

# Preventive diplomacy and Conflict prevention as a model for the mediation of conflict in Africa: The basic human needs perspective

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## **Abstract:**

Africa requires a rallying point from where they can integrate and mobilize their resources in order to create sustainable peace and stability in a continent that is characterized by chronic conflicts and underdevelopment. This could be done through regional intervention into conflicts for example SADC intervention, and the approach of intervention in this case preventive diplomacy followed by conflict prevention in order to attain sustainable peace and economic as well as political stability in the African continent.

The nature of this paper places it in the domain of International Relations (IR) and Conflict Transformation and Management because it is concerned about how preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention can be used by African governments, regional organizations and African Union as a foreign policy tool in mediating conflicts in Africa.

## **Problem statement**

The paper stem from the premise that in spite of the notion of African solutions for African problems, there is no substantial progress regarding peace progress in the mediation of conflicts in Africa. Although there have been democratic gains in some parts of Africa and a relative peaceful settlements in Burundi, Zimbabwe, Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Ivory Coast, etc., all of which are as a result of African mediated solutions, these remains fragile. For a variety of reasons, including the lack of authority of the African Union governments, the region's mediated efforts resulted in power sharing deals only.

It remains to be seen whether the peaceful gains will be able to last under the circumstances where the South African government mediation end up as power sharing deals. Also, although there is extensive domestic and international literature on South Africa's other countries mediation in Africa, there is a need for understanding of preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention as viable model in mediation of conflicts in Africa. Recently, debates have raged over South Africa's role and capacity for mediation in conflict resolution in Africa. It is thus critical to examine if preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention are viable models for African Governments to mitigate peace and stability in Africa.

## **Approach proposed by this paper**

The primary aim of this paper is to propose the use of Preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention as a model for mediating conflict in Africa. Sustainable peace cannot come about

unless the underlying issues that give rise to conflict are addressed. In short it is practically impossible to attain peace without addressing first simple human securities. Consequently the theoretical framework used in this paper is: the Basic Human Needs Theory as advocated by John Burton (1990). As argued in the problem statement, this paper will be focusing on the significance and need for the understanding of preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention as a model in mediation of conflicts in Africa, aimed at the achievement of sustainable peace and security. The study thus will argue that Preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention could be used as foreign policy tool by the African governments in mediation of conflict in Africa. It should be noted from the outset that there are two distinct approaches that this paper proposes as the model for African Union when mediating conflict in Africa. These include Preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention. The underlying assumption for the adoption of both approaches is that, given the complex nature of African conflicts, only some combination and sequence of approaches – in contrast to any one of them is necessary to capture the complexity of conflict in any given African state.

## **Introduction**

The world has had conflict as far back as people can remember. Conflict exists at even the smallest unit, which is between two individuals. In fact some philosophers, such as Aristotle in the *Treaty of Man*, argue that even individuals are in conflict with themselves, about issues of morality and ethics. Conflict, whether personal, interpersonal or societal has claimed incalculable human lives. Conflict, however, has also become the corner stone of human development to a certain degree.

Africa requires a rallying point from which to integrate and mobilize resources in order to create sustainable peace and stability on a continent that is characterized by chronic conflicts and underdevelopment. This could be achieved through timely regional interventions into conflicts through preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention.

## **Conflict and Development**

Busumtwi-Sam (2004: 317) postulate that, the establishment of security, stability and peace-building need to be separated from socio-economic reconstruction and development after conflict. He points out that establishment of security and peace-building are aimed at stopping fighting and preventing further violence in the short-to-medium run. In the same vein,

Busumtwi-Sam perceives reconstruction and development as long-term processes aimed at restructuring the society and promoting economic growth. In this paper, the former is referred to as preventive diplomacy because it is concerned about preventing and containing the spread of violent conflict and the latter is perceived as conflict prevention because the process is not only concerned about the containment and addressing the violent conflict, it goes beyond the manifest conflict paying attention into the latent conflict, the underlying issues that give rise to the manifest.

