CONFLICT AND UNDER-DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Introduction
One of the central challenges of Africa today is the endemic and protracted ethno-religious and political conflicts. Since the eve of the 21st century, Africa has been challenged by a variety of upheavals of differing magnitudes. Conflicts erupted in Zaire, Burundi and Rwanda. There was also armed uprising in Northern Uganda. Border conflict equally erupted between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Somalia has remained a collapsed state in spite of the attempts to resuscitate it. Sudan became entangled in a bitter intra-state conflict almost of a genocidal proportion. In Southern Africa, Lesotho witnessed an armed uprising. Angola was also in turmoil. In West Africa, Liberia was almost a collapsed state even as rebels embattled Sierra-Leone and Guinea-Bissau. Cote d’Ivoire also experienced armed rebellion. It is an incontrovertible fact that violent conflict is the major hindrance to the development of African States. Among others, conflict inflicts human suffering through death, destruction of livelihoods, constant displacement and insecurity. Violent conflicts disrupt the process of production, create conditions for pillage of a country’s resources and divert their application from development purposes to servicing war. Violent conflicts are thus responsible for perpetuating misery and underdevelopment in the continent. With focus on Africa, this paper looks at the two variables: conflict and development, and goes to establish that conflict is the anti-thesis of development. No society will achieve any meaningful development, if conflict becomes prevalent in it, the way it has been in Africa.

Conceptual Clarification
Conflict is a fluid and indefinitely elastic concept which can be twisted into different shapes. It has become an issue over which scholars find themselves in sharp disagreements. Suffice it to say that conflict is defined as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. However, mere pursuit of differing goals does not necessarily depict and result to violence, open fighting and killing such that has bedeviled African continent for about three decades now. Depending on its management, conflict can escalate from the level of mere