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Embracing a Common and Inclusive Approach: Building Sustainable Peace in a Violent Society from a Theological Ethics Perspective

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Abstract

Every violent conflict and war have negatively affected the structure of the common good in affected societies, leaving parties in a continuous state of sociopolitical and economic hardship. Such confrontational situations always create a need for peace to restore and secure the common good's destroyed structures and institutions. However, establishing peace in a society torn by violence and conflict is a complex task. Research shows that many approaches and mechanisms have not provided the desired sustainable peace and reconciliation. This has led researchers, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, religious groups, and other stakeholders to explore ways to build sustainable peace that restores the structures of the common good. Since 2000, the United Nations, along with different bodies, has advocated for an inclusive and collaborative approach, emphasizing the importance of involving everyone at the negotiation table through fair representation of women, youth, and Indigenous peoples. This has become necessary, mainly when conflicts occur between two communities within the same state or country, or between the government and non-state actors. While this is the primary focus, this paper attributes the emergence of conflicts to poor governance and the silence of the church or religious organizations in the face of corruption by political actors and elites. In light of this, it highlights the government's failure, as well as the recklessness and irresponsibility of political actors and elites. Therefore, the article calls on the church to courageously and boldly make its presence felt, challenging the government and political elites to be agents of justice, recognition, and respect for human dignity, human rights, and equality. Against this backdrop, this article employs the Church's theological ethics discourse as a method, which requires the Church to assess and evaluate itself, to question the status quo, and promote sustainable peace and development.

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Introduction

War and conflict cause significant collateral damage. Civilians mainly suffer from many consequences, serving as case studies for understanding the human costs of war. Conflict, in any form, should not be promoted, as the harm impacts those involved. They are expected to participate in negotiations to end the conflict and support efforts to rebuild, reconstruct, and rehabilitate. Therefore, this article argues that an inclusive approach to negotiation, which leads to peace, can help restore or recover the common good. Every conflict, upheaval, and war has always resulted in economic costs, which underpin the human toll. These costs slow down development or cause regression, affecting the living conditions of those affected and often forcing many to migrate or seek refugee status. Supporting this view, Matthew Levinger described the situation as follows: "Economists sometimes describe civil war and other violent upheavals as 'development in reverse, observing that the typical seven-year civil war results in a 30 percent increase in the incidence of absolute poverty in the affected country. The economic impact is long-lasting: a country requires an average of fourteen years of peace after a civil war to recover to its original growth path."¹ Reinforcing this, the 2011 World Bank report on the adverse effects of conflict or war states:

One-and-a-half and a half billion people live in areas affected by fragility, conflict, or large-scale, organized criminal violence, and no low-income fragile or conflict-affected country has yet to achieve a single United Nations Millennium Development Goal. ... While much of the world has made rapid progress in reducing poverty in the past 60 years, areas characterized by repeated cycles of political and criminal. Violence is being left far behind, compromising their economic growth, and their human indicators are stagnant.²

This highlight indicates the dangers of war or conflict in the affected areas. Thus, it reveals that, while people are going through a lot, there is an increase in military spending, capital flight, or the destruction of infrastructure, and a loss of social capital, which plunges many, including neighboring states or communities, into difficult situations. Hence, "neighboring states may face the economic and social stresses of accommodating many refugees. Pakistan, for example, hosted two million refugees from Afghanistan during the 1990s. About 70 percent of the world's refugees are hosted by neighboring countries."³

As noted earlier, the situation has a significant impact on the well-being and quality of life of the people. In light of this, Paul Collier et al. pointed out that the most severe human costs of conflict are often borne by civilians, whose daily lives are disrupted by violence. Infant mortality rises by an average of 13 percent during a five-year war, and adult mortality rates among refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) increase even more. Remarkably, higher mortality rates frequently persist long after the conflict ends.⁴ In its investigation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) pointed out the unprecedented negative impact of war or conflict, especially civil wars. Its 2010 report highlighted that forty-three million civilians worldwide were displaced by conflict, which is double the number thirty years ago.⁵ This challenge, confronting as it is, demands that something urgent be done to address the problem at its root. However, since many peacebuilding approaches have failed to address the situation, the United Nations, in conjunction with other international organizations, has recommended an inclusive approach to the peace process as a new mechanism to address the conflict.

An inclusive peace approach is necessary, as most conflicts or wars are intrastate. Therefore, an approach that connects the affected people and community to participate at the negotiating table, leading to a peace agreement and accord, is recommended. It will be a trajectory for sustainable peace, restoration of the lost common good, and development. However, it is often discovered that the government or political elites have allowed such practices to persist, likely for their political aggrandizement, while everyone else looks on. In light of this, the church or Christianity is expected not to sit idly by like any other. Still, it should serve as a force to push the government or political elites to take the necessary steps to arrest the situation, rather than acting as if it is a partner with them. At this point, it should stand to be the voice of those affected by the conflict, the poor, the excluded, those suffering injustice, and the marginalized, whose conditions and mistreatments have always constituted greater causes of conflict. Thus, it should constantly remind the government and political elites that justice is the backdrop of peace, while also remaining in proximity to the poor and victims of division and injustice. Pope Paul VI says that "if you want peace, work for justice."⁶

¹ Matthew Levinger, *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking the Solutions* (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace, Academy Guides, 2013), 22.

² World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011), 1.

³ Matthew Levinger, *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking the Solutions*, 22.

⁴ Paul Collier, V. L. Elliott, Håvard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003), 23-24.

