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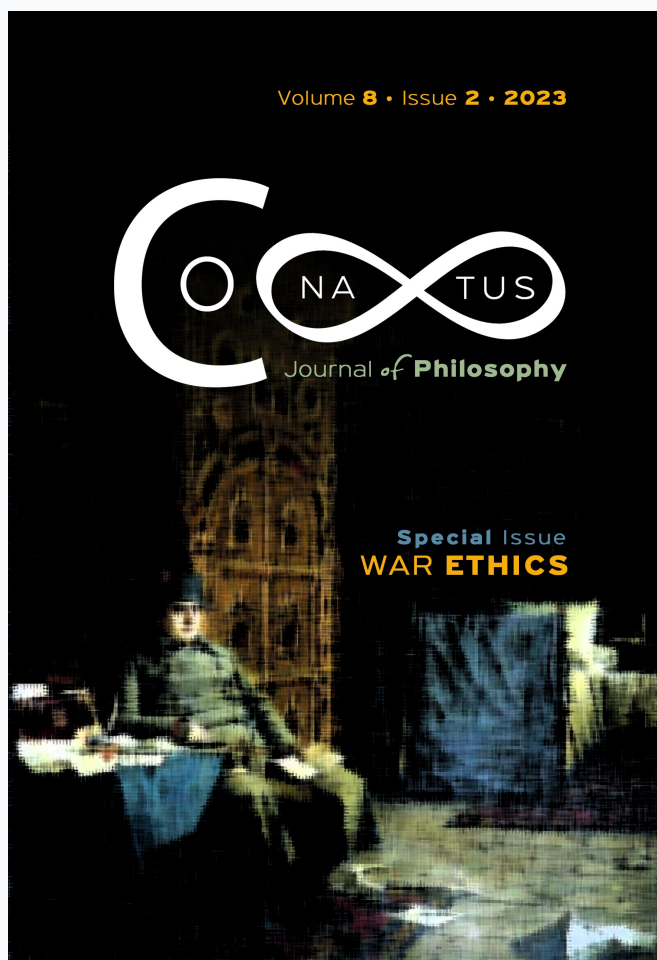
Just War Determination through Human Acts Valuation: An Igbo-African Experience

Anthony Udoka Ezebuiro, Emeka Simon Ejim, Innocent Anthony Uke

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Anthony Udoka Ezebuiro

University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria
E-mail address: anthony.ezebuiro@unn.edu.ng
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8231-5270

Emeka Simon Ejim

University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria
E-mail address: emeka.ejim@unn.edu.ng
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4998-7925

Innocent Anthony Uke

Tansian University, Nigeria
E-mail address: innouke4real@gmail.com
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7267-7551

Abstract

This paper analytically reflects and x-rays the African perspective of just war using human act valuation as the basis of argument. In the wake of time, philosophers, psychologists and ethicists have differentiated between two kinds of actions, namely human action and action of man. Accordingly, man is convinced that he is different from the rest of the animal family; hence he acts at a level which dogs, for example, cannot attain. In any case, man does not always act as a man; his activity is not always stamped by what distinguishes him from other beings, namely rationality. Sometimes, he acts at the level he shares with other living beings; in other words, his activity at this level is ruled by a natural necessity or determined in the sense that doings at this sphere are not called actions, for they are 'instinctive, thoughtless movement, mannerisms, reflex actions, or what is done under the influence of psychic constraints, hypnotic suggestions or demented frenzy etc.' Such actions are rightly called actions of a human being, since their source is that bodily and spiritual individual who is called Peter, Paul, etc., but they are not human actions per se. They do not express the individual being; they do not proceed from him precisely as a human being. The only genuinely human action is the one which a human being performs in virtue of what distinguishes him from other beings. Since this is nothing other than reason, or rather, rationality, human actions are the actions which are performed when he acts as a rational being. Therefore, human acts are those actions of man that have their source in man's rationality or spirituality, understood in terms of human's interiority from which his activities flow. Beyond this, the African has got another sense of human act valuation, which is community-based or community-centered. In line with this, an attempt is made here to demonstrate how just war can be determined through human act valuation using the Igbo-African perspective as a case study.

