IS IT POSSIBLE TO SAY THAT INTRA-CONFLICTS IN AFRICA ARE CAUSED ONLY BY EXTERNAL FACTORS?

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ARTICLE INFO

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ABSTRACT

The continent of Africa has been highly susceptible to intra and inter- state wars and conflicts. This has prompted the insinuation that Africa is the home of wars and instability. This paper will look at the concept of conflict and types of conflicts. It will contend the external causes of Intra-conflicts in Africa and also look at the internal causes of conflicts in Africa as well. It will critically analyze all the possible causes of conflicts of diversity or intra conflicts in Africa. Intra conflicts in Africa are caused by both external and internal factors and both play a significant role in causing the various intra-conflicts in Africa.

Keywords: Intra-conflicts, causes, external factors and conflicts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a universal feature of human society. It takes its origins in economic differentiation, social change, cultural formation, psychological development and political organization all of which are inherent conflict and becomes overt through the formation of conflict parties, which come to have or are perceived to have, mutually incompatible goals [1]. The identity of the conflict parties, the levels at which the conflict is contested, and the issues fought over (scarce resources, unequal relations, competing values) may vary over time and may themselves be disputed.

Conflict is an ever-changing process and all our judgments about it have to carefully take into account the passage of time. The balance of power and available resources, actors or the components of a conflict can change dramatically as time goes by.

Defining conflict also depends on the concept one has of the nature of conflict as something that takes place in society and between people.

For example, conflict is commonly understood as:
• A form of opposition between parties;
• An absence of agreement between parties;
• A way to solve social contradictions;
• A natural process in human social interaction.

However, the recent general trend has been to consider conflict as something normal, an everyday social phenomenon, and a simple and natural characteristic of human social systems. Society by its very nature, as human beings themselves, is not perfect, so disharmony and contradictions are inevitable parts of the social development

Conflict is an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles. It is present when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or take pursue their interests through actions that damage the other parties. These parties may be individuals, small or large groups, and countries

There are many types of conflicts namely;

- Interstate Conflicts referring to conflicts between two or more States example Nigeria and Cameroon had a conflict over the Bakassi peninsular region, Kenya and Uganda also once had a conflict over the Migingo land dispute.

- International Terrorism which is rampant now days and very organized crime groups and many times they attack countries and countries in this case, also strike back as a way of trying to eradicate them example Boko Haram group which operates in Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic and the Al-Shabaab group which operates in the horn of Africa.

- Intra-conflicts which have many categories that are ethno-national conflicts, Civil wars, Regime change conflicts and Religious conflicts.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes of Intra Conflicts in Africa. Looking at both internal and external factors and giving an in-depth discussion and understanding of how these factors cause Intra conflicts in Africa.

3. DISCUSSION

It's not possible to say that intra conflicts in Africa are only caused by external factors because there are many internal factors which cause and push too many intra conflicts in Africa. These internal factors play an important role in causing intra conflicts in Africa and they will be explained and discussed in the document.

External Factors that caused and cause intra conflicts in Africa
Colonization [1]

Just after the independence of the African countries, they started to search their country demarcations, however; the only option to have the line of demarcation for the newly formed states was accepting the colonizers set but which was not fully accepted by every country of the region or it was invisible. To this end, neighboring countries got into armed conflicts or wars. 1961, 1964 - 67, 1977 – 1978 and 2006- 2009 Ethio-Somalia war and the 1998–2000 Ethio-Eriteria war are some but major manifestations of these colonial-boarder settings [2]. The colonial sentiments in the mindsets of the peoples of the region are also mentioned as one factor of conflict.

Colonization played a big part in pushing conflicts in Africa in that it brought new strategies to build hatred among the people which are known as the favorite game, where some ethnic groups were favored and brought closer to the European way of life [1]. The divide and imperial strategy developed the spirit of rebellion and hatred to the groups that were disfavored and overlooked. This was the case in Rwanda and other African countries.