⁵ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2010*, 10th ed. (New York: UNHCR, 2011), 12, www.unhcr.org/4e9c8d10.html. Accessed April 11, 2025.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, *World Day Message of Peace, 1972*. The world has hyped its efforts towards peacebuilding, yet unfortunately, it has not sincerely and courageously sought to understand why these efforts seem to be in vain. To this end, the Pontiff had to point out to the world government and, of course, the entire human race that there is no way to have peace if we are not prepared to address

Bad governance: the backdrop of violent conflict

Good governance is closely linked to genuine politics and is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the common good. This means that politics, from the beginning, serves as a mechanism for human flourishing and social transformation. Unfortunately, some politicians have fallen short of their duty to serve humanity and ensure sociopolitical and economic development that offers hope for the future. Supporting this, Pope Francis notes: "The development of a global community of fraternity based on the practice of social friendship on the part of peoples and nations calls for a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good. Sadly, politics today often takes forms that hinder progress towards a different world." (Fratelli Tutti, §54) Accordingly, it is clear that politics has failed to address challenges affecting humanity and society; as a result, citizens often behave in ways that are harmful to one another. This leads to crises, conflicts, and violence. Of course, we must recognize that our world and communities are filled with differences, diversities, multiculturalities, and multiethnicities. When politics does not acknowledge these characteristics, our communities risk degenerating into a state of nature, where there is "war of all against all" (*bellum omnium contra omnes*) – "homo homini lupus" (Man is wolf to man), as attributed to Thomas Hobbes. This suggests incompatibility among people of different backgrounds, nationalities, tribes, ethnicities, and races, with the primary motive being a lust for domination— "libido dominandi"⁷—as the foundation of violent conflict or war, according to Augustine of Hippo.

So, as we still experience lingering wars and violent conflicts in our world today, it highlights the failure of politics, which has not addressed the challenges posed by differences and diversity in multicultural and ethnic communities. Coming from an African background, I am aware that many wars and conflicts result from struggles for superiority among tribes and groups, which often stem from or lead to political exclusion and inequality. The case of the Rwandan genocide, where even Christians killed themselves during Easter, underscores the government's failure, as it was rooted in the prioritization of tribe over political unity, reinforcing ethnic identity.

Ethnicity has been a key identity marker in Rwanda since its colonization and subsequent independence. Colonial masters constructed ethnic identities among the three ethnic groups: Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. Unfortunately, it continued to be reinforced by the post-independence government, leading to the enabler and driver of violent conflict culminating in genocide in 1994 that claimed almost one million Rwandese.⁸ Following this, the popular belief shows that tribal hatred and tribalism are the root cause of the genocide that stemmed from the civil war that started in the 1990s. Thus, claiming more than one-third 1/3 of the population of the minority group of Tutsi and those of the Hutu who never aligned with the Hutus that carried out the genocide.⁹ However, some authors best described as tribalists have argued against this. Li Darryl argues that it was part of an explanation provided by the international media. Hence, he believes that it was not particular to Rwanda. Thus, many violent conflicts that had taken place in sub-Saharan Africa were attributed to ethnic and tribal animosities and jingoism.¹⁰ Still, many authors maintain a history of ethnic and tribal animosities and differences in matters of origin and sociopolitical role.

This narrative holds that the Tutsis were settler-colonial invaders who subjected the indigenous Hutu population, exploiting them (and poorer Tutsis) through clientelism, while systematically excluding them from power. Within this narrative, there are varying degrees of recognition of the fluidity of ethnicity in the pre-colonial period. However, most theorists recognize that the high rates of intermarriage, the difference in political structures, and the ambiguity surrounding the Tutsi/Hutu/Twa designations and their linkage to occupation and wealth mean that 'ethnicity' may be too anachronistic a term to use.¹¹ However, the argument whether the Rwandan genocide was a result of tribal and ethnic animosities and hatred is not the focus of this essay, but what I wanted to highlight here, using the Rwandan genocide, is the poor politics that has resulted in poor management of what should have been avoided to save lives and properties. Therefore, my stand remains that poor governance is the backdrop of any issues that lead to conflict in any country or community.

In other climes, even in the developed world, there have been cases of racism, discrimination, inequalities, exclusion, and xenophobia that have, in the recent past and at present, been the root causes of ongoing conflicts in different parts of the globe. The World Bank and the United Nations have studied and recommended inclusion as a trajectory for mitigating violent conflict, noting an increasing number of conflicts in various regions and countries due to exclusion and inequality. When violence is mitigated or prevented, a record of economic development often follows,

the problem of injustice. This might mean saying that the victims of injustice are like a time bomb that detonates at any time if the province of justice does not address their agenda.

⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *City of God, Book XI*, (Modern Library ed., 1993), Preface, 1.4., 3.14.

⁸ Wendy Lambourne, *Ethnic Conflict and Genocide in Rwanda* in the Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity (Palgrave Macmillan online, 2019), 1-33.

⁹ Susan Thomson, "Genocide in Rwanda" in *Oxford Bibliographies online*, February 27, 2019, DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199846733-0032.

¹⁰ Li, Darryl, "Echoes of Violence: Considerations on Radio and Genocide in Rwanda." In *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, edited by Allan Thompson (2007), 90-109. Ann Arbor: Pluto Press. https://prd-idrc.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/openbooks/338-0/#page_167

¹¹ Millaray Freire-Archer, *Constructed Identity or Elite Manipulation? Ethnicity in Rwanda*, (2018-12-12) <https://www.crgreview.com/constructed-identity-or-elite-manipulation-ethnicity-in-rwanda/>.

resulting from sustainable peace.¹² This can only be realized when an inclusive approach is applied, as most conflicts recorded in specific regions and countries stem from injustice arising from exclusion and discrimination. In recent times, it has been observed that we have had many conflicts within regions and countries, as opposed to how it used to be when conflicts were mainly between two countries, as seen during the World Wars and the Cold War. Corroborating this, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) observe that "The number of internal state-based conflicts – involving state and nonstate forces within the boundaries of a state – has risen sharply. After peaking at 50 in 1991, the number of these conflicts declined for several years but then increased again. In 2016, 47 internal state-based violent conflicts were recorded – the second-highest number in the post-Cold War era, after 2015, when the UCDP recorded 51 state-based conflicts."¹³

Following this, it is clear that internal conflicts and uprisings originate from poor governance. It would be foolish to see the government's inability to control the parties involved in these conflicts as the main cause of the issues, which can indeed be identified. The most troubling aspect is the government's engagement with non-armed groups from specific communities, as highlighted by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the Peace Research Institute Oslo. This highlights the irresponsibility and insensitivity of the government. Any responsible government would always seek to prevent conditions that could lead to uprisings from particular ethnic or tribal groups, such as feelings of exclusion, discrimination, and injustice, which serve as the backdrop. This pattern has been observed in many countries worldwide. In light of this, an irresponsible government can be seen as being insensitive because it fails to address the root causes of conflicts between different groups within a nation or between the state and certain armed factions.