Keywords: *just war; human acts; valuation; community-based action; Igbo-African*

I. Introduction

The world we live in today is a world that is seemingly saturated with different kinds of disputes leading to various kinds of conflicts, violence, and wars. Yes, a dispute can result in conflict, violence or war, however, not all disputes lead to violence or war. This work is focused on dispute leading to violence or war and how this violence and wars can be justified in the African perspective using human act valuation as the basis. First and foremost, the concepts of dispute, violence and war are difficult concepts to acknowledge and analyze within philosophical disciplines. However, according to Njoku,[1] as cited in Ezebuiro et al,[2] a dispute can lead to quarrels or heated debates because positions and issues are contested, and people may have different views on the facts of a situation, and disagreements about how it can be managed or handled. So, in disputes, views are challenged and people make claims and counter claims about what the issue is all about. Although the appearance that the ultimate purpose of dispute is to find ways and argue to persuade others to agree with their viewpoints or negotiate their meaning structure, a dispute can degenerate and lead to conflict, violence or war. A conflict is a serious disagreement about something. It is also an argument, a struggle, a fight, a clash. The Cambridge Dictionary says it is "an active disagreement between people with opposition of opinions or principles."[3] The essence of conflict seems to be disagreement, contradiction, or incompatibility; hence, conflict refers to any situation in which there are incompatible goals, cognitions, or emotions within or between individuals or groups that lead to opposition or antagonistic interaction. When conflict occurs, violence or war is also equally likely to occur. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines violence as an act of physical force that causes or is intended to cause harm.[4] According to Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues,[5] violence is the form of behaviour which involves physical force with

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[1] Francis O. C. Njoku, *Philosophy, Communication, Conflict Resolution and Peace* (Abuja: Claretian Publications, 2014), 106-107.

[2] R. Obiora, A. U. Ezebuiro, O. Anichebe, C. Ihesiaba, and N. Nwankwo, "An Ontological Enquiry into the Anatomy of Dispute, Conflict and Violence in Contemporary Africa," *Journal of Religion and Cultural Studies* 9 (2021): 51-62.

[3] *Cambridge Dictionary*, vol. 4, ed. V. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 260.

[4] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 7, ed. P. Edward (New York: Macmillan Company and Free Press, 1967), 113.

[5] Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "African Perspective on Just War," *Philosophy Compass* 17, no. 3 (2022): 1-11.

the intention to damage, hurt or kill people or property. The damage inflicted by violence can be physical or emotional, psychological or both. On the other hand, war is an intense armed conflict between states, governments, societies, or paramilitary groups such as mercenaries, insurgents, and militias. It is generally characterized by extreme violence, destruction, and mortality, using regular or irregular military forces. Extreme violence and wars are completely detestable. However, there are occasions where or when they could be allowed. In this paper, attention will be focused on the conditions capable of justifying extreme physical violence or war using an Igbo-African perspective or experience of human act valuation as a case study. Africa is a vast continent of diverse people with diverse cultures, religions, and languages. Incidentally, the Igbo people are one of the ethno-cultural groups in Africa with no expansionist drive. Since this is the case, coupled with the fact that the researcher is also an Igbo with considerable knowledge of Igbo life and thought, this work will draw significant views and positions from the Igbo-African experience. Igbo wars provide illustrations of just wars in accordance with the assumption of this work that such war must aim at the corporate harmony of the group with no expansionist drive. However, a number of references will be made to other ethno-cultural groups in Africa where and when necessary.

II. Background of study

There is a motivation for this work. The world we live in is a world characterized or seemingly inundated with different kinds of disputes leading to various kinds of conflicts, violence, and wars. It is a world where violence exists in its extreme and highest proportion. It is also a world where wars exist between nations, countries, and states across the globe. Yes, different countries and nations of the world today have experienced, and in some cases, are currently experiencing war. Whether in the East, West, North or South, there were, there have been, and there are still wars going on between nations, groups, or the other bodies. In most cases, one reason or the other is given as the basis for the war. While we cannot deny that violence or wars could be caused or fought for several reasons, an ethical assessment of wars or violent events that do happen is very critical and important at this time. It is important, for example, because in some quarters, it is claimed that many of these wars or violence that once occurred could not have occurred or taken place had A, B or C happened. That means that they could not have taken place in the first place if certain

things had happened or were taken into consideration. Unfortunately, most of these avoidable or preventable wars did take place because some people preferred to listen to the voices of their emotions and passions rather than the voice of reason. Hence, perpetrators of these wars or violence allowed themselves to be consumed by the influence or fire of psychic constraints, hypnotic suggestions, or demented frenzy and so on. Obviously, this sort of revelation indicates that, truly, not all wars are fought with good, right, or just reasons. On this ground, it shows that actually, there is a great difference between just war and unjust war.