The underlying issues include frustration of basic human needs, a need for economic and institutional reconstruction and development. On the other hand, Sandole (2010: 78) stresses that the lack of integration of conflict management, peace-building and development fields and efforts has undermined peace-building and post-war recovery efforts since the early 1990s. This is the gap that the argument of this paper seeks to address by proposing a hybrid approach into the management of African conflict in order to achieve sustainable peace and development. Boyce and Pastor (1998: 42-3) argue that post-war security, peace-building, reconstruction and development should not be separated into distinctive boxes because they are in many ways inter-linked. They see peace-building as a key prerequisite for economic growth and attraction of foreign investments while at the same time economic reconstruction, development and growth can help consolidate peace and stability and prevent resurgence of violent conflict.

This paper stem from the premise that in spite of the notion of African solutions to African problems, there is no substantial progress regarding timely mediation of conflicts in Africa. Although there have been democratic gains in some parts of Africa and relatively peaceful settlements in Burundi, Zimbabwe, Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Ivory Coast, these remain fragile. Kofi Annan (1998: 19) thinks that ‘unless there is reconstruction and development in the aftermath of conflict, there can be little expectation of progress or durable peace.’ This point of view is echoed in a report by the African Union (2007: 1) that peace and development are ‘two sides of the same coin’ and that they are mutually reinforcing in post-war situations. Similar opinion is voiced by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) when it states that: ‘Without peace there can be no sustainable development and without development it is impossible to establish enduring peace’ (2005: 2). Schomerus and Allen (2010: 81) add that ‘peace holds a meaning far beyond “peacefulness” or simply “absence of conflict.”’ Peace requires improvements in living conditions, including better infrastructure, employment opportunities, basic services and

reliable and effective government structures.

It is against this background that this paper argues for a ‘timely’ reaction to disputes and conflicts via preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention. The writer will show the importance and way forward to resolve conflicts before they become extended and deadly. The question however, is: does African regional organisations and the African Union have the capacity, interest and willingness to engage in the regional and continental conflicts as a whole, to help prevent disputes from escalating into full-blown protracted conflicts? Also, although there is extensive domestic and international literature on AU’s mediation efforts in the continent, there is a need to understand and further conceptualise preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention as a viable model in mediation and prevention of conflicts in Africa.

The primary aim of this paper is to focus on the significance and need for understanding preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention in mediation of conflicts in Africa, aimed at the achievement of sustainable peace and development. By development in this paper the author refers to human, or people-centred development, which draws from some of the themes of the basic human needs theory and incorporates a range of material from ‘alternative’ development thinking (Pieterse 1998). It stresses that growth without equity and some form of redistribution of wealth and resources, does not necessarily constitute development. Equally, sustainable peace cannot be achieved unless the underlying issues that give rise to conflict are addressed.

Notably, efforts have been made by the African states in conjunction with various African institutions and leaders to address the ongoing challenges on the continent, resulting in increased calls for the South African Government’s contributions in Africa (Shillinger, 2009:42). According to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation’s (DIRCO) annual report of 2010, the South African Government has risen to the challenges and is playing a meaningful role in the region, the continent and globally.

For that reason, this paper postulate that creation of peace and stability through preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention is becoming vital in preventing conflict before it becomes violent and destructive. Some authors assert that on the continental level, one of the challenges facing Africa is that the international community appears intent on trying to wash its hands of large-scale multilateral involvement in Africa’s instability and conflict (Peck, 2005:562).

Serious questions have been raised regarding the capacity of the African Union (AU) and other bodies to respond to African challenges by actually preventing, managing and resolving conflict.

Peace is vital and of utmost importance in creating stability and development on a continent where many countries have not enjoyed peace for many years. As Thabo Mbeki, the former president of South Africa stated in his address to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2007, “Without peace and stability, Africa may not be able to achieve harmony and the dream of a New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) for sustainable development”.