Some observations also suggest that the government's irresponsibility and insensitivity have contributed to conflicts between natives and foreigners in the same region. There have been instances of xenophobic attacks and skirmishes in various countries worldwide related to this issue. The ongoing occurrence of such xenophobic violence has negatively impacted regional and national integration laws. Undoubtedly, these governments would struggle to make meaningful contributions toward reconsidering integration laws. In Africa, South Africa serves as a pragmatic example of a nation known for xenophobia. There have been xenophobic attacks on foreigners by South African citizens that raise concerns about the African Union's integration laws. Bonga Wellington Garikai supports this view by saying that "Xenophobic attacks have increasingly escalated in South Africa, hence becoming a significant area of concern."¹⁴ Every xenophobic attack, as I earlier pointed out, is directed at foreigners and is driven by prejudice, hatred, and biases against foreign nationals.¹⁵ It has, in the course of this, affected many refugees, economic migrants, asylum seekers, and other locally defined outsiders such as domestic migrants and ethnic minorities.¹⁶ It is disappointing to see that South Africa, which has suffered exclusion and discrimination through the reality of apartheid rule, should be identified as a place of xenophobic violence and a place where democratic parity and people's dignity are recognized and respected on account of their foreign identity. Once again, this raises a multiplicity of questions.¹⁷ This has consistently exposed the weaknesses and irresponsibility of the South African government, even though it is not unique outside Africa. Europe has had a record of xenophobia leading to political racism. According to the United Nations

A reflection of current trends is that there are more racist politicians among the current 785 MEPs than members representing the 15 million ethnic minorities and third-country nationals living in European Union (EU) countries, making them the Union's eighth largest country out of 27. The 19 members of the ITS group include leading lights of extreme right-wing parties across Europe, and, despite the rhetoric, their real views are not hard to find. The ITS leader is French MEP Bruno Gollnisch, Deputy Leader of Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National, who was charged in January 2007 with Holocaust denial. Andreas Moelzer was the brains behind the success of Jorg Haider's Austrian Freedom Party, the same Haider who refused to condemn a terrorist bombing that killed four Roma. Frank Vanhecke

¹² World Bank Group and United Nations, *Pathways for Peace, Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, (Washington D.C.: World Bank. Doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1162-3., 2018), 1.

¹³ The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) *provided us with data that showed an increase and a continuous rise in state-based internal conflicts*. Some of these conflicts were a result of the contested incompatibility or exclusion existing between the government and certain territories, resulting in many battle-related deaths. Pinker S., and Mack A., "The World is not Falling Apart." In Slate, December 22, 2014. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2014/12/the_world_is_not_falling_apart_the_trend_lines_reveal_an_increasingly_peaceful.html.

¹⁴ Bonga Wellington Garikai, "Impact of Xenophobia Attacks in South Africa on Regional Integration Agenda" in *Dynamic Research Review*, 2021. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353764140>.

¹⁵ Misago, J.P., Freemantle, I., and Landau, L.B., *Protection from Xenophobia: An Evaluation of UNHCR's Regional Office for Southern Africa's Xenophobia Related Programmes. The African Centre for Migration and Society, University of Witwatersrand*, 2015, Saya, K., *Xenophobia attacks and Africa's regional integration: a case of South Africa's xenophobia attacks from 2000 – 2015*. Bachelors Dissertation, Department of Politics and Public Management, Midlands State University, 2015.

¹⁶ Misago, J.P., Freemantle, I., and Landau, L.B., *Protection from Xenophobia: An Evaluation of UNHCR's Regional Office for Southern Africa's Xenophobia Related Programmes. The African Centre for Migration and Society, University of Witwatersrand*, 2015.

¹⁷ Choane, M., Shulika, L.S., and Mthombeni, M., "An Analysis of the Causes, Effects and Ramifications of Xenophobia in South Africa." *Insight on Africa*, Volume: 3, Issue: 2 (2011), 129-142.

is a leader of the Flemish Vlaams Belang party, which demands that immigrants must totally assimilate into Western culture or be repatriated. Yet all three are trying to reposition the ITS, claiming they are within the mainstream of European politics. One sign of this rebranding is the rejection of the "Europe of the Fatherlands" name for the group, with its echoes of Hitler and the Nazis, despite its earlier use for the joint newsletter of the majority of its current membership.¹⁸

The cause of xenophobia is not far from us. Some scholars have highlighted it. Among them is Bruce, who believes that the instability of the nationals, as the cause of xenophobic violence, is born in the nation to form a bad culture.¹⁹ Such a bad culture seems to have become a tradition, thereby becoming ingrained in the lives of people, who often feel that some individuals around them are not worthy of recognition and respect, and therefore are not fully integrated into their national life or treated well. This has since fallen within the realm of human rights violations, and, in fact, human rights violations often indicate poor governance, characterized by irresponsibility, insensitivity, and an inability to handle situations that can generate conflict and violence. Human rights violations are proof that some people suffer inhumanity, marginalization, inequality, and discrimination based on gender, race, tribe, ethnicity, nationality, and region. This is why it has had a negative impact on the regional, national, and global law of integration. Thereby, pushing many human rights groups to come up with an intervention approach that would restore the lost recognition and respect for human dignity and rights due to xenophobic violence and political racism. Part of this effort, according to Bonga Wellington, is that "the organizations continue to work tirelessly, engaging various governments on issues of discrimination, hatred, and unfair treatment of foreigners. The establishments attempt to establish relevant authority over the chore and ensure accountability for numerous activities by politicians. Human Rights Watch, one of the human rights organisations, documents killings, serious injuries, forced displacement, discrimination, and barriers to justice and basic services. These statistics validate arguments to end xenophobia."²⁰

In light of this, poor governance at any level creates a foundation for conflicts, violence, and various crises. It results from ineffective politics that ignore their responsibilities, including a failure to recognize that everyone has equal rights and dignity regardless of nationality, ethnicity, tribe, region, race, or country. It also shows an inability to manage crises caused by diversity and differences, along with insensitivity to the fact that political settlements can prevent or reduce conflicts or violence arising from a specific group, tribe, race, or ethnicity. Therefore, in a multiethnic society, if politics do not adequately address diversity and differences, acts of exclusion, discrimination, and inequality are likely to develop, leading to conflicts and violence.