III. Talking about justice and just war

Certainly, just war arguments revolve around or include what is the ethical behavior in a war and what to do following a war. No doubt, the words "justice," "just cause," and "right" are mostly concepts that are contextually driven in the sense that they are usually defined and defended through distinct and different worldviews. Nevertheless, justice is conceived of as right actions desired and cherished in all cultures, even if the grounds through which these actions are held to be right may differ. In this sense, a just war is a war fought for right or just reason. According to Ugwuanyi, "It is a war fought as the only means to claim rights."[6] An unjust war is fought with any reason other than just ones. Perspectives abound and differ on what distinguishes just wars from unjust wars. So far, it is the Western perspectives that have been leading many of the literature on just war. They have been driven by the Western notions of the idea which do not account for alternative conceptions of it.[7] On the other hand, African perspectives, for example, have so far been neglected and in most cases have been considered inferior. The need to chart a new course becomes critical. The present study focuses on addressing the issue through the assessment of human acts valuation. We recall however, that some scholars like Okeja,[8] Metz,[9] Luis

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[6] Lawrence Ogbo Ugwuanyi, "Towards an African Theory of Just War," *Revista de Estudios Africanos* 1 (2020): 53.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Uchenna Okeja, "War by Agreement: A Reflection on the Nature of Just War," *Journal of Military Ethics* 18, no. 3 (2019): 189-203.

[9] Thaddeus Metz, "An African Theory of Just Causes for War," in *Comparative Just War Theory: An Introduction to International Perspectives*, eds. Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues and Danny Singh, 131-155 (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020); Thaddeus Metz, "The Motivation for 'Toward an African Moral Theory,'" *South African Journal of Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (2007): 331-335.

Cordeiro-Rodrigues,[10] and Ugwuanyi[11] have made various philosophical contributions on the issue of just war from an African perspective. However, none of them has sought to consider the problem from the point of view of human act valuation. Their works were philosophical though, as against those of Uzoigwe,[12] Ukpabi,[13] Ajayi,[14] Crowder,[15] and Smaldone[16] who were more of historians than philosophers; having dwelt more on the issues that relate to or derive from war, such as prevention of war, conflict resolution and mediation. Ogot,[17] Ajayi and Smith,[18] and Awe[19] have also done some work in that direction, although they dwelt heavily on the sociological aspects of war in Africa by discussing the nature and type of military organization, the nature of execution of wars, the economy of warfare, the nature of military technology, and the goal of warfare in Africa. Ukpabi, for example, focused specifically on the "types of military organisations," and "effects of the military on traditional societies,"[20] and "the role of women, slaves and mercenaries in traditional armies."[21] All these efforts are commendable. However, they remain insufficient (perhaps with the exception of Okeja), creating gaps that need to be filled. The present study is an attempt in that direction to tackle this same issue from the perspective of human act valuation using the Igbo-African standpoint as a case study.

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[10] Cordeiro-Rodrigues, 23.

[11] Ugwuanyi, 53.

[12] G. N. Uzoigwe, "The Military in Politics in Pre-colonial Africa: A Case Study of the Interlacustrine States of Bunyoro Kitara and Buganda," *Nigerian Defense Academy Journal* 1, no. 2 (1990): 85-102.

[13] Sam C. Ukpabi, *Military Involvement in African Politics: A Historical Background* (New York: Conch Magazine Limited, 1972).

[14] Sam C. Ukpabi, "The Military in Traditional African Society," *African Spectrum* 9, no. 2, (1974): 200-217.

[15] Michael Crowder, ed., *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 212.

[16] Joseph P. Smaldone, *Warfare in The Sokoto Caliphate: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 76.

[17] Bethwell A. Ogot, ed., *War and Society in Africa: Ten Studies* (London: Frank Cass, 1972), 119.

[18] J. F. A. Ajayi and R. Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century Ibadan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 7.

[19] Bolanle Awe, "Militarism and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Yoruba," *The Journal of African History* 14, no. 1 (1973): 65-77.

[20] Ukpabi, "The Military in Traditional African Society," 294.

[21] Ibid.

IV. The Igbo-African experience of conflicts and wars in pre-colonial era

The Igbos are one of the indigenous ethno-cultural groups in Nigeria, West African region. They co-exist alongside other tribes, namely, Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani, Efik, Ijaw, Ibibio, and Ishekiri among others. The Igbo people are located predominantly in the present South-Eastern part of Nigeria, consisting of five States, namely, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Imo. They share border with the Igala and Idoma people to the North, the Ijaw and Ogoni to the South, the Yako and Ibibio to the East and the Bini and Warri to the West.[22] However, there are other indigenous Igbo people in some other States in Nigeria like Delta, Rivers, and Benue, etc. There are claims that some populations of Igbo people are also found in Cameroon, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea, as migrants. Before the advent of colonial administration, the largest political unit was the village group, a federation of villages averaging 5,000 persons. Members of the group shared a common market and meeting place, a tutelary deity, and ancestral cults that supported a tradition of descent from a common ancestor or group of ancestors. Authority in the village group was vested in a council of lineage heads and influential and wealthy men. In the eastern regions, these groups tended to form larger political units, including centralized kingdoms and states. Village life for the Igbo people is like many other villages in Africa, but still unique in an Igbo way. Igbos live in villages that have anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand people comprised of numerous extended families. Something very interesting about these villages is that there is no single ruler or king that controls the population. Decisions are made by almost everyone in the village. There are established institutions such as a council of elders (a group based on age), a council of chiefs, women's associations, and secret societies. The Igbos simultaneously emphasize individual actions and community living. Igbo society in the pre-colonial period was not always peaceful. There were moments, as we witness today, when tensions and open physical conflicts ensued.[23] Examination of human affairs has in many cases showed that interactions among human beings are sometimes characterized by intolerance which in turn engenders tensions and conflicts. In other words, as long as human beings exist and inter-