Some authors suggest that former Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya were the proponents of the African Renaissance that was based on the promotion of peace, security and the endorsement of sustainable development on the African continent. Using a few cases drawn from publications whose main concerns were not South African foreign policy, the literature emphasizes the unrelenting expectations of involvement and of the reasons why the South African Government, within the context of regional actors, has to be diplomatically involved in mediating African conflicts. This is equally informed by chapter VIII of the United Nations (UN) Charter, whereby AU policies and sub-regional mechanisms are encouraged to manage and mediate conflicts in any particular region (Peck, 2005: 562). Although the African Union (AU) seems to be committed, it is clear that it has accepted that South Africa is seen and accepted as one of the main mediators in conflicts since it pursues policy via compliance with international law (Carlsnaes & Nel, 2006: 40). One could also argue the fact that Thabo Mbeki is the AU’s leading mediator of conflicts in Africa, showing the reliance on South Africa and its capacity. However, South Africa’s capacity to perform these tasks of preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention as a mediator on a number of fronts, remains a challenge.

Peace mission efforts by South Africa emerged within the context of a changed landscape in Africa. The colonial legacy, the struggles against colonial rule, and its subsequent replacement with post-colonial independent governments, shadowed by a global Cold War, ended in the early 1990’s. This was replaced by internal conflicts which continue until today. These internal conflicts often manifest themselves in violent armed rebellion between governments and opposition or militia groups (ACCORD, 2007:11). Given the complex nature of the African

conflicts, the theoretical underpinnings of this paper seek to argue that sustainable peace and stability in Africa can only be realized once basic human needs are addressed.

Shaw (2000, cited in Taylor, 2005:147), postulates that war or conflict is after all the continuation of politics by other means. Therefore, establishing this designed space as our point of departure, the orbit that this paper seeks to establish is one that argues that for the establishment of peace, the latent issues which give rise to violent conflicts need to be addressed in a timely manner through the use of preventive diplomacy, before disputes escalate into full-blown wars.

### **Preventive Diplomacy**

Preventive diplomacy is not a new phenomenon in conflict management. It seeks to primarily address a political/diplomatic process mandated under chapter VI of the UN Charter in order to prevent disputes from developing between parties, existing disputes from rising into open conflicts, or limiting escalation of conflict when it occurs, notwithstanding the fact that the mediators could be requested to provide limited support in mediating towards preventive diplomacy (Bischoff, 2006:148). Glover points out that preventive diplomacy is employed to forestall policies that create social and political tension. These policies include human rights violations, (such as denial of individual's freedom of expression, or the right to a fair trial), or discrimination against people on grounds of ethnic, linguistic or religious identity or political belief. (It is) by definition low key, undramatic, invisible, but it is cheaper than peacekeeping or war (Glover, 1995:2).

Researchers often debate a suitable and all-encompassing definition of what preventive diplomacy and other conflict management methods are. This section will provide a comprehensive overview of discourses from scholars and authors who ventured on peace initiatives and processes in Africa. These scholars outline themes and concepts that will form the basis of the analysis for the proposed research that would influence and impact on my study. For example, researchers are not unanimous in the conceptualization and definition of what South African preventive diplomacy in Africa is. There are a variety of those critics specifically on South Africa's quiet diplomacy towards Zimbabwe, especially the former president of South Africa, Mr. Mbeki. These themes include preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding with specific reference to the research study.

For instance, some scholars present preventive diplomacy as actions undertaken in order to prevent disputes arising between parties, to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts and to prevent the spread thereof (Doyle, 2005:530). Some are specific that preventive diplomacy was officially adopted as the strategy for the management of conflicts by the UN member states and the South African Government has to partake in the said strategy. This arrangement can involve confidence building measures, early warning, and possible preventive deployment to reduce the danger of violence and increase peaceful settlements. Researchers are of the opinion that, to resolve a conflict, confidence between conflicting parties or intrastate conflict, a mediator that is neutral and impartial is a prerequisite in any peace process, which is often a key task in the mediation process for a mediator to lay a foundation for substantive negotiation (Kotze, 2009: 55).