The Church/ Christianity and the Imprudent Silence as a backdrop for Crises

While it seems that the bulk of sociopolitical and economic problems stem from poor governance, it is worth noting that the Church or Christianity, on various occasions, has failed in its duty to confront the government or the political system on some issues plaguing society. The silence or quietness of someone who has been gifted with the mouth and intellect amid forces stunting human flourishing, sociopolitical transformation, and development can be misconstrued at times as complicit or abetting. Pope Gregory the Great would condemn such an attitude in his pastoral guide, as he would rebuke those who remain silent when they should speak out. He identifies such silence as imprudent because of fear. Thus, he states: "Indiscreet speech may lead men into error, and an imprudent silence may leave in error those who could have been taught. Pastors who lack foresight hesitate to say openly what is right because they fear losing the favor of men. As the voice of truth tells us, such leaders are not zealous pastors who protect their flocks; rather, they are like mercenaries who flee by taking refuge in silence when the wolf appears."²¹ He continues by saying that for any pastor to remain silent in the face of confronting challenges against their flock would amount to fear, complicity, or collusion with the perpetrators of evil against the people and society. "When a pastor has been afraid to assert what is right, has he not turned his back and fled by remaining silent? Whereas if he intervenes on behalf of the flock, he sets up a wall against the enemy in front of the house of Israel. Therefore, the Lord again says to his unfaithful people: Your prophets saw false and foolish visions and did not point out your wickedness, that you might repent of your sin."²²

Following this, there has been evidence of rising and increasing growth of the church or Christianity in numbers and visible romance with politicians amid an increase in political instability, corruption, violence, and conflict. Such a visible relationship that has not translated into human flourishing and sociopolitical transformation has instead

¹⁸ The United Nations, *In the Wake of Xenophobia: The New Racism in Europe*, September 2011. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/wake-xenophobia-new-racism-europe>.

¹⁹ Bruce, L-A., "Recurrence of xenophobic attacks in South Africa." *Centre for Applied Legal Studies*, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2017.

²⁰ Bonga Wellington Garikai, *Impact of Xenophobia Attacks in South Africa on Regional Integration Agenda*, 2021.

²¹ Pope Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, Lib 2, 4: PL 77, 30-31, also contained in the Office of the Reading of the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time of the year. Known for his oratory, political prowess, and courage, Gregory the Great, in his pastoral guide, expects that every priest in the manner of alter Christus should be courageous enough to call evil by its proper name, especially when the flock is negatively impacted. The society is on the brink of collapsing.

²² Ibid.

presented the church or Christianity as failing in its prophetic duty. Emmanuel Katongole elaborates on this thought, contextualizing the growth of Christianity in Africa as having little to no positive impact. He pointed out that the continuous development of Christianity in Africa is at par with an increasing poverty, violence, and civil war. In light of this, he states:

Christianity continues to grow and thrive in Africa, but so too grow the realities of poverty, violence, and civil war. Perhaps because of this fact, in the last twenty years, we have witnessed a renewed interest in Christian social ethics, which has resulted in a number of recommendations regarding Christianity's role in the search for peace, democracy, and development in Africa. But while these recommendations confirm Christianity's social relevance, they do not explain why war, tribalism, poverty, corruption, and violence have been endemic to Africa's social history. Neither do these recommendations and suggestions get to the heart of the Christian story, which is a fresh vision for the world in which we live.²³

Regardless of how anyone perceives it, it is clear that Christianity is being criticized here because the visible increase in its numbers suggests that those contributing to the rising issues of poverty, violence, tribalism, and discrimination are part of the church or Christianity. Consequently, Christianity is expected to rise to the occasion by enhancing the relationship between religion and politics in Africa. At this point, according to Katongole, the "most urgent task for Christian social ethics is to make politics work better, that is to become more democratic and transparent, with the expectation that properly functioning nation-state politics in Africa will ensure peace and stability and thus advance development."²⁴

However, this focus should not be limited to Africa; it must be broadened and expanded to include the entire Christian community in the global context, primarily as conflict, violence, war, discrimination, and inequality have spread around the globe and are visibly militating against humanity and human dignity. Of course, this demonstrates that democracy and leadership issues are not limited to Africa but are prevalent almost everywhere in the world. Therefore, it is not enough to boast about the billions of Christians in the world, which amounts to approximately 2.38 billion.²⁵ Still, the question will always be whether their number has made a significant impact on our world, which is often perceived as a religiously driven human consciousness and people's development savvy. It is evident that out of this population of Christianity in our world, many politicians are heads of state, members of parliament, judicial councils, and political appointees who have influenced sociopolitical decisions, political, and executive orders that have negatively impacted humanity, society, and even led to conflict and violence. At the same time, they romanced with the ecclesiastical authorities.