Imported Constitution

A constitution is the basic fundamental document determining the procedure of how decisions are being made in relation to human dignity and not to a particular class of people, ethnic group, religious, linguistic cultured group of a state. It should define equality onto all groups in the society the aspect of their values and human rights.

African leaders adopted constitutions that didn't reflect the cultural, political and social elements of their states after obtaining independence; they adopted a homogenous constitution into a heterogeneous society. Problems originating from heterogeneous states couldn't be resolved by the homogenous constitution.

Most of the African larders adopted the British and French constitutions (their respective colonial masters) and some of them schooled and were trained and were prepared by the colonial masters hence made a lot of consultations and negotiations when drafting the constitutions and even the colonial masters took part in the drafting of the constitutions hence this explains why African problems can't be solved [3].

Creation of Arbitrary Borders by Colonial Powers:

Colonization of Africa by European powers in the 19th century created political units that divided ethnic groups in some cases and combined rival groups in others. As currently composed, boundaries of most Africa states were arbitrarily drawn without regard to ethnic and cultural affinities [4]. In some cases, European boundaries forced starkly different, rival cultures to cohabit within the confines of a single state. The impacts of these borders were felt to varying degrees from one country to the other throughout Africa.

For instance, the Akan speaking peoples were split between Ghana and Cote d' Ivoire; the Ewe ethnic group has also been split between Ghana and Togo while many Yoruba are found in the Benin Republic. It should be noted that since the 1950's when Africa nations started to gain independence, these arbitrary borders have more often than not become the source of conflict.

The Cold War [1]

The cold war influenced wars in Africa and played a big role in causing Intra conflicts in Africa. The African governments paid more attention to the former definition of sovereignty were they were interested in protecting their territorial borders meanwhile Western powers and the then Soviet Union were interested in selling their ideologies. These two aspects contributed in various ways elements that today have contributed to promoting conflicts in African countries.

African states just from gaining independence, most leaders could hardly make decisions in that decisions were being made by Western powers and the then Soviet Union, this was the continuation of colonialism since most policies were still determined by the different super powers that were once colonial masters. They created strong men and women nit strong institutions [1].

The cold war politics affected Africa in that the superpowers imposed rulers of their choices in Africa to curb down internal crisis prohibited African states from developing on their own in relation to their realities hence leading to the creation of conflict environment that we today experience in Africa.

Also, the cold war Interventionalism had a massive militarization of regimes erecting obstacles to future conflict resolution, efforts, and development. Large quantities of weapons were shipped to Africa, military training were regular in Africa from the western countries and the then Soviet Union, heavy funding and financing from both blocs re-enforced the legacy of cold war. They brought a lot of money to African countries that the rulers used in curbing down rebellions, building their political authority hence these funds strengthened regimes to the extent that they were unable to build up a national identity but supported ethnic, clans, religious divided groups that later on became the springboard of conflicts in Africa [3].

Imported European states

The Europeans transferred Homogenous mentality state to Africa through the use of military might associated with colonialism and exploitation. It was brought to Africa although African countries were constituted of their original distinct communities [4].

A state is an entity where there is a government governing a defined territory and able to exert authority, laws meanwhile at the same time act in international politics for the general interests of the state. Europeans had certain pre-conditions like having a cultural homogenous entity which facilitates the administration of the territory, be able to move administrative authorities to the different sectors of the country and to subdue other organized units of the state into a uniformed entity.

The policy of governance has made Africa be unable to handle it and that has become one of the main places of intra-conflicts and also Africa continuously been dominated by European states, making it difficult for these states to develop in an indigenous manner. The Europeans also chose leaders who were able to continue with their old exploitative policies and nit leaders that would serve and respect the will of the African culture and interests.

As mentioned in the introduction, there are also other internal factors that play an important role and cause Intra conflicts in Africa besides external factors and they are discussed below.