According to the United Nations (UN) Agenda for Peace as presented by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali (1992), preventive diplomacy consists of the actions undertaken in order to "prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur". Involving confidence-building measures, fact-finding, early warning, and possibly "preventive deployment" of UN-authorized forces. Preventive diplomacy seeks to reduce the danger of violence and increase the prospects for peaceful settlement. The rationale for the adoption of this kind of approach by the African regional and continental organizations is straightforward and compelling: without effective techniques for preventing violent conflict from arising or a recurrence of such violence, large scale conflicts might occur, which would result in instability and war in a continent characterized by chronic conflicts and underdevelopment.

## **CONFLICT PROVENTION**

It is of paramount importance to highlight from the outset that there is not a lot of literature on prevention. Therefore, in this section of the paper the researcher relied mostly on John Burton as a source. This presents both a challenge as well as a need to do more research on this approach to social conflict.

The 11 September 2001 (9/11) attack on the United States, the November 2001 Paris terror attacks, the 2003 invasion of Iraq by NATO forces resulting in the civil war in that country, the annexation of Crimea in Ukraine by the Russian Federation in March 2014, the recurring Boko Haram terror attacks in Nigeria, the deep-rooted conflict in Syria, Sudan and South Sudan

are some of the key recent and/or current violent conflicts that confirm predictions made by John Burton dating as far back as two decades ago.

Burton predicted more than twenty years ago that “there are compelling analytical reasons to assume a continuing escalation in the incidence of conflict, and levels of violence associated with it. There are reasons to believe that, given present social and political trends, and given traditional means of control, there will, in fact, be at all social levels, an escalation of conflict at a cumulative rate” (1990:50-51). This increase in conflict has occurred alongside the introduction of progressively more sophisticated policies of deterrence on a global level that seem to be forcing a reconsideration of policies in great and mid-power relationships, for ‘provention’ – Burton’s concept which will be discussed in more detail below - at that level is now a precondition of survival.

The dominant view is that conflicting behaviours can be deterred. However, if this approach does not prove successful, all conflicts can be contained provided sufficient coercion is employed (Burton, 1990:13). This is what traditional preventive diplomacy seeks to advance. However, this section of the paper advances an argument of conflict provention which is a complete opposite of preventive diplomacy. This section of the paper will discuss the concept of conflict provention in order to address the objective of this research. The outline of this section will be as follows: the section will offer a brief discussion of provention and social problems; a detailed discussion of conflict provention as an approach; latent and manifest conflict; and the cost of treating symptoms using Galtung’s ABC triangle of conflict as an explanatory and tool of analysis.

## **Conflict Provention**

John Burton (1990) offers a critical distinction between approaches of conflict prevention as a form of conflict containment through means of dispute settlement and regulation, and provention, directed at removing causes of conflict and promoting conditions in which behaviors become controlled by the extent to which parties value the collaborative quality of their relationship. In such relationships, “exchanges of short-term political expediency are supplanted by long-term policy development, aimed at tackling problems before they become conflicts” (Anstey, 2006:128).

Anstey (2006), in his book *Managing Change Negotiating Conflict*, postulates that provention and transformation require a fundamental change in conditions and attitudes of the parties. In



the same breath, Mayer (2001), as cited by Anstey (2006), argues that reconciliation, which transforms (rather than regulates) conflicts, involves “deeper, more far reaching” forms of resolution than agreements. In contrast, Zartman (2001) writes, that while prevention is a worthy goal, it is an unrealistic one in the short term as conflict is unlikely to be eliminated from human behaviour. Zartman further proposes that efforts should rather be concentrated on reducing conflict escalation and violence first. According to Anstey (2006:129), the problem that faces the proponents of preventive diplomacy is quite often the fact that the parties see little need for it.

There is not yet the imperative of a hurting stalemate or perception of a need to change attitudes or approaches surrounding issues. Thus, having failed to foresee the need to approach relations differently to prevent conflicts arising or escalating, parties embroiled in conflicts are often possessed by dynamics that lock them into the crisis of escalation. Further, to be credible and lasting, a solution to any conflict should not benefit one conflicting party, but all those that are in a conflict (Zartman, 2001).