The active involvement of Christians and their leaders in the Rwandan genocide in 1994 exposes the failure of Christianity in contending with conflict and its contribution to violent conflict. The genocide that took place when Rwanda had almost 90% of the population being Christian shows how Christian teaching did not ingrain in the hearts of the people to avert the tribal and ethnic driven genocide. It wasn't delightful to learn how a Christian leader, in responding to Cardinal Roger Marie Ellie Etchegaray, the Papal special envoy, who was shocked that Christians participated in killing one another on account of division along ethnic and tribal lines, believed that the blood of tribalism is thicker than the waters of baptism. As the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace from 1984 to 1998, he asked the assembled church leaders on his visit to Rwanda in 1994, "Are you saying that the blood of tribalism is deeper than the waters of baptism?" One leader answered, "Yes, it is."²⁶ Following this, Katongole says that "If Rwanda is a mirror to the Church, then we must face in it all the contradictions that cloud the global Christian identity."²⁷ It is indeed a contradiction that the church was intricately involved in the Rwandan genocide, as highlighted by a man called Adalbert.

He recalls how on that fateful day, Saturday, President Habyarimana's plane crashed. That Saturday was during Easter Week, when he attended his usual choir practice, which involved both Tutsi and Hutu members at the church in Kibungo. According to him, "We sang hymns in good feeling with our Tutsi compatriots, our voices still blending in chorus." But when they returned for mass the next morning, the Tutsi were not there. They had already fled into the bush. This angered the Hutus in the church, including Adalbert, who immediately organized to chase after Tutsi

²³ Emmanuel Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY, 2011), 1.

²⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁵ Pew Research estimated the Christian population at about 2.38 billion. However, subsequent research has claimed a higher figure of up to 2.5 billion, making Christianity account for 31% or one-third of the global population. Therefore, with this population, it is expected that it will bring about a significant change in our world, both in politics and economics, to foster human flourishing and sociopolitical growth and development. Unfortunately, the world has continued to witness violence, war, poverty, and exclusion amid the increasing rise of the Christian population.

²⁶ Confer Peter Hebblethwaite, "In Rwanda, 'Blood is Thicker Than Water'," *National Catholic Reporter* (June 1994)

²⁷ Emmanuel Katongole, *Mirror To the Church, Resurrection Faith after Genocide in Rwanda* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009), 22.

church members. “We left the Lord and our prayers inside to rush home.” We changed from our Sunday best into our workaday clothes, we grabbed clubs and machetes, and we went straight off to killing.²⁸

In light of the foregoing, this represents an example of Christianity that failed to transform the world through its teaching and life. Apart from Rwanda, many Christians have been involved in cases that advance inhumanity, exclusion, inequality, and discrimination that have led to conflicts and crises. Aware of this, Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, urges us to avoid the economy of exclusion and inequality. Thus, he states:

Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality... Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode.²⁹ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, §§53 and 59)

I am sure that Pope Francis was not just addressing a specific group, but everyone, including the members of the Christian community, as this exhortation highlights the fact that will make the Gospel palatable to the hearers and recipients. At this point, the bulk of this work rests on the Church. The leaders of the church, by the power vested in them, are expected to guide the members of the Christian community to live so as not to be a visible agent of exclusion, discrimination, and inequality that can generate violent conflict. In light of this, the church would become an inspiration to the political class of society as an advocate of equity with clean hands. To this end, the church would not just be a field hospital for the poor and those on the margins of society, as Pope Francis suggests, but for the entire society, including the government and politicians, by speaking courageously to the hearts of leaders to lead rightly. Hence, its mission will alter the theological trajectory to address not only the problem of poverty but also the challenges of conflict.

At this time, theology must address conflicts: not only those that we experience within the Church, but also those that concern the world as a whole and those which are lived on the streets of Latin America. Do not settle for a desktop theology. Your place for reflection is the frontier. Do not fall into the temptation to embellish, to add fragrance, to adjust them to some degree, and domesticate them. Even good theologians, like good shepherds, have the odour of the people and of the street and, by their reflection, pour oil and wine onto the wounds of mankind.³⁰

In light of this, Pope Francis suggests that the church, as a field hospital, can achieve this in three ways: by proclaiming Christ, addressing inequalities, and sowing hope, which can only be accomplished through the grace of the Holy Spirit.³¹ Thus, Pope Francis challenges the church in this manner: “The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after a battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. ... And you have to start from the ground up.”³²

A few months ago, a Catholic bishop in Benue State, Nigeria, Bishop Anagbe, openly expressed his concerns as he courageously called on the government to protect his flock and the entire community from the attacks of Fulani herdsmen and Islamic extremists. When it became apparent that the state governor, who happened to be a Catholic priest (Fr. Hyacinth Alia), and the Federal Government of Nigeria were not paying attention, he even traveled to the United States to seek international awareness and intervention. His reports, which sound so prophetic, were articulated thus:

In a powerful plea for international attention, Bishop of Makurdi Diocese, Wilfred Chikpa Anagbe, highlighted the escalating violence and persecution faced by Christians in Nigeria during a recent U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs meeting. With Benue State, where he serves, being predominantly Christian, Anagbe described it as one of the

²⁸ Ibid., 33.

²⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium, the Apostolic Exhortation* (2013), emphasizing the joy of the Gospel, can only be accomplished when we pay attention to the message of the Gospel and strive to live out to avert what might bring disrepute to the face of Jesus Christ in the world. The church is now charged with the responsibility of transforming the world through its gospel mission amid the crises, violence, and conflict that are taking a toll on people's lives.

³⁰ A Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to Grand Chancellor of the PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA ARGENTINA FOR THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY in 2015. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150303_lettera-universita-cattolica-argentina.html.

³¹ Pope Francis highlights this in his remarks on the third meeting of the Church as a Field Hospital, held in the Vatican in 2024, which was an initiative of Spain's Mensajeros de la Paz Associatio. While appreciating the attendees, the Pope Francis reminds them of the importance of making the vision of the Gospel realizable by walking with the poorest, repairing inequality, and being hope to the vulnerable, and doing so would be able to inspire those who will join in advancing the message of the church as a Field Hospital in our communities and society. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-11/pope-francis-the-church-is-a-field-hospital.html>.