Internal factors that cause Intra conflicts in Africa
Economic decline and economic shock

Continuous economic decline plays a major part in state collapse and conflict. Many African countries have undergone a process of steep economic decline over the past three decades [1]. This is partly a result of the conflict itself, together with corruption and bad economic management. But Africa's economic woes are also a consequence of massive debt, unfavorable terms of trading with the rest of the world and exclusion from an increasingly complex, technology-based and "globalized" economy. As a result of economic decline, governments find themselves unable to fulfill promises of more jobs, better wages, and improved public services [2]. Important sections of the population particularly young men become disillusioned, marginalized and frustrated.

Economic shock is a more direct cause of conflict. This can take various forms ranging from natural catastrophe to sudden large shifts in terms of trade and commodity prices. The Ethiopian famine of 1974 was the main factor in the overthrow of Haile Selasse's government and the violence that ensued. Famine can cause mass displacement, increasing pressure on scarce resources. Other economic shocks have similar effects. The sudden shift in the terms of trade in Nigeria in 1992/3 halved Nigeria's income introduced hyperinflation and led to violence and the overthrow of the government.

Dictatorial and Oppressive Regimes

In the former times even today, it is common to find undemocratic and oppressive regimes which were or are supported and sustained by super nations for the sake of their interests across the region. Military Ethiopia was repeatedly supported by Russia and Cuba, The government of Idi Amin from Uganda and Siad Barre of Somalia is some but bold instances of oppressive ruling systems of the horn [1].

They usually create and direct a functionalized society in order to crush any force that wants to challenge them. They believe it's the use of force that can solve the problem however, force mostly help postpone the problem to future.

Politics of the State

African leaders don't usually respect the laws of the constitution; they have the habits of going beyond the rules and create rules that will see them in power for a longer time. They use power and sign decrees that are not in confirmative with the constitution for example of recent Yoweri Kaguta Museveni who changed the constitution and removed the presidential age limit making him lifetime president. These kinds of politics cause intra conflicts in Africa.

Corruption

One of the major factors responsible for internal conflicts in Africa is the devastating impact of corruption. Corruption, manifested in the embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, has paralyzed development efforts and caused debilitating immobilize in the march towards socio-economic transformation and political integration in Africa. Africa's resources have been badly managed over the years that masses are fed up with their leaders [2]. This has provoked militant nationalism against Africa leaders. The result, expectedly, is the unending conflict across Africa states.

The Africa Union itself acknowledges the debilitating impact of corruption on the political and socio-economic stability of Africa states. This perhaps explains the adoption of the "Africa Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption" by the 2nd ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union on 11 July 2003. The convention is meant to, among other things, promote and strengthen the development in Africa by each state party, of mechanisms required to prevent, detect, punish and eradicate corruption in the public and private sectors [4].

Availability of arms

The ready availability of small arms in Africa is a major factor in sustaining and fueling conflict. Considerable supplies of small arms are in circulation from previous wars. For example, between 1972 and 1990, Ethiopia and Somalia imported $8 billion worth of small arms and light weapons. In 1992, the Angolan government distributed an estimated 700,000 rifles to the population [3].

Caches of arms exist throughout the continent and Africa has active trading networks that move arms between countries. However, imports of arms, primarily from former Soviet-Bloc countries, continue to grow and to sustain conflict. The increasing capacity within Africa to manufacture ammunition has removed yet another constraint on the use of small arms. The ready availability and relatively low cost of small arms have been coupled with the emergence of a network of both local and international dealers who trade arms for

minerals or other resources. This has been a major factor in prolonging African conflicts, which have become self-sustaining conflicts and consequently less amenable to external mediation or intervention.

Opportunities for resolution are lost because of the lack of credible external guarantors to the peace process. This is particularly important when dealing with demobilization and disarmament, where the stakes are high for the belligerent groups in terms of the potential loss of power and personal security.

Poverty and Famine

The daunting economic challenges left over from past policy legacies make it difficult for Africa to reduce poverty, which, along with famine are key causes of conflict in Africa.

As poverty increases, the "economic opportunity costs" of civil war decreases. In other words, the more individuals have to lose, the less likely they will risk joining a conflict [3]. Property rights and land scarcity issues play into this heavily, as so many Africans rely greatly on agriculture.