According to Burton (1990:3), conflict prevention means “deducing from an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of conflict, including its human dimensions, not merely the conditions that create an environment of conflict, and the structural changes required to remove it, but more importantly, the promotion of conditions that create cooperative relationships.” The term prevention was invented because “prevention” has a negative connotation. Conflict prevention refers to the removal of casual conditions, and the positive promotion of environments conducive to collaborative relationships. This approach to social conflict extends the scope of our concerns beyond the narrow area of conflict resolution. Prevention is thus concerned with social problems generally, with altering the environments that lead to conflict, and with creating environments that mitigate conflict.

### **Prevention and Social Problems**

Conflict is a multi-faceted phenomenon with a number of causes. Thus, any approach that seeks to address any conflict situation should take into account the complexity of the conflict at hand. This section of the paper is influenced by an awareness of the complexity of conflicts, within societies and internationally, that could not be contained when treated by the enforcement of legal norms or by means of coercive power. This is where it becomes critical to highlight that a “failure to recognize that there are two quite different types of conflicts- those that are subject

to the application of social and legal norms and coercive processes, and those that are not” (Burton, 1990), is at the heart of the argument of this paper on the handling of conflicts within and between societies. In his public lecture titled “Breaking the Cycle of Violence” at the Institute for Peace & Justice Distinguished Lecture Series, Galtung postulated that the basic thesis of conflict is that wherever there is violence, there is unresolved conflict. Unresolved conflict means there is an incompatibility of goals, including issues that have not been resolved, superseded or transformed. That conflict can be directly between actors who have conscious goals or it can be structural, between parties that have their own interests. Thus, for violence to stop, the conflict must be resolved (2001).

In the age of growing inequality and unemployment within societies, terrorism, ethnic conflict and scarcity of resources, governments seem to be in a state of confusion on foreign and strategic policies that seek to address these social ills. According to Burton, “there is a growing number of ethnic and tribal conflicts that remain unresolved in addition to problems with military governments. Across continents jails and correction centres are overcrowded and, moreover, seem not to achieve their purpose” (1990:14). This argument is supported by the example that the majority of people who are sent to jail return to their communities after their release. In many instances, the time in jail does not lead to rehabilitation. “Deterrent and coercive approaches do not lead to the discovery or removal of causes of conflict in any particular case, and do nothing to stop others occurring” (Burton, 1990:14).

In cementing this argument, South Africa is a case in point. According to the Justice and Correctional Services Minister, Michael Masutha, there are approximately 160 000 prisoners in South Africa but the system has the capacity to accommodate only 120 000. This means that South African prisons are overcrowded by approximately 40 000 prisoners. Masutha claims that the current levels of overcrowding in correctional centres in major provinces like Western Cape, Kwazulu Natal and Gauteng are between 200 and 300% above capacity. Referring to the Pollsmoor prison in the Western Cape, the minister attributed the challenge of prison overcrowding to the “particular socio-economic circumstances in areas of the Western Cape, such as congestion in the townships and the Cape Flats, fuelled by the serious crime rate resulting in the problems at Pollsmoor” (News24, 2016-12-23). It is against this background that Burton concludes that “the traditional orientation that focuses on the primacy of authoritative institutions as the means of control implies an invalid assumption: that social conflict is due to human deformities rather than to structural or institutional deformities, and can be controlled, therefore, by deterrents, constraints and coercion” (1990:32).

Conflict prevention seeks to address deep-rooted disputes and conflict. Deep-rooted conflict includes cases of conflict with political elites/authorities, between political elites and among persons and groups in societies. Symptoms of deep-rooted conflict include “hostage taking, illegal strikes, public protest movements, ethnic violence, terrorism, gang warfare, and many other forms of intractable opposition to authority at one social level on another” (Burton, 1990:15). The conflict in the Kingdom of Lesotho is the case in point. The containment of conflict within existing frameworks is not possible, except over severely limited periods of time.

