

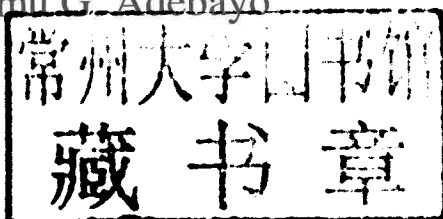
The background of the cover features a stylized graphic. At the top, there is a large, irregular orange shape. Below it, several dark blue and black silhouettes of hands are raised, with fingers spread. These hands appear to be emerging from or holding up the orange shape. In the bottom right corner, there is a dark blue silhouette of the map of Africa. The title text is overlaid on a dark blue horizontal band that spans the width of the cover.

MANAGING CONFLICTS IN AFRICA'S DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

Edited by **AKANMU G. ADEBAYO**

Managing Conflicts in Africa's Democratic Transitions

Akanmu G. Adebayo



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Managing Conflicts in Africa's Democratic Transitions

for two friends
Moshood Ibraheem (1956-2004)
and Tayo Situ (1952-2011)
in memoriam

FOREWORD

**ATTAHIRU M. JEGA, OFR
CHAIRMAN, INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL
COMMISSION, (INEC) NIGERIA, AND PROFESSOR OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE, BAYERO UNIVERSITY, KANO**

The theme of this book, “managing conflicts in Africa’s democratic transitions,” is of interest to me, both from academic and practitioner standpoints. In fact, it is why I accepted to deliver the keynote address at the conference of the same theme, organized by Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia, only a few days after the April 2011 elections in Nigeria. As a professor of political science, my research areas include democratization and governance in Africa; now as chairman of Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), my primary duty is to lead the nation in the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections.

Political conflicts in Africa have many, often complex causes. It is easy to brand them in a stereotypical fashion as ethnic or religious but in many fundamental respects, they have underlying socioeconomic causes. Since the mid-1980s when the impact of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) led to a remarkable transformation of identities, conflicts became characterized by new dynamics, and assumed newer dimensions, essentially underlined by economic variables. The impact of globalization in the contemporary era has only reinforced these new dynamics.

Democratic transitions are avenues through which countries have opportunities to move away from modes of authoritarian rule towards democratic governance and to create more stable polities that are conducive to sustainable socio-economic development. To have a democratic transition, a nation must also have a democratic culture.

However, almost invariably, political transitions in Africa have been conflict-ridden, with devastating consequences. Often, the consequences of such

conflicts are enormous and wide-ranging in terms of destruction of lives and property, displacement of people, psychological scars and traumas, etc.

Thus a sort of a paradox exists between the desirable goals of democratic transitions and the accompanying violent, even criminal tendencies of the political elite—all with grave consequences.

In a liberal democratic context, elections are important mechanisms which facilitate democratic transition, giving opportunities to citizens to vote their choices of candidates, their parties and policies. How elections are conducted and managed, therefore, have an important bearing on the extent to which citizens have an unfettered freedom to exercise their choice and make their votes count in the election/selection of their representatives and executive leaders. Where there is concrete evidence, or even a perception, of abuse or misuse of the electoral process, confidence in the process is undermined, suspicion is engendered and conflict is aggravated.

Some of the greatest challenges in election management, therefore, are how to make the electoral process transparent, inclusive, and credible, and how to give people confidence that their votes would indeed count. Election managers have a herculean task balancing and assuaging the fears and suspicions of rival parties and candidates. There has been a constant striving to not only be fair and just but also to be seen to be so.

In our recent Nigerian context, the newly constituted INEC did everything possible to demonstrate non-partisanship and impartiality, and did its best to provide a level playing field for all contestants and political parties. It created avenues for periodic consultations with political parties and civil society organizations, and at great expense, brought additional efficiency in operational and logistical preparations.

The result of all these is the widespread acknowledgement of the April 2011 elections as free, fair, and credible; some observers have even said that they are the best elections ever conducted in Nigeria's history. Now, it is to be expected that the type of representatives and elected executives who have emerged from this process would be more responsible and responsive to the needs and aspirations of Nigerians in deploying public resources to address the fundamental needs of the people. Of course, elections are a necessary but not sufficient condition for good democratic governance; however, in a country long devastated by reckless authoritarian rule of both military and civilian varieties, where for over a decade the electoral process has been misused and abused, engendering apathy and scepticism, there is much hope that a transparent and credible electoral process is bound to yield positive results in the governance arena.