³² Pope Francis, quoted in *American Magazine*, “A Big Heart Open to God,” September 19, 2013.

most dangerous regions for believers, citing a long-term Islamic agenda aimed at eradicating Christian identity. Anagbe detailed the alarming rise of Islamist extremism, which he claims has led to systematic attacks on Christian communities, including killings, land seizures, and the destruction of churches. He emphasized that the violence is not merely a religious conflict but is driven by a quest for control over fertile lands, with militant Fulani herdsmen acting as enforcers for powerful interests. "They are taking all the places," he stated, underscoring the expansionist approach that forces Christians to flee their ancestral homes.³³

Following this, the bishop's position reflects what the church, viewed as a field hospital, is expected to do to save the poor and vulnerable and to prevent the state from imploding, which could lead to uncontrollable conflicts and crises. Unfortunately, rather than strongly supporting Bishop Anagbe's outcry about the rising insecurity and the killings of Christians, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) released a Communique on the same day, which somewhat appeared to have a voice that was so calm as not to corroborate that of Bishop Anagbe. However, anyone can understand that they were trying to avoid being misunderstood as fanning the ember of division, conflict, and violence, even when the claims they made as achievements of the Federal government of Nigeria were discovered to have been poorly and corruptly executed, or yet to be implemented. For example, they stated:

Our nation has recently witnessed some positive developments. These include the reinvigoration of the Petroleum Industry, the rehabilitation of some dilapidated roads and the construction of new ones across the nation, the introduction of the student loan scheme, the new minimum wage, the reduction in the debt service-to-revenue ratio, and the proposal for a new tax regime. The Nigeria Correctional Service Act 2019 was a landmark in the history of prison services in Nigeria. It was a shift from the perception of the prison as a centre for retribution to a "correctional" facility with a focus on reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration. We commend some cheering strides made by governments at various levels to promote agriculture. We equally appreciate the efforts of some security operatives, who put their lives on the line to fight criminality and put an end to their savagery.³⁴

A statement like this often leaves people who find poor and corrupt implementation of such matters feeling disappointed with the church. Many times, they see the church as a partner with the government, which has proven to be anti-people. People are hungry while the church praises the government for its efforts to improve agriculture. It is frustrating to hear the church praise the government for strong security when many are losing their lives to terrorists, bandits, kidnappers, and killer herdsmen, as Bishop Anagbe pointed out. This situation is like "Nero fiddles while Rome burns." Given this, it's clear that the church's silence, its lack of proper investigation into how the government's claims were carried out, and its failure to question the status quo, along with a perceived closeness to the government, could be seen as excluding the people from important issues that affect them. Such an attitude can alienate the people from both the church and the government or cause the church to lose its respect as a genuine mother to the people. Therefore, in times of crisis, conflict, and violence, it might be viewed as a potential victim, alongside the destruction of property and physical structures that represent the government's institutions.

Meaning the business: finding and addressing the root causes of Sociopolitical and Economic Challenges.

The effectiveness of any government is measured by its ability to identify the root causes of issues that hinder human flourishing, as well as sociopolitical and economic development, work to contain them, and address these challenges effectively. Similarly, the presence of the church as a visible reflection of God's kingdom is judged by its capacity to lead in advancing justice and to raise its voice to alert the government to sociopolitical and economic problems. Thus, becoming a source of hope for the hopeless and despair. This implies that the bulk of sociopolitical transformation and economic development lies with the government, as it is seen and identified as next to God. This is why even the bible recommends respect and collaboration with the government for a better society and human flourishing. St. Paul's letter to the Romans stated:

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers, no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong.³⁵

This must have inspired Martin Luther to develop his treatise on *Secular Authorities* in 1523. In this treatise, he pointed out that God rules the world chiefly through two authorities: churchly and earthly kingdoms. However, the earthly kingdom supersedes the churchly kingdom, as he believes it has the responsibility of protecting the good people and punishing the bad, including church leaders. This must be done within the ambience of the positive law and compulsion from the sword. Corroborating this, David Whittle stated: "God has given the secular prince the

³³ Citizens Portal, "Bishop speaks on Christian persecution in Nigeria's Benue State amid rising Islamic Violence," March 13, 2025. <https://citizenportal.ai/articles/2595220/>.

³⁴ Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), *THE JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE: A LIGHT FOR A NEW NIGERIA: A Communiqué issued at the end of the First Plenary Meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN)* at the CSN Resource Centre, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Durumi, Abuja, 8-14 March 2025.

³⁵ New International Version Bible, St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 13, verses 1-3.

power of the sword for the maintenance of order and justice. That calling itself is a high and worthy office. The magistrate—whether king, duke, burgher, or father—should devote himself to that calling and leave the proclamation of the Word and the disposition of souls to God and the church.”³⁶ Taking a cue from this, it is evident that Luther’s treatise assigns considerable power to protect and maintain order in the worldly government, and highlights the separation of Church and State in terms of specific roles. Thus, the church’s role becomes specifically spiritual. Luther categorically puts it thus: “[T]hese people [that is, the people of the kingdom of God] need no secular sword or law. And if all the world were composed of real Christians, that is, true believers, no prince, no king, lord, sword, or law would be needed. For what would be the use of them, since Christians have in their hearts the Holy Spirit who instructs them and causes them to wrong no one . . .”³⁷ However, Luther later seems to have changed the narrative somewhat, as his submission suggests not just collaboration from the realm of the spirit. Thus, he says, “Here the other proposition applies, that you [as a Christian] are under obligation to serve and further the sword by whatever means you can, with body, soul, honor, or goods. For it [meaning government] is nothing that you need, but something quite useful and profitable for the whole world and your neighbor.”³⁸

Following this, the observation reveals that while the first quote emphasizes the church-state separation in specific roles that seem to have no point of convergence, the second quote, while maintaining the separation, creates space for their relationship to support social order. In light of this, this treatise helps us recognize that the government and the church should leverage each other’s strengths for sociopolitical change, economic growth, and human development.

