War and Security in Africa

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Abstract

The paper examines war and security with an emphasis on Africa. The debilitating impact of war on humanity and society cannot be overemphasised. War stifles socio-economic development, loss of lives and properties, and the social displacement of people etc. Several wars have been fought within the African content, such as the Congo war, Liberia war, and Sierra Leone war, amongst others. The realist theory, propounded by Hans J. Morgenthau in 1978, was adopted as the theoretical framework. Secondary source of data was deployed; it involves the collection of data from textbooks, journals and seminar papers etc. The study found that poor governance is one of the drivers of war and insecurity in Africa. Over the years, a good number of factors have led to the disintegration and shift in focus of the African security discourse to other considerations, such as the satisfaction of basic needs, the right to a sustainable environment, and the protection of cultural and religious identity, among many others. The study recommended that African leaders should implement people-oriented policies that will have

a positive impact on the socio-economic well-being of the people. Once the issues of poverty, hunger, and squalor are addressed, it will help scale down wars in the continent.

Keywords: War, Africa, Security, States and Conflict

Introduction

An analysis of a conflict situation or war provides one of the most veritable instruments for studying international relations. Von Clausewitz (1911) defined war as an act of violence intended to compel our opponents to fulfill our will. Elsewhere, he emphasised the continuity of violence with other political methods; war is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with a mixture of other means (Von Clausewitz, 1911). According to the International Law Dictionary, war, in principle, can only take place between sovereign political entities, that is, States. War is thus a means for resolving differences between units of the highest order of political organization. The majority of those who have been concerned with war as a socio-political phenomenon have also adopted it as their basic premise that there is a fundamental difference between domestic conflicts, for which there are normally mechanisms for peaceful resolution, and international conflicts, which occur in a state of anarchy. According to Aaron (2016), wars have been seen to involve directly state institutions, such as the foreign office and the armed forces. Since war is put in an international context, the stakes of war may be the life and death of states. This general outlook on war as a global or inter-state phenomenon has been shared by many students, regardless of their professional background as political scientists, historians, sociologists, psychologists or military analysts. The school of political realism maintains that nation-states can only realise their national interests by demonstrating their willingness to fight and by making use of wars of various degrees of magnitude as an instrument of national policy to achieve legitimate ends (Lider, 2007; Nobel, 2007).

There is a strong relationship between war and security as war threatens security. War and security-related issues are international issues as they are not unusual to a group of people or race in the global system. To buttress the universal character of war, emphasis is made on numerous wars that have been fought in Europe, such as the First World War (WW1), the Second World War (WW11), and the

ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. In Africa, several wars have been fought in the continent, such as the Congo crisis of 1960, Liberia civil war of 1989 and Libya civil war of 2012 amongst others. This paper examines the nexus between war and security in Africa.

Statement of the Problem

Mundy (2011) posits that weak governance, ancient animosities, exclusionary politics, disputed legitimacy, resource competition, external factors, globalised conflicts, and radical ideologies have combined to create various episodes of violent conflict across the African continent since most countries attained political independence in the 1960s. Millions of lives have been lost, and violence has cost African countries billions as a result of cruel destruction and foregone economic gains in spite of numerous attempts to foster sustainable peace (Mundy, 2011). Nogueira (2014) noted that over time, the character and origins of violent war have changed as political, economic, social, and environmental circumstances evolved. He went further to posit that "the number of African countries embroiled in violent conflict rose sharply in the 1960s, as groups contested the legitimacy of post-colonial governance structures" (Nogueira, 2014, p. 98).

According to Muggah (2012), since the 1960s, a total of 24 sub-Saharan African countries (i.e., almost 50% of African countries) have suffered war, while 22 other countries have managed to avoid it. Freedom wars, intractable wars, proxy wars (substitute wars or wars controlled from abroad, typical conflicts of the context of bipolar dispute), or post-Cold War conflicts have sparked a major review of its causes and magnitudes, sometimes very biased and reductionist, based on very different sources, methodologies and data. Nevertheless, most sources agree that Africa has experienced a considerable decline in the number of major armed conflicts in recent years (Sharmaa, 2014). For example, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (2005) states that if in 1990 there were 11 major armed conflicts in Africa, this figure had dropped in 2007. In total, this agency estimates that since the end of the Cold War, a total of 14 armed conflicts can be counted in Africa, namely Algeria, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), Republic of the Congo, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda (SIPRI, 2005).

From this, it follows that the war in Africa has had an exceedingly important humanitarian and socio-economic impact. The approximations only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are that over five million people lost their lives as a direct or indirect result of armed violence. In countries like Sierra Leone, almost half the population (about two million) were displaced due to armed clashes between the government and rebel groups, while in Darfur, the death toll was estimated to be more than 300,000 people (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Moreover, a recent report by Oxfam International and Saferworld (2017) states that Africa continent has lost more than 300,000 million dollars as a result of wars in recent years. In short, a level of losses, direct and indirect victims, and an impact in terms of opportunity costs, transaction costs, and impact on infrastructure, etc., which, per se, induces a more detailed analysis of the nature and impact of the armed conflicts in the continent.

Objectives of the Study

1. Examine the factors responsible for wars in Africa.
2. Identify measures for addressing the menace of war in Africa.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the realist theory propounded by Hans J. Morgenthau in 1962. The realist theory derives its impulse from the view that the nature of man is sinful and conflictual. Realism holds that political theory must flow from observation of the history and experience of people and states and that these show a pattern of violent and aggressive behavior (Richard & Sinclair, 1996). Thus, the highest moral duty of the state is its own preservation. To accomplish this, states must utilize power. According to Morgenthau (1978, p.57), "the interest of the state, defined in terms of power, is the primary moral guide by which policies are developed, but prudence in pursuing that interest is the primary ethical guide for policymakers". In the world of power politics, states must increase their power to guarantee their survival. According to Hans Morgenthau (1978, p.56), "thus, the goal of the state has come to include the search for ways to acquire and keep power, increase power and demonstrate power. In short, in a world of inconsistent states seeking power, or a system confirmed by historical experience and by the character of man, states must engage in power

politics in order to survive, and they should do anything prudent or otherwise to achieve that goal".

According to Walker (1993, p. 33), "there is no single tradition of realism but rather a knot of historically constituted tensions, contradictions and evasions''. There are, therefore, different types of realism, which Timothy (1993) has distinguished into three; classical realism (up to the twentieth century), modern realism (1939 – 1979), and neo-realism (1979 to date). Timothy (1993, p.41) admits