Burton argues that such conflicts require alterations in norms, institutions and policies to bring adjustment within the range of human acceptability and capability. Therefore, this requires an analysis of the total situation and an appropriate remedy, rather than merely the containment of dissident behaviours (1990:15). Social instability and human survival issues cannot be resolved in the absence of an explanatory and preventive approach to them. Often, the intervention approach to violent conflicts, such as peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy, seek to address only the symptoms of conflict, such as violence or the threat of violence and the cost of treating symptoms is far more expensive than treating the underlying causes giving rise to such conflicts. The short-sightedness of these approaches leads to the neglect of the real causes of conflict, hence the frequent recurrence of conflict after a period of stability, as evidenced in the case of countries such as Lesotho, Mozambique, Sudan, South Sudan, and many others.

### **Prevention Implies Change**

Unlike preventive diplomacy, which is a quick-fix and case by case approach to conflict escalation, prevention is the long-term policy approach that aims to eliminate the sources of conflict. According to Burton, “explanations of behaviour that direct attention to the need to adjust systems to people, rather than the other way around, provides a predictive base that usually points to the necessity to alter environments and conditions as the means of prevention” (1990:236). In other words, prevention requires change or transformation of the existing structures and institutions through policy that is geared towards addressing the underlying causes of conflict in the society. Conflict prevention as a policy, argues Burton, is a requirement of survival in a nuclear or any other age (1982). Preventive measures are relevant to those who are concerned with policy-making at local, regional, corporate, administrative and parliamentary levels, as well as in international organisations, and require far deeper

background knowledge of the sources of conflict, and of the environmental changes that would be required to *prevent* it (Burton, 1990:257).

### **Manifest and Latent Conflict: The cost of treating symptoms**

Issues that pertain to social stability and human survival cannot be addressed if there is an absence of explanatory and preventive approaches to them. Burton postulates that the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been characterized by a major shift to securitization, investing in major and costly industry in security checks, while little attention is given to the sources of robbery and terrorism. Financial muscles are concentrated more on jails and very little on the sources of deviant behaviours. Europe and the West “impose their institutions and values on peoples of other nations in the name of democracy and freedom, but there is little analysis and understanding of the oppressive circumstances that have led peoples and nations to their present condition, or their present felt needs for taking steps toward their independent development” (Burton, 1990:17). In the later chapters of his book *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*, Burton writes that:

*In the global society, great powers are still operating on the traditional assumption that other nations can be coerced into behaving in certain ways. This is the approach adopted by greater powers to “terrorism”, to competing economic and political systems, and to small states that seek to establish alternative political systems. It is predictable that war is frequently the result, despite the relatively weak position of small states. It should come as no surprise that small states can “win” conflicts with greater powers. Great powers have not yet come to terms with their failures to control by military force, because they have as yet little understanding that there are human needs that are not for trading and cannot be suppressed (1990:40).*

Meanwhile, the costs of containing conflict and violence - that is of treating symptoms by traditional coercive means - are more than societies can afford. The misdiagnosis of conflict comes with a proclivity from governments to be obsessed with treating the behaviour and not the underlying causes that give rise to the conflict, whether violent or non-violent. Sandole's (1987:289) distinction between genotypic (underlying) and phenotypic (behaviour), of the phenomena of conflict is the critical point of departure for this section:

‘What most of us think when we observe conflict situations are phenotypical phenomena: the claims and demands of the parties, their behaviour, (of an attack by one side on the other), the results of their behaviour (casualties) and level of their interaction (interpersonal, intergroup,

inter-organisational and international). It is also on the phenotypical plane that we observe differences among the specific manifestations of these abstract levels; family community, environmental, labour management, and interstate conflict and conflict management'. According to Bradshaw (2008:16), the underlying, invisible and giving rise to the phenotypic phenomena, are the genotypic. Mitchell (1981:17-32) takes this distinction further by separating conflict into three components:

**The underlying conflict situation, or contradiction;**

**Conflict attitudes;**

**Conflict behaviour.**

According to Mitchell, it is of paramount importance to distinguish the existence of conflict from its behavioural manifestations. Galtung (2002), as cited by Bradshaw (2008:17), argues that social conflict is a complex phenomenon, which refers to the behaviours, attitudes and structural underpinnings of contention among the social collective.