Against this backdrop, conflicts and crises in any society can be linked to poor governance, ineffective political processes, and the apathy and insensitivity of the church. One Nigerian military president, General Sani Abacha, is noted to have said that if conflicts or acts of terrorism last more than twenty-four hours in any country, then the government is aware of it. When asked if the perpetrators of banditry, insurgency, terrorism, and kidnapping receive support and patronage from political elites, Samuel Tabara, the President of the Southern Kaduna Peoples’ Union (SOKAPU), responded:

I would not dismiss that because let me remind us of a famous statement from the late General Sani Abacha, which says that if insurgency lasts more than 24 hours, the government must have a hand in it. That statement has continued to resonate, and we have seen a few cases where individuals in the security agencies have been complicit. Now, we cannot rule that out. Yes, these individuals have sponsors. Some people may use them for power bargaining and politics. Therefore, we cannot rule that out.³⁹

Church/ Christianity’s Role

In light of the foregoing, it is the church’s prerogative to speak out when the government fails to adequately address or resolve the crisis and conflicts affecting the country’s social, political, and economic development, rather than remain silent. The church must challenge a system that pushes people into poverty and crisis with courage. At this moment, the church’s voice during a crisis should resonate with that of Archbishops Herder Camara and Oscar Romero, who, while employing a nonviolent approach, uncompromisingly confronted injustices, exploitation, poverty, and corruption that left many people vulnerable and incapacitated in their countries, Brazil and El Salvador. In doing so, they made the message of Jesus and the Word of God a powerful force for transformation, prioritizing the people and victims of conflicts and crises—making them central to efforts to build and rebuild communities torn apart by conflict. This requires establishing a strong presence that is clearly understood and felt by the people in countries where politicians have become wolves to the populace or are indifferent to issues that can lead to conflict and violence.

Martyn Whittock lends credence to this by commenting on the invitation of Christians to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. He says that “the Christian community is rooted in the idea of being ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). From this comes the idea that Christians are not only called to declare to others the nature of God and the way of salvation, but also to counteract that which corrupts the world and undermines communities.

³⁶ David M. Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance: The Magdeburg Confession and the Lutheran Tradition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 33.

³⁷ Martin Luther, *Secular Authority: To What Extent Should It Be Followed*, trans. C. M. Jacobs, in *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1930), 225-273 at 241.

³⁸ Luther, *Secular Authority: To What Extent Should It Be Followed*, 235.

³⁹ See AllNigeria News Paper, March 27, 2024. Late Abacha said that if insurgency lasts more than 24 hours, the government must have a hand in it- Tabara. General Sani Abacha was the military president of Nigeria from 1993 to 1998. He was known for his brutality as an army general who participated in and helped in many successful coup d’états that ousted many military governments. He interrupted the Interim government formed by Babangida, who annulled the 1993 adjudged free, fair, and credible election that saw MKO Abiola as the winner. So, the statement attributed to him must be coming out of experience. Such a statement should always be used to assess every Government that has been witnessing continued conflicts or crises of any sort, since it has been given the power of the sword to maintain order and justice. Failure to do it would amount to collaboration with the perpetrators. There is no way nonstate actors can overpower the government or have their way for a long time in crisis and conflict-ridden communities, states, and countries.

In other words, to be a salt-like presence in the world.”⁴⁰ Unfortunately, many Christian communities and their leaders have often remained silent out of fear of being seen as confrontational in a society where injustice, discrimination, conflict, violence, and poverty have become the new normal due to the political misconduct of rulers. Therefore, Archbishop Oscar Romero said this as a break from the usual pattern:

“A church that suffers no persecution but enjoys the privileges and support of the things of the earth - beware! - is not the true church of Jesus Christ. A preaching that does not point out sin is not the preaching of the gospel. A preaching that makes sinners feel good, so that they are secured in their sinful state, betrays the gospel's call. “God of justice, we repent the sin of our church when it fails to denounce injustice in our world and to call its people to repentance and conversion.” “When the church hears the cry of the oppressed, it cannot but denounce the social structures that give rise to and perpetuate the misery from which the cry arises.” “The church would betray its own love for God and its fidelity to the gospel if it stopped being . . . a defender of the rights of the poor . . . a humanizer of every legitimate struggle to achieve a more just society . . . that prepares the way for the true reign of God in history.”⁴¹

In a world constantly marked by conflict, injustice, and inequality, Archbishop Dom Helder Camara was famously found on the side of the poor, the excluded, and the victims of conflict through a nonviolent approach. To this end, he was nicknamed the “bishop of slums.” Internationally known for his human rights advocacy, he confronted the military dictatorship of his time, from 1964 to 1985.⁴² Thus, he had this to say: “Keep your language. Love its sounds, its modulation, its rhythm. But try to march together with [people] of different languages, remote from your own, who wish like you for a more just and human world.”⁴³ In light of this, he means that “God embraces all human beings. The heart of faith is the call to love one another.” “Toward the end of the evening, the archbishop added with a gleeful laugh, ‘If you live your religion, you will become different.’”⁴⁴ Following this, Francis McDonagh describes Camara’s mission in this manner: “His stern call to justice was inflected with a joy-filled, mystical love of God and creation that brought to mind the image of St. Francis.” “Without justice and love,” Camara said, “peace will always be a great illusion.”⁴⁵

In this context, the church has the responsibility to foster an alternative consciousness, drawing from the community exemplified by Moses, as suggested by Walter Brueggemann in his prophetic imagination. This role would position the church as the conscience of society, serving as a builder of a moral community that challenges public culture and awareness, as well as government policies that tend to impoverish people, foster tribal hatred, create imbalances in political settlements, and perpetuate nepotism. These issues lead to injustice, inequality, and exclusion, which can become a ticking time bomb if not adequately addressed. Therefore, the church’s alternative consciousness, rooted in the community, would lend its voice to the voices of the poor, the excluded, the oppressed, and the marginalized. Consequently, the church embodies the image of Moses—a model of a courageous prophet who confronted injustice in the royal court of Egypt on behalf of his people’s freedom. To this end, the alternative consciousness serves to *criticize* and dismantle the dominant consciousness. To that extent, it attempts to do what the liberal tendency has done: engage in a rejection and delegitimizing of the present ordering of things. A religion of God’s freedom as an alternative to the static imperial religion of order and triumph, and a politics of justice and compassion as an alternative to the imperial politics of oppression. The point that prophetic imagination must ponder is that there is no freedom of God without the politics of justice and compassion, and there is no politics of justice and compassion without a religion of the freedom of God.⁴⁶

Following this, the church has an opportunity to become a force that promotes inclusion and a grassroots approach in governance, ensuring justice, equity, fairness, and ultimately, peace—particularly in conflict- or crisis-affected areas—by advocating for or emphasizing the rights of communities or Indigenous peoples to participate in negotiations and peace processes concerning issues that affect them.