Sharp increases in oil prices in recent years prompted increased biofuel production. This put inflationary pressure on food prices, causing prices to increase by about 15% in 2007, a huge burden for low-income states. The impact on Africa was mixed: agricultural producers benefited from price increases while non-agricultural workers, primarily in urban areas, suffered. Rising food prices can cause social unrest even in relatively stable nations, as evidenced by Senegal's instability and rioting in 2007.

Food production is subject to several risks. Factors such as environmental degradation, conflict, and climate can reduce productivity substantially. In addition, warring elements intercept food relief shipments. As so many Africans depend directly on locally raised food, droughts or other catastrophes can create famine, which exacerbates social unrest.

Appearance

This has been part of the cause of conflicts in Africa. Many Europeans and Arabs moved to Africa long ago and the recent generations settled and most were born and lost their ancestral roots and such have adopted the cultures of the country's in which they are living and some of them still identify themselves with the lost cultures, the more they do that, the more they spin and intensify ethnic conflicts that exist in Africa today.

The issue of color drives conflicts for example South Africa during Apartheid Era (Apartheid which means separate development) where there was a racial segregation developed when the whites in South Africa were considered the first citizens, well developed, better education, economic and politics meanwhile the blacks were completely excluded from all these aspects because of their color. The blacks had no voting rights, undereducated, underdeveloped and oppressed [4].

The issues of Credible Commitment

Most African leaders are proud, unnecessarily pride and have anger that makes them unable to dialogue to reach consensus. Leaders like this never think of the cost and general interests of the citizens but belligerence to win.

Leaders take over power and swear to respect the people's cultures, language, religion, ethnic group and serve everyone with dignity and respect but end up serving just the ethnic group from which they originate and not follow and respect the commitment he/she took [5].

When a conflict breaks out and one of the parties signs an agreement and later refuses to respect the agreement for example the Central African Republic where President Bozize signed an agreement with the Seleka rebels but ended up not respecting it. This is a common practice in many countries in Africa although they may not be in a war respecting agreements and credible commitment is still a big issue in Africa.

Resource Governance and politics behind resource management

This factor has many debates around it and most authors and writers forget the point that politics behind resources is the main cause of conflicts.

Resources are those elements that enable people in a particular situation and society to realize their objectives and not that they cause a conflict because of its abundance or its scarcity, so resources can facilitate but not originate a conflict. It's the politics behind resource management that causes conflicts [3].

Conflicts usually originate when one party or group of the society is excluded by the government during the sharing of state resources. This makes the excluded group believe that their rights are being denied and for that reason as citizens of the nation, they believe that they have equal rights of resources distribution of the state. This practice of Ethnic bias could be realized in many African countries where leaders use family members, people from the same ethnic rout, and the linguistic group among others.

The discrimination and exclusion of part of a group in a state are one of the reasons that can push the excluded people to pick up arms to fight for their rights and equal sharing of resources.

Actors behind the conflicts

These are people who push the conflicts and they are commonly known as Invisible hands. They are categorized into ethnic activists and politics entrepreneurs plus intellectuals and they drive conflicts due to various interests [3].

They do provoke, promote and perpetuate them through their manipulative strategies of these people. For example, ethnic activists discourage group mixing and this is very dangerous especially for a country with many groups which we build the issue of "We" and "They". This will lead to hatred and drive to conflicts.

The intellectuals who have been participating in doctoring texts like the constitution and they usually try to keep dictators, presidents from their ethnic groups in power by manipulating the constitution against the will of the people.

4. CONCLUSION

Africa, in general, has been and still evidences a lot of Intra conflicts. Most of the drivers and causes of these Intra conflicts are external factors and also there are many internal factors. These internal factors are a key and play important role in many Intra conflicts in Africa and a lot is still to be done to address these internal issues such as credible commitment, poor governance, poverty, corruption, dictatorship, politics of the state among others and also good conflict management strategies since not all conflicts can be resolved. So it's not possible to say that Intra-conflicts in Africa are or was caused only by external factors but also internal factors play a significant role in causing intra-conflicts in Africa.

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