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[22] Ferdinand C. Ezekwonna, *African Communitarian Ethic: The Basis for the Moral Conscience and Autonomy of the Individual: Igbo Culture as a Case Study* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 24.

[23] Anthony Ekwunife, "African Culture: A Definition," *African Christian Studies* 3, no. 3 (1987): 5-18.

act, conflicts are bound to ensue amongst them. In the pre-colonial period, some of the issues that sparked off conflicts among individuals, communities, and states have remained basically the same as today. These include issues arising from marriages, inheritance, religion, land, boundaries among others. It is important therefore to understand the fact that conflicts, though they may cause division and enmity, would always occur so long as human beings live and interact with one another in a given society. The introduction of fire arms into Igbo land by the Europeans in the nineteenth century engendered a series of communal conflicts and crises.[24] Not much is known about these conflicts, beyond the fact that they usually resulted from issues arising from factors such as murder, land disputes, kidnapping, and so on. Wars between several Owerri village groups in the 1880s were caused by land dispute while the attack of southern Igbo town of Obegu by Aro was associated with debt recovery.[25] Typically, wars between village groups were however, regulated by a number of conventions.[26] Nevertheless, the resolution of a conflict did not have to include a definite victory for one of the parties involved. Judgment among the Igbo usually involved compromise and accommodation. The Igbo insist that a good judgment "cuts into the flesh as well as the bone" of the matter in dispute. This implies a "hostile" compromise in which there is neither victor nor vanquished; a reconciliation to the benefit of – or a loss to – both parties.[27] Various institutions in Igbo land played vital roles in conflicts resolution. These included the council of elders, the *Umuada* institution, the oracle Priest or *Eze Ala* amongst others. Those whose actions caused unrest in the society were severely punished to ensure lasting peace. However, conflict resolution mechanism among the Igbo as in other pre-colonial African societies was not meant only to assuage or pacify the victim(s) but to act as deterrent to all those who may want to commit such crime(s); not only to appease the living but also the ancestors and gods of the land.[28] It has been considered by Oguntomisin that the various communities in pre-colonial Nigeria had varied conventions aimed at mitigating inter-human and intra and inter communal con-

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[24] Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Igbo People* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 109.

[25] Ibid, 78.

[26] Ibid, 80.

[27] Victor C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 14.

[28] R. Brukum, *The Power of Myth* (London: Doubleday, 1998), 39-47.

flicts.[29] These conventions were not without being backed by taboo which must be observed for peaceful regulation of human activities such as co-habitation, relationship between husband and wife, father and children, one community and the other among others. According to him,

> Conflict resolution mechanism was an integral part of pre-colonial Igbo village democracy. The absence of a centralized system of government among the people in pre-colonial period did not mean that the people were in a state of anarchy. As in most pre-colonial African societies, there were bound to be conflicts amongst individuals and communities but there also existed traditional methods by which they were resolved to ensure that peace and order were achieved and maintained in the society.[30]

Pre-colonial Igbo-African societies were reputed to hold secrets of peacemaking and conflict resolution embedded in their customs and traditions before the disruptive activities brought about by colonization.[31] This can be seen in the principle of *Ubuntu*[32] as in East-Central and Southern Africa for example or *Egbe bere Ugo bere* (live and let live)[33] as in Southeastern Nigeria. These are concepts that demonstrate that Igbo-Africans had, over the years, developed and tested varied methods of conflict resolution. This is an all-embracing African interpretation of both negative and positive peace.[34] The concept of *Ubuntu,* for example, was also widely applied in the resolution of conflicts among the peoples of East-Central and Southern Africa. It is also found in varied forms in different communities in other parts of Africa. The term is known to be humanistic and holistic in the conception of peace which states that human beings are one in their relationships with one another. The management of conflicts amongst pre-colonial Igbo as in other African societies according to Beier involved the following six principles:

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[29] G. O. Oguntomisin, *The Processes of Peacekeeping and Peacemaking in Pre-Colonial Nigeria* (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers, 2004), 17.