⁴⁰ Martyn Whittock, “The Archbishop who challenged violence and corruption - and paid with his life” in *Christian Today*, January 21, 2023. <https://www.christiantoday.com/news/the-archbishop-who-challenged-violence-and-corruption-and-paid-with-his-life>.

⁴¹ See US Catholic, *Romero’s wisdom: Prayers*, February 25, 2009. <https://uscatholic.org/articles/200902/romeros-wisdom-prayers/>. These were drawn from Archbishop Oscar Romero’s sermon, which he mostly delivered in the year 1978. Through these efforts, he was challenging the church to make a significant difference and establish a presence that would prompt the government to develop plans that would transform society, where everyone is a priority, not treated as a mere afterthought. In light of this, he is challenging the Christian community and its leaders to take the lead in advancing justice, equity, and fairness. This is a better way for the church to be the salt and the light of the world.

⁴² See Center for Action and Contemplation, “A Vision for Liberation: Explore Dom Hélder Câmara’s Contemplative Path to Justice” in the February “*We Conspire*” Series, March 24, 2025. Archbishop Herder Camara made such a concrete representation and reflection of the gospel of Jesus and the word of God to contribute to the liberation and freedom of the poor and those suffering discrimination, and whose rights were violated by the military dictators.

⁴³ Dom Helder Camara, *Spiral of Violence* (Sheed & Ward Ltd., 1971), 61.

⁴⁴ As quoted in Avis Crowe, *Radical Grace*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 1991), 6.

⁴⁵ Dom Helder Camara, *Dom Helder Camara: Essential Writings*, Selected by Francis McDonagh (Orbis Books, 2009), back cover.

⁴⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Augsburg Fortress: 2001), 3, 8-9, 40.

Government Bowing to Pressure.

At this point, the government, recognizing the strength and courage of the church, which has resulted in its close relationship with the people, must be compelled to develop policies, enact laws, or amend its constitution to promote inclusive governance. Any government that prioritizes inclusive governance fosters a society that values diversity, acknowledges differences, respects everyone regardless of their background or race, and remains open to all in decision-making. In light of this, inclusive governance plays a crucial role in driving development. Development is secured in the presence of peace, and conflicts and crises mainly arise where there is inequality, exclusion, and imbalance.

The OECD – the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development corroborates that inclusive governance should be a priority in international development, as it comments on it as the 16th Sustainable Development Goal of the 2030 Agenda.⁴⁷ Thus, the United Nations in 2015 explains SDG 16, which is inclusive governance as that which “[p]romote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. People everywhere should be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives, whatever their ethnicity, faith, or sexual orientation.”⁴⁸ SDG 16 encourages the government, civil society, communities, and indigenous peoples to come together or leverage each other’s strengths to resolve conflicting issues. Thus, it states further that:

High levels of armed violence and insecurity have a destructive impact on a country’s development, while sexual violence, crime, exploitation, and torture are prevalent where there is conflict or no rule of law, and countries must take measures to protect those who are most at risk. Governments, civil society, and communities need to work together to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights is key to this process, as is reducing the flow of illicit arms, combating corruption, and ensuring inclusive participation at all times.⁴⁹

Therefore, every serious government that is a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals, by prioritizing inclusive governance, will identify the root causes of conflict in any community and create a space for everyone to participate in the negotiation process that leads to a peaceful resolution. In light of this, it will ensure the rebuilding of the structures of the common good that were affected during the conflict and create more development opportunities that will help prevent relapse into conflicts after peacebuilding.

Conclusion

This article examines how conflicts worldwide often stem from misunderstandings, divisions, struggles for power, oppression, marginalization, tribalism, ethnic tensions, inequality, and exclusion. Unfortunately, many of these conflicts, whether between countries or within them, have persisted for years, resulting in the continuous destruction of lives, property, institutions, and the foundations of the common good. As a result, they seem to resist every peace-building approach. Therefore, this article attributes the ongoing conflicts and their threats to poor governance, irresponsibility, and misconduct by political elites, as well as the church’s silence or inability to challenge the government or political leaders to take necessary actions. These actions could help bridge divisions, address inequality, promote inclusion, dismantle tribalism and ethnic barriers, and establish systems and institutions that ensure harmony and cohesion.

Due to this ongoing failure, continuous conflicts have erupted in these areas, preventing any action from being taken while lives and property continue to be destroyed. This article argues that only an inclusive approach can resolve conflicts caused by divisions, exclusion, inequality, tribalism, and ethnic differences, thereby promoting peace. An inclusive approach involves giving all parties the right to be heard and to participate in negotiations, resolutions, and peacebuilding efforts. This requires implementing justice, trusting in the abilities of everyone, and recognizing all parties as capable of contributing to the solutions for the problems that affect them. At this point, this article urges the government to take necessary steps to make peace achievable. It also calls on the church to continually and boldly challenge the government and political leaders to use their authority to bridge divisions, while maintaining close relationships with those most impacted by the conflicts, including the poor, marginalized, oppressed, and excluded—to preserve the common good and build peace.

⁴⁷ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *What Does Inclusive Governance Mean? Clarifying Theory and Practice*, (OECD DEVELOPMENT POLICY PAPERS March 2020 No. 27), 12.

⁴⁸ United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies*.

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

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