Our recent Nigerian experience also demonstrates that a well-organized and credible election is not a guarantee that peace would reign and conflicts are prevented. These depend on other predisposing factors. First, the attitude and disposition of politicians is crucial. In situations where politicians engage in electoral contests with a "do-or-die" mentality or mindset, and pursue a zero-sum game, there is a limit to which good management of elections would totally eliminate occurrence of conflicts. Second, when such a disposition on the part of

politicians is combined with inadequate political/voter education on the part of the citizenry, in the context of high incidences of poverty and significant levels of youth unemployment, avoidable conflicts become inevitable, with devastating consequences. To a large extent, the post-elections violence, which occurred in some parts of northern Nigeria following the presidential elections of April 16, 2011, are attributable to these factors.

The implication of all these is that, in political transitions in countries such as Nigeria, in addition to ensuring that the electoral process is transparent and credible, the mindsets of politicians and the uninformed or ill-informed attitudes of the citizenry have to be changed. Regrettably this takes more time to accomplish in the electoral and political reform processes. Additionally, there needs to be other mechanisms in place for conflict management and resolution, for anticipating and preventing conflicts and for peace-building. The systemic roots of some of the causes of these apparently election-related conflicts (e.g., poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, etc.) also have to be addressed.

Conducting elections that are free, fair, peaceful, and credible in Nigeria—given its size, large population, terrain, and ethno-religious diversity—is a very difficult assignment even under normal circumstances. Under the far-from-normal circumstances in which the new INEC had to conduct the 2011 voters' registration and elections, it seemed (and felt) like an impossible task. But the overwhelming encouragement, support, and assistance which the Commission received from stakeholders in Nigeria, friends of Nigeria abroad, and Nigeria's development partners, all motivated us to do our best under very difficult circumstances. We knew that it would be difficult to do a perfect job, and there are certainly many imperfections with the 2011 elections. The following may be listed among the accomplishments:

- There was a more credible Voters Register now in place than what we met, perhaps better than any we ever had in the country. We now have an important database of over 73.5 million registered voters, with photographs, telephone numbers, fingerprints, and addresses; and we believe, presently in Nigeria it is probably the largest single national database.
- We introduced the Re-Modified Open Ballot System, which ensured transparent voting and result announcement procedures at the polling units. Although the procedure was a bit cumbersome, it was widely appreciated and acknowledged by voters as well as observers as giving the people the opportunity to vote and for their vote to count, in spite of the inconveniences.
- We also recorded remarkably reduced levels of electoral fraud in comparative terms.
- There was also substantial improvement in operational and logistical preparations. Obviously, in many polling units, materials still arrived late, and we had to make adjustments in terms of time of commence-

ment of accreditation and voting. But in general, in over 80% of the polling units, voting commenced on time.

- Many observers have also noted that the 2011 elections were freer, more credible, and more peaceful than ever before in Nigeria's history. This is, I think, specifically in terms of pre-election and election-day conflicts. There was of course the unfortunate post-election day violence which happened over the announcements of the results of the presidential election. But in comparative terms, in terms of violence preceding elections and violence on the day of election, we certainly recorded the least number of incidences.

The assertion that conflicts are inevitable in human societies, whether under transition or not, is, in many fundamental respects, true. The challenge is how to anticipate and prevent them, and when they occur, how to manage them with minimal negative consequences. Proactive engagement, dialogue, sensitization, and credible conduct by leading politicians can go a long way in preventing conflicts and positively managing them.

Our experiences in Nigeria can be a lesson for other African countries both in the conduct of elections and in managing conflicts engendered by elections. We in Nigeria are already taking steps to learn from the 2011 elections. I fully endorse this volume for taking a pan-African look at managing conflicts in our democratic transitions.

Abuja, December 2011

PREFACE

These are exhilarating, tumultuous days on the African political scene. The excitement began in 2010 with the “Arab Spring,” when popular movements and peaceful demonstrations rocked North Africa and proceeded in 2011 to topple long-reigning dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Elsewhere in Africa, and equally exhilarating, scheduled elections took place and popular movements demanded political change. This book is about elections, and elections in Africa have provoked violence. Significant examples in the past five years included election-related violence in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Liberia, Uganda and, just as recently as last week, in Senegal. Many of these violent conflicts occurred before, during and after elections; some degenerated into civil wars which have further escalated civilian casualties and produced humanitarian crises of enormous proportions. Many of these crises were resolved, “patched up,” with the help of regional and international organizations, and the intervention of African statesmen and world leaders. However, another round of elections in these countries—like the scheduled elections in Kenya later this year—might tear the paper-thin patches and engulf the countries in another round of violent conflicts.