[30] Francisca A. Ezenwoko and Joseph I. Osagie, "Conflict and Conflict Resolution in Pre-Colonial Igbo Society of Nigeria," *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2014): 135-158.

[31] J. B. Akam, *Man: Unique but in Plural* (Enugu: Snaap Press, 1991), 23.

[32] A. E. Afigbo, *An Outline of Igbo History* (Owerri: Tobanshi, 1986), 65.

[33] Anthony Ekwunife, *Consecration in Igbo Traditional Religion* (Enugu: Jet Publishers, 1990), 2.

[34] Francis Arinze, *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion* (Ibadan: University Press, 2008), 26.

> [...] First, the principle of impartiality of the manager of conflict. Rulers in all Nigerian communities were expected to behave impartially in their office [...] Second, the principle of fairness. That is, the poor and weak should receive a fair deal as well as the rich and powerful [...]. Third, the [...] principle of accommodation, compromise and a disposition for reconciliation, as opposed to the principle of "winner takes all" or the "zero sum game" [...]. Fourth, the principle of reciprocity. The spirit of accommodation must be mutual and reciprocal to be effective [...]. Fifth, the principle of moderation and of measured action and response. It was this principle that informed the deliberate limitation of the level of violence in conflicts within Nigerian communities in the past [...]. Sixth, the principle of incompatibility or separation. That is where the parties to a conflict cannot be reconciled, the best policy would be to separate them [...].[35]

All of these were regulated or carried out because of the way and manner the human person was conceived, seen, and acknowledged in pre-colonial Igbo-African time. No doubt, they were different from the western notion or conception of the human person.

V. Between the Igbo-African and Western conception of the human person

Understanding the perception or conception of the human person in pre-colonial Africa is quite critical and germane in understanding just war determination in African perspective. Between the Igbo-African and the Western perspective or concept or notion of the human person lies a huge ingredient to understanding just war determination in pre-colonial Africa. Yes, there were some obvious measures of differences between the way Africans understood the human person before the arrival of the colonial masters and the way the human person was being conceived, understood, presented, and paraded by the West at the same time. Obviously, these different conceptions, no doubt, have their implications and influences on how a war can be considered or determined as, or seen to be just. For example, according to Chigekwu G. Ogbuene, traditional Africans conceived the human per-

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[35] Ulli Beier, ed., *The Origin of Life & Death: African Creation Myths* (London: Heinemann, 1966), 1-8.

son in relation to life (*Ndu*). The term 'person' in Igbo understanding is '*Mma-ndu*' the beauty of life. Man has *Ndu*' and the Igbo believes that *Ndu bu isi* life is of supreme importance.

> *Ndu* is the most precious, holiest and greatest gift of nature. It is the sumum bonum or highest value in nature. Man loves it and loves to have it long and abundantly. *Ndu dika aguu; ona agu onye, ona agu ibe ya* (Every human has an inborn desire to live as he instinctively longs to eat). Axioms of this nature, expressing the importance of life, are very common in the Igbo language. *Ndu*, for instance, is used in salutation. It is identified with the power, breath, sound or word of Chukwu (God). *Ogologo Ndu n'aru isike* (long life and prosperity), like posit or cheers, is something the Igbos say to each other just before drinking an alcoholic drink. In some areas people greet one another with *Anwula or anwuchula*: which literally means, 'do not die early or prematurely; live on and live well." The significant belief in the supremacy of life is reflected also in personal names like *Ndukaku* (life is more important than wealth); *Osonduagwuike* (one is never tired of the struggle for life), *Chinwendu* (life belongs to God) etc.[36]

The obvious lesson of all these names and many others in connection with *Ndu* is to know the mystery of *Ndu* and that life is precious and should not be toiled with. This is behind the Igbo belief in the principle of "*Egbe bere, Ugo bere*": Live and let live, as earlier stated. In fact, it is the foundation of African communitarian ethics, for in the community, each person is his brother's keeper. Community is very important and vital to what transpires in one's life. Without the community there is no individual and without the individual, there is no community.[37]

> People are more intimately bound by common ends. They fraternally share a sense of belonging, solidarity, an awareness of dependence and personal identification which prompts the individual to claim the particular community as his own and as the place where he belongs. This awareness makes the bond that unifies all the members even stronger.[38]

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[36] Chigekwu G. Ogbuene, *The Concept of Man in Igbo Myths* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 97-98.

[37] Ezekwonna, 21.

[38] Margaret M. Green, *Igbo Village Affairs* (London: Routledge, 1964), 27.

