undertaking either a post-conflict evaluation of peace-building measures so far or a comparative examination of such efforts in a particular region. This study does so by focusing on the West African sub-region. The intricate and intertwining nature of conflicts in this region provides us with a good case study to assess the approaches so far attempted in building peace and the potential strategies that may further be adopted.

In introducing the subject matter, the object has been to paint a picture of the dimensions and facets of conflict in Africa generally, and West Africa in particular. In this section, the various views and sometimes critiques of the nature, character and categorizations of conflict in Africa have been presented with a view to providing a holistic understanding of the range of issues involved, and that may also be focused on in examining the case studies from West Africa. The expectation is that the rather comprehensive theoretical review will serve to broaden our articulation of possible solutions especially in relation to regional peace-building as a strategy.

## Notes

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