#### **Manifest and Latent Conflict: The ABC Triangle of Conflict**



Figure 1.1: The ABC triangle of Conflict. Source: Adapted from Galtung (1979:72).

Conflict is defined “in terms of incompatibilities, of contradictions, and that should not be confused with the attitudinal and behavioural consequences of conflict, often destructive (hatred and violence against objects and people)” (Galtung, 1979:105). They all come together in an ABC triangle, as illustrated in the figure above. Adopting Galtung’s ABC triangle and using it as a tool for analysis, one could argue that preventive diplomacy is more concerned with the manifest conflict. The manifest conflict refers to the behaviour within a conflict situation, such as fighting and violence. As previously argued above, preventive diplomacy, according to the United Nations (UN) Agenda for Peace, as presented by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali (1992), consists of the actions undertaken in order to “prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur”. Involving confidence-building measures, fact-finding, early warning, and possibly ‘preventive deployment’ of UN-authorized forces”. Preventive diplomacy seeks to reduce the danger of violence and increase the prospects for peaceful settlement. The basic tenets of preventive diplomacy are to prevent violent conflict from escalating.

Conflict prevention, however, is also concerned with the latent conflict (attitudes and contradictions). The approach as proposed in this paper, takes a holistic approach rather than a narrow view of conflict, as mostly evident during preventive diplomacy. Conflict prevention seeks to address the underlying causes of violent conflict. Transformation and development are at the core of conflict prevention in this regard. The concern is not with the elimination of violent behaviour, such as protests and fighting, but rather with the transformation of such attitudes and behaviour through addressing basic human needs. Addressing the behavioural forms of conflict as illustrated in the ABC triangle above does not solve the fundamental causes of violent conflict, but merely treats the symptoms. This point has been advanced in detail in the section above. In other words, preventive diplomacy alone is not sufficient to address conflict, whether domestic or international. A more holistic approach is needed. This paper will propose an approach in the following section.

### **Blended Social Conflict Approach**

In his writings, Galtung was the first to propose the concept of positive and negative peace; the latter was described as an “absence of violence, absence of war.” The former, which he described as integration of human society and the provision of basic human needs to all

members of the society (Galtung; 1964:2), is the one that is of most interest for this paper. The concept of peace is premised on the problem statement that, in spite of the notion of African solutions for African problems, there is no substantial progress regarding timely mediation of conflicts in Africa in order to safeguard stability, peace, people's rights and the provision of basic needs to all.

This paper proposed that sustainable peace requires conflict prevention, which facilitates the creation of positive peace, which some see as a "stable social equilibrium in which the surfacing of new disputes does not escalate into violence and war" (Reychler, 2001:12). The paper argued that sustainable peace is characterized by the absence of physical and structural violence and the elimination of discrimination and self-sustainability (Reychler, 2001:12). Its aim is to move a given population from a condition of extreme vulnerability and dependency to one of self-sufficiency and well-being. According to Bigdon and Korf (2004), positive peace could be described as "conflict transformation". Conflict transformation can be achieved by searching for the causes of conflict, which are often deeply rooted in human needs, dignity, recognition, safety and freedom. Johan Galtung's (1964; 1969) illuminating distinction between positive and negative peace is a useful point of departure to analyze preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention approaches to peace and conflict research.