Any action capable of destroying an individual's life and in turn the unity of the community is totally forbidden. Hence, a typical African sees himself or herself as under an oath to be his or her brother's keeper. It is from this direction that Menkiti conceived personhood in Igbo-African perspective as entailing a maximal definition abrogating to the community the right to affirm personhood.[39] This is what is known as Menkiti's 'ontological primacy' of the community. In Bantu philosophy, Tempels also acknowledged personhood according to the relational interaction extending to the spirit world.

> Bantu holds that created beings preserve a bond with one another, an intimate ontological relationship, comparable to the causal tie which binds creature and creator. For the Bantu there is interaction of being with being, that is to say, of force with force. Transcending the mechanical, chemical and psychological interactions, they see a relationship of forces which we should call ontological.[40]

In *African Religions and Philosophy*, Mbiti accepted Tempels' view but added the performance of 'worthy social obligation/rites.'[41] And in *The Image of Man in Africa*, Dzobo described the conditions under which one attains personhood to include achievement of creative personality, a productive life and the capacity to have and maintain a productive relationship with others.[42] Generally, what is common with these perspectives is the fact that the individual's self is inseparable from the '*telos*' of the community in which he lives. They viewed selfhood from the relational perspective. In other words, without the community, the individual lacked personhood; for they conceived the self as a group affair. Thus, an individual African person is a person to the extent that he is a member of a family, clan, or community. This is where the conception of the human person in African perspective differs and does not agree with the Western view notably represent-

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[39] J. Menkiti, "Person and Community in African Metaphysics," in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, ed. Richard A. Wright (New York: University of America Press, 1984), 74.

[40] Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Portland, OR: HBC Publishing, 1959), 100.

[41] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1997), 106-107.

[42] N. K. Dzobo, "The Image of Man in Africa," in *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, eds. Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, 123-135 (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992): 131-132.

ed here by Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative[43] and Rene Descartes' *cogito ergo sum.*[44] For example, originally, the Greek had no explicit conception of the human being as a person. Ancient culture revolved around the 'cosmos' or nature and saw the human being in relation to that.[45] It was only in the middle ages that the human being came into play as part of the order established by God. Okere believes that the self, in the Western perspective, remained, in a way, only an abstraction. For him, the individual is never a pure isolated individual.[46] But on the contrary, the modern mind separated the human being from such support from his community and set it out on its own, but predominantly as 'subject' or reason. This was not without price as this reason became perceived as the transcendental subject as in Rene Descartes. In the process, the real human being was lost in favour of abstract 'subject' and abstract reason. Thus, Descartes conceived of the human being in terms of an *ego cogitans* or 'thinking self,' an active spiritual agent in contrast to mere extended matter or *res extensa*. Descartes moved the discourse of selfhood away from the divine to the concrete subject, thereby identifying the self with the mind. Thus, in its liberty, the human being is like God, and because, for Descartes, freedom is power; hence, God endows the human person with the power of liberty. By this, the human person was objectified. The individual thinking substance is the one that feels, doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, unwills, imagines, and has sense of perception.[47] Following Descartes was Kant who also saw the human being at its peak as the moral assertion of autonomy. As moral agent, the human being lives in a world of freedom, as an end and not as a means. In other words, the term 'person' is a word that designates ends in themselves. Thus, the worth of a human being is not dependent on the assessment of others but on the individual's rational nature. Therefore, Kant associated the individual with both reason and autonomy and moral status.[48] The implication of these

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[43] Ernst Cassirer, ed., *Immanuel Kant's Werke*, Band IV (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922), 287.

[44] René Descartes, *Meditationen: Uber die Grundlagen der Philosophie,* ed. Lüder Gäbe (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1960), 23.

[45] Izu Marcel Onyeocha, "The Christian Concept of the Dignity of the Human Person," *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies* 5 (1993): 72-73.

[46] Theophilus Okere, "The Structure of the Self in Igbo Thought," in *Identity and Change: Nigerian Philosophical Studies I*, ed. Theophilus Okere (Indianapolis, IN: Cardinal Station, 1996), 159.

[47] René Descartes, *A Discourse on Method, Meditations on the First Philosophy, Principles of Philosophy,* trans. John Veitch (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1912) 3-4.

[48] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (New

lines of conceptions is manifestly demonstrated in the way just war is being determined in African perspective.

VI. Implications of the duo conceptions on just war determination

There are so many implications to be drawn from both perspectives about the human person in relation to just war. It is obvious one might think there is not much difference between the African and western notions since both conceptions talk about the good or preservation of life of the individual; hence the need for just war instead of unjust war. But there are a whole lot of differences.