I have always wondered about democracy, especially about why elections in Africa have been so violent. As a young lad growing up in Obamoro, in Western Nigeria in the mid-1960s, all I knew of elections was the violence: political thugs and traditional hunters shooting into the air, harassing bystanders, setting property on fire, intimidating opponents, and killing people. My father, a cocoa farmer, was a card-carrying member of one of the political parties/alliances. I recall one evening when a host of thugs, ten or fifteen of them, arrived at our town in a jeep, their machetes and clubs terrifying in the setting sun. One of them was nicknamed Zorro; he was reputed to carry a small revolver. Before the jeep even came to a complete stop the thugs had disembarked, chasing people, slapping and kicking them, shouting and singing insulting political songs. Everyone ran in different directions, their chickens, dogs, goats and sheep stampeding out of the way. The thugs got to our house and asked for my father. He was not yet back from the farm, we replied in panic. They proceeded to harass the women and exchanged some harsh, threatening words with the teachers who were our tenants. To this day I still remember the way they gestured at the wom-

en and teachers, like they would behead them. No one was hurt that day, but they promised to be back; and, apparently, it wasn't the first time. After this incident, many people advised my father to resign from the party or, as many of his peers did, to register with the other major party/alliance so that he may produce the appropriate card whenever asked about his political affiliation. He didn't have to, because the military took over not too long after this attack. I got to meet Zorro in Iwo, the headquarters of our local government, several years later. Jobless at the time, poor and aging, he didn't look so ferocious any more.

This attack on my family home by political thugs left a sour taste in my mouth about democracy and elections. Many Nigerians, young and old, men and women, rural or urban dwellers, were happy when the military restored "order" in January 1966 and put an end to the mayhem. Anyone who grew up in Western Nigeria in the 1960s would be happy to see the military arrive; but the same people in later years equally marched for freedom from army rule.

That attack also continued to pique my interest in managing electoral conflicts. I wasn't alone. The interest in managing electoral conflicts began to receive scholarly attention during the 1990s when many African countries were transitioning from military and one-party dictatorships to multiparty democracies—with attendant complications, violence, and pugnacity. One of these studies is an edited volume by Tomothy Sisk and Andrew Reynolds, entitled *Elections and Conflict Management in Africa*, published by the United States Institute of Peace in 1998. The following year, Andrew Reynolds published his study *Electoral Systems and Democratization* (Oxford university Press, 1999). Staffan Lindberg has also made significant contributions to the study of elections in Africa. Two of his books are especially relevant. The first is *Democracy and Elections in Africa* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); the second is *Democratization by Elections: A New Mode of Transition* (also by the Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009) which takes a more global look at elections as a medium of political transition. Appropriately, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), a civil society organization that focuses on electoral issues, published *When Elephants Fight: Preventing and Managing Election-Related Conflicts in Africa* (Johannesburg, EISA, 2010). Last year an edited work by Boubacar N'Daiye and Mathurin Houngnikpo entitled *Elections and Democratization in West Africa* (Africa World Press, 2011) joined the list. Also, *Election Dispute Management: Practice Guide for West Africa*, published in 2011 by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), introduced what it calls "an actionable African solution to African problem."

Of the many violent conflicts in Africa, this book only explores the landscapes for managing those conflicts in the continent's democratic political transitions. The leadership and political elites in many African countries have come to accept elections as the norm since the restoration of multiparty democracy in the last decade of the last century. Nevertheless, the tendency towards autocracy, one-party dictatorship, and term-prolongation has not been completely abandoned. Will the military continue to influence democratically elected governments from the shadows or sneak back in by hijacking popular movements, like

they seemed to have done in Egypt? Will African nations push forward with democratic transfers of power, the orderly transition through the ballot boxes, as was the case in Ghana in 2008 and in Senegal in 2012? Is the culture of democratic transfer of power gaining or losing ground in Africa? What is democratic about elections in Africa with high illiteracy rates and poor security and technology to support credible elections? Do small and large countries experience democratization differently? What kinds of conflicts have arisen prior to, during, and after elections? How have these conflicts traumatized the people and how have these traumatic experiences been perceived and presented in African literature? How free, fair and credible are these elections? What are the roles of African civil society organizations in conflict prevention and resolution? What are the responsibilities of the international community, especially international organizations, agencies, and the African diaspora? Specifically, what is the role of the African Union (AU)? What conflict management or conflict resolution strategies have been identified and proactively engaged? After the elections have come and gone, and after the politicians have settled down to exercise power, what became of the victims and their victimizers? How effective are forgiveness, amnesty, and other peace efforts in restoring hope? What is the place of the South African brand—truth and reconciliation—in bringing about healing and closure, and in heralding the future in other African countries? How might African countries make the period between elections one of lasting peace, sustainable development, and economic progress rather than a time to rest, rearm, and reload? This book attempts to answer these questions and raise others.