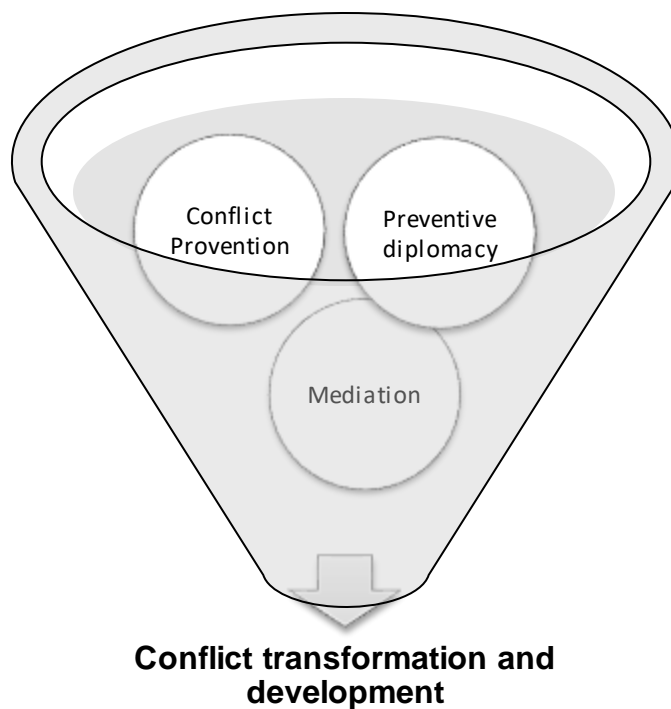
Galtung postulates that peace can be defined as an "absence of violence" and that violence is "the cause of difference between the potential and the actual". This approach allows him to differentiate between personal and structural violence. At the centre of personal violence is the individual, whereas structural violence more broadly focuses on whether the societal structures in which people live, enable them to realize their full potential. Thus, Galtung argues that peace and conflict research must not only focus on eliminating the immediate causes of war (creating negative peace), but also create societal structures conducive to long-term peace and general welfare (creating positive peace), (1969:167-168).

Peace and conflict researchers are often concerned with the wider goals of development (Gleditsch, 2004). This paper argued that human-centred development based on conflict prevention is the necessary alternative for sustainable peace and development. The paper has identified a need for African states to adopt a clear strategy on the management and intervention to African conflicts. The African intervention whether regional or continental into any conflict in Africa needs to be geared towards addressing the latent forms of conflict simultaneously with the manifest forms of conflict. The failure for any state or regional organisation to

comprehend the complexity of social conflict, whether violent or non-violent, has the potential of protracting the very same conflict it seek to address.

It is against this background that this paper proposes the use of conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy in order to achieve the transformation of conflict and development within regions and the continent of Africa. This is done through a proposed model, which is a work in progress by this author.

### **Blended Social Conflict Approach**



**Figure 1.2: Blended Social Conflict Approach**

The Blended Social Conflict Approach, as coined in this paper, is the combination of preventive diplomacy, which is concerned with preventing the escalation of disputes into violence, and conflict provention, which refers to the removing of underlying causes of conflict through development and transformation. This hybrid model needs mediation processes as a facilitating agent to enable conflict provention and preventive diplomacy. The model assumes that the ultimate results would be conflict transformation and development. Transformation speaks to the transformation of violent and destructive conflict into non-violent and positive conflict, and building of relationships, which acts as an agent for change. Development will result from the building of institutions and the fair distribution of resources, which address basic human needs. The model in this paper is briefly introduced and still needs further work



and tuning. This model could be used by the African governments as a foreign policy tool when mediating conflict in Africa.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has critically argued that preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention could combine the efficiency of conflict management and other related matters of any government's foreign policy. The locus of this was on the preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention as an approach for mediation and the resolution of conflicts in Africa, aiming to achieve, or at least help, countries to stabilize and start working on sustainable peace and security.

As argued in the previous section, prevention is an invented approach. The absence of a suitable word reflects the fact that prevention of an undesired event by removing its causes, and by creating conditions in which it cannot occur, has not been a focus of attention of societies or scholars. This paper has discussed conflict prevention in detail, drawing from the work of John Burton. Galtung's ABC triangle of conflict was adopted in this paper as a tool for analysis in order to differentiate between preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention. This enabled the writer to provide theoretical clarity about a need to propose an alternative approach to the mediation of conflict in Africa.

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