In the western notion, for example, Ugwuanyi highlights some conditions that regulate the western determination of war as just. For example, the state must approve of it. Citing Austin Fagothey, he writes:

> The state, since it is a natural society, has from the natural law, the right to use the "means necessary for its preservation and proper functioning." But conditions may be such that the only means by which a state can preserve itself in being, and can protect or recover its lawful right, is by war. Therefore, under such conditions, the state has from the natural law the right to wage war.[49]

The second condition is that the mandate to declare war must come from a lawful authority. It must be for a just cause, with the right intention and right means. This is the view of Thomas Aquinas,[50] which Ugwuanyi also cited.[51] Just cause means that the war must be a justified one. That is to say, it should be to promote the goal of the state and the good of the citizens whose wellbeing might be in danger without a war. But a legitimate authority should not just declare war and be indifferent to the prosecution of the war. It should also supervise the war. The legitimate authority also has the duty to terminate the war when the situation demands that the war should be brought to a halt. Right intention refers to just cause. It is about having pure and proper intention. The view here is that if a war is waged for an un-

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York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 37; 42-43.

[49] Ugwuanyi, 54.

[50] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), 1223.

[51] Ugwuanyi, 54.

just cause, the intention cannot be a right one. Only a war declared by the right intention (defined as one that is driven by the intention to realize a social, moral or political good that cannot be realized otherwise) should be permitted. Ordinarily, intention is held to be right when the outcome of the good that is meant to be realized through it can be held to be good. It is this notion of intention that is applied in this instance. This means that wars declared to revenge personal harm, or some selfish reasons are not just wars. Just as wars fought for power are not just wars. The final condition for a war to be considered just is if the war is declared using the right means. Right means refers to the means of fighting the war. This must be proportionate to the reason for declaring the war. It includes weapons applied and the manner the weapons are used. For example, if a gun is applied to execute war but instead of applying the gun on the combatant it is rather applied to kidnap and torture children of the combatants, then the gun is a wrong means. The above represents the implications that can be drawn from the western view of the notion of human person as it relates to declaring a war as just. But beyond these western implications are African implications. In determining just war according to African tradition, more attention is given to acts capable of enthroning and safeguarding the communitarian ethics of African culture. In this regard, wars are not just entered into simply because they emanated from a legitimate authority. Instead, it is looked at from the point of view of the community orientation. The community is the determining force or reason to go to war. It is called community-oriented war. That is to say, that it is the community standard that regulates war. African communitarian ethics does not permit one to go into war as the first option in resolving a conflict. Measures are taken to ensure that negotiation, mediation, and arbitration have been made to avert war. Situations where it becomes expedient to go to war, proportional means and end are recommended. This understanding gives credence to the fact that war is not meant to annihilate the other party; hence, efforts are made to ensure that the use of weapons is proportionate to the war. On no account are sophisticated weapons allowed. In traditional African societies, war was not one of battles and head-on attacks but what Ajanyi and Smith (cited in Ukabi[52]) call "ambushes, skirmishes and feints."[53] In line with the fact that war is not for total annihilation of the opponent, participatory pain is allowed. There were often less

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[52] Ukpabi, "The Military in Traditional African Society," 215.

[53] Ugwuanyi, 54.

causalities as those who caused heavy casualties were compelled to donate people to the losing side.[54] This confirms the fact that African believes that the essence of war is to prevent an unjust treatment of one group by the other party to a level of recognizing the right of the other group to exist and to be respected as a separate entity. War is not fought in a manner that makes it possible to annihilate the other but with recognition that the other is a community of human beings whose losses also amount to negative feeling for the opponent. Thus, African communitarian ethics prides itself on maintaining harmony across all borders.

> Hence the overall goal of war is to bring the other party to a level of recognizing the rights of the other group to exist and to be respected as a separate entity. For this reason, war is not fought in a manner that makes it possible to annihilate the other but with recognition that the other is a community of human beings whose loses also amounts to negative feelings for the opponent.[55]

Ethics of harmony recognizes that actions capable of destroying the principle of harmony in a community are avoided. Actions that promote physical and metaphysical equilibrium where humans and the "living dead" operate harmoniously in an atmosphere of peace are allowed. African societies believe that a certain measure of moral and spiritual order is necessary for the functioning of the human community. This order enables all forces and agents to play their role and safeguard any one of their own. For this reason, war, if necessary, could be employed to achieve this order. But in executing the war, there would be no need to do more harm than is necessary, since this may often lead to another process of restoration. The ethics of harmony ensures that wars are fought not for defeat, but to achieve a higher moral gain of reconciliation and reunion. And such an act of reconciliation is often held to be social, moral and ontological. Morality in this context is an intimate relationship with the ontological order of the universe. Hence any action capable of infraction of this order is a contradiction in life itself and brings about a physical disorder, which reveals a fault.[56] The desire to protect or restore this ontological order is what leads to just war. Beyond restoring physical

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[54] Ibid., 62.