Broadly, the book is divided into three parts. Professor Attahiru Jega, chairman of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), provides the preface which places the book in its proper context. This is followed by part 1, which takes a conceptual/theoretical look at democratization, elections and conflicts in Africa. Serving also as the introduction to the volume, chapter 1 by Chux Ibekwe and Akanmu Adebayo examines the relationship among democratization, elections, and conflicts and concludes with a set of recommendations that may strengthen the way forward. Focusing on Liberia, Abiodun Alao and Mike Adeyeye in chapter 2 look at securitization issues in post-conflict societies. In chapter 3, Oumar Cherif Diop reviews Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* (TSAR Publications, 1995) to understand trauma as an outcome of severe, violent encounters in conflict-prone African societies. In this sense, all of Africa's wars and violent conflicts—be they revolutionary, anti-colonial or anti-apartheid wars, or post-election conflicts to steal or defend the people's mandate—must be approached and treated the way Mazvita, the protagonist, treats her child in *Without a Name*.

The second part has eight chapters in which domestic and international issues and actors in Africa's transitional politics are explored. The goal is to understand the nature of elections and election-related conflicts in the past decade or so. As might be expected, the eight chapters in this section had complementary overlaps. Oluwakemi Adesina in chapter 4 traces the history of post-

election violence in Nigeria while 'Lai Olurode in chapter 5 puts his finger on one of the major problems in Nigeria's electoral history—incumbency. Moving from Nigeria in chapter 6, Samy Gerges uses quantitative analysis to establish a connection between religiosity and political activism, especially participation in peace movements in Egypt. The chapter answers the question whether or not religion played any role in the Arab Spring. In chapter 7, Haluk Bingol and Richard Vengroff examine the failure of the Sopi revolution in Senegal and why two-term incumbent president Wade was on the ballot in Senegal's presidential election in February 2012, but was defeated when the opposition parties rallied behind Macky Sall in the runoff on March 25, 2012. If large countries have experienced violent conflicts, what of small Lusophone West African countries of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau? Brandon Lundy addresses this question in chapter 8 and finds that while small Cape Verde is one of Africa's democratic success stories, Guinea-Bissau proves that size does not matter as far as violent political transitions are concerned. Going across the continent to Kenya, Mara Roberts conducts a conflict analysis of Kenya's 2007-2008 post-election conflict in chapter 9. She introduces the conflict tree as an analytical tool (see photospread), and calls attention to the "root causes" of the conflict. Chapters 10 and 11 look at the international dimensions of Africa's transitional conflicts. In chapter 10, Edoh Agbehonou evaluates the handling of Côte d'Ivoire's post-election conflicts in the French press while, in chapter 11, Andrew Ewoh takes a pan-continental look at the United States foreign policy responses to Africa's violent conflicts. The two chapters reveal that while the French fundamentally choose to intervene as a former colonial power, the United States generally takes a hands-off approach except where United States interests, especially its security and economic interests, are threatened.

The third part evaluates the relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of various conflict management strategies for resolving Africa's election-related violent conflicts. Leading off this part is chapter 12 by Abdul Karim Bangura. An important chapter, it is also the longest chapter in the book. Bangura's objective is to present Africa's major peace paradigms that may be deployed in resolving many of the continent's post-election violent conflicts. Drawing from many historical instances, he illustrates seven peace paradigms: peace through coercion, law, nonviolence, communication, love, *Ubuntu*, and respect. What African country could be seen as a model in managing electoral conflicts? Ghana comes to mind. This is the focus of Joseph Kingsley Adjei's discussion in chapter 13. He agrees that the way Ghana managed and prevented violent conflicts in the 2008 presidential election was exemplary, and other countries might learn from it; but there is still some unfinished business and the presidential election scheduled for December 2012 might provide the opportunity for Ghana to demonstrate its democratic maturity.

Amnesty, forgiveness, pardon; these have been proposed as options for managing post-election violence in various parts of Africa. These are also the subjects of chapters 14 and 15. In an extended review of Antjie Krog's book entitled *Country of My Skull* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2000), Eddie Mie-

nie examines the accomplishments, problems, and limitations of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a conflict management tool. Since its implementation in South Africa, the TRC approach has been widely adopted in many post-conflict situations in Africa. In chapter 15, Joseph Nasongo, Lydia Wamocha, and Judith Achoka think that a version of TRC might be needed to bring some closure to Kenya's violent post-election conflict of 2008. However, they also think that church leaders should champion the Kenyan version of amnesty or forgiveness since the church was perhaps an interested onlooker during the violence.

