Understanding the Nature of Conflicts in Africa: Analytical and Theoretical Explanations

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Abstract : The focus of this paper is to explore the different theoretical perspectives that underline academic attempts at understanding and explaining the nature of conflicts in Africa. The African environment is riddled with the past history of conflicts among groups either for an economic outlet or imperial space, and most often, such past negative interactions have made it difficult even now for some of these groups to live harmoniously together within the present state system and to trust each other. The paper observed that no one theory or explanatory schema could offer a holistic explanation of conflict in Africa. At best, each of the possible theories can only offer a partial explanation of the causes and nature of conflict in a particular African society or state. This paper, therefore, attempted to synthesize the many sources of theories of conflicts and provided the intellectual background from which these different theories emanated. Therefore, if this paper has done anything at all, it is to offer the basis for assessing different theoretical strands aimed at offering cogent and reliable explanations for most of the conflicts in Africa and especially in the West African sub-region.