[55] Cordeiro-Rodrigues, 122.

[56] Ibid.

and ontological order/harmony is the quest for the preservation of cultural heritage. The fight against any form of subjugation where individual persons achieve their independence and power to rule themselves amounts to community-oriented actions. Cordeiro-Rodrigues contends that violence can be morally justified in order to protect African people's cultural heritage.[57] Culture, he says, has a significant role in liberation. Thus, actions that are valued as just are actions that are geared towards community and cultural liberation. Africans suffered so much in the hands of their colonial lords. Therefore, any action that engages violence in order to emancipate Africans from the inferiority complex inculcated during colonial rule is justified. Societal consciousness of its inferiority complex leads them to war. War is a community event; hence it is declared by the community. Community engages in dialogue within itself leading to an agreement that does not alienate anyone and involves all the parties in the decision. That means that it suffices that parties are able to feel that adequate account has been taken of their points of view in any proposed scheme of future action or coexistence. Pantaleon Iroegbu similarly contends that "the purpose of our life is community-service and community-belongingness."[58] Summarizing the reasons why Africans believe that social harmony is to be praised, and that it is the greatest good of all, and to act in ways that accord with the greatest good of social harmony necessarily entails that one's actions exhibit both identification and solidarity, Cordeiro-Rodrigues lists the following conditions, namely:

> First, that one conceives of oneself as part of a group; that the group considers that individual a member and members also see him or her as a member of the group; that individuals who see themselves as members of the same group share common goals, and that members of the group coordinate their actions in ways that achieve share common ends.[59]

So, to act in accordance with solidarity means to invest one's emotions and behaviour in others. To exhibit solidarity, one ought to act

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Pantaleon Iroegbu, "Beginning, Purpose, and End of Life," in *Kpim of Morality Ethics*, eds. P. Iroegbu and A. Echekwube, 440-445 (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 2005), 442.

[59] Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "African Views on Just War in Mandela and Cabral," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (2018): 657-673.

and feel in ways that prioritize caring about others. This combination of solidarity and identification is what is called social harmony and friendship in the Western world. But taking this on board, an action is right just insofar as it is a way of living harmoniously or prizing communal relationships. It is one in which people identify with each other and exhibit solidarity with one another; otherwise, an action is wrong.[60] Just war is one which the Igbo call "*Ogu eji ofo anu*" (i.e., a fight grounded on truth and justice). However, "*Ogu eji ofo anu bukwa ogo mmeri*" (i.e., a fight grounded on truth and justice is one that wins). *Ofo* is a sacred symbol of justice in Igbo thought. To fight with *Ofo* symbolically means to have all the relevant values, such as truth and justice that would enable the *Ofo* function to one's favour.

VII. Conclusion

The primary intention and objective of this work has been to demonstrate how possible it would be to provide, from the Igbo-African perspectives, alternative conditions upon which a war can be considered or determined as just. This, the paper achieved by putting certain factors into consideration. The work critically looked at the Igbo people of Nigeria as they constitute an indigenous people and represent a part of the African people whose thoughts are generally being referred to in this discussion. Furthermore, the work examined the two notions of perspectives of the human person (the Western and African) and from there moved to determining how each of the notions leads to the determination of just war in Africa. Observations were made of the different implications each of the notions paved to the determination of just war. At the end, the work concludes that assessing war through human act valuation from African perspective is the best alternative the world can have to mitigate the enormous conflicts and wars that have ravaged and confronted the entire humanity. African perspective of just war determination, as being canvassed here, is hinged on the general values of African communitarian ethics that consider both the act and the actor himself and how the act of the actor aligns – or not – with the general communitarian ethics and values of the people. The pre-colonial Igbo societies had well defined social political institutions that helped to facilitate conflict resolution. This basic political organization existed

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[60] Thaddeus Metz, "Final Ends of Higher Education in Light of an African Moral Theory," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43, no. 2 (2009): 179-201; Thaddeus Metz, "African and Western Moral Theories in a Bioethical Context," *Developing World Bioethics* 10, no. 1 (2010): 49-58.

throughout pre-colonial Igbo societies. Elizabeth Isichei describes it as village democracy – a system of government that gave everyone – old and young – certain roles to play in society.[61] The mechanisms for this conflict resolution in pre-colonial Igbo society were embedded in the tradition and culture of the people. Hence, conflicts and disputes were resolved mainly by mediation. This is the conclusion this work can arrive at the moment.

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[61] Isichei, 109.

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