Besides TRC, South Africa is also home to another innovative idea: electoral conflict management panels (CMPs). Ilona Tip in chapter 16 demonstrates the effectiveness of these panels in reducing electoral conflicts in South Africa, and in drastically reducing the number of cases being heard by the courts. The CMP concept has also been implemented in several African countries. In the last chapter (chapter 17), Sarah Danso returns to Côte d'Ivoire to tease out the peacemaking options, mixed signals, and lessons learned from the country's post-election conflict and civil war.

There is no concluding chapter; events were changing and violent conflicts were erupting even as the book was being typeset. Two examples will suffice. Millions of Senegalese went to the polls on February 26, 2012, with incumbent President Abdoulaye Wade seeking a third term amidst much protests and some violence. At the runoff on March 25, 2012, Wade was soundly defeated by Mr. Macky Sall behind whom the opposition had rallied. The runoff election was peaceful and the transition is expected to be smooth. The same cannot be said of neighboring Mali where, on March 22, 2012, a military coup d'état toppled the democratic government of Amadou Toumani Toure only weeks before presidential elections which were scheduled for April 29. The military junta was headed by Captain Amadou Sanogo who, among other things, accused the Toure administration of poor handling of the Tuareg uprising in the northern parts of the country. No new date has been set for elections. With changes like these every month, it is almost impossible to bring the book to closure. This is why we have included in chapter 1 a summary of several policy options for managing Africa's election-related conflicts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book grew out of a symposium on "Managing Conflicts in Africa's Democratic Transitions" held at Kennesaw State University (KSU) on May 13, 2011. Appropriately, much of this acknowledgment is about the symposium. And first and foremost I thank Shauna Carmichael and Stella Williamson, my colleagues at the Center for Conflict Management, for their tireless work in organizing the symposium and assistance with the editing of the book. Next, I thank members of the Symposium Planning Committee, in particular Dr. Nurudeen Akinyemi,

Dr. Oumar Cherif Diop, and Ambassador Neneh Macdouall Gaye. I am also grateful to Dr. Adeyinka Bruce Omotunde and Chux Ibekwe for tremendous assistance.

The symposium was co-sponsored by several departments at KSU. They include the Institute for Global Initiatives, the Center for African and African Diaspora Studies, and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, especially the PhD program in International Conflict Management. I am grateful to the co-sponsors, particularly Dr. Barry Morris and Dr. Volker Franke. My appreciation also goes to the Office of University Relations for publicizing the event, and the Office of Special Events for facilitating the arrangements. The symposium drew the participation of scholars, activists, practitioners, and civil society organizations. I thank my dean, Dr. Richard Vengroff, for being the chief host. As researcher and practitioner, he had provided democratization, election, and governance training in many African countries. He supported this project from the beginning and gave a paper as well as chaired a panel. I thank Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin, president of Nigeria's Campaign for Democracy and Women Arise, for participating in the symposium and providing an activist's perspective. I also thank symposium chairs, discussants, volunteers, and presenters.

Two internationally renowned scholars of African descent provided keynote addresses at the symposium. My gratitude goes to Professor Abdul Karim Bangura for delivering a powerful keynote even at short notice. That address on African peace paradigms provides a strong anchor for the third part of this book regarding African solutions to African violent transitional politics. Professor Attahiru Jega, chairman of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), gave the second keynote address. Words alone cannot fully express the depth of my gratitude to him. He traveled out of Nigeria literally right after successfully managing the April 2011 elections. Also, he patiently answered every question—and there were many, since there were many members of the Nigerian Diaspora in the audience—and demonstrated the logic and topicality of the symposium on electoral conflicts. Part of that address is included in his Foreword to this book. I also thank my dear friend, Dr. 'Lai Oluode, a national commissioner with the INEC, for his support and commitment to this project.

Many members of the African Diaspora in Atlanta participated in the symposium. I am grateful to Ms. Mary Bowers, chair of the Association of Kenyan Professionals in Atlanta (AKPA), and Mr. Titus Olowokere, president of the Alliance of Nigerian Organizations in Georgia (ANOG), for mobilizing their members. The Nigerian Consulate in Atlanta gave a befitting welcome to Professor Jega. My gratitude goes to Consul Baba Garba (then Acting Consul-General), Consul Ore Akerele, and other Consulate staff, for their support.

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Akanmu G. Adebayo, PhD
Kennesaw, GA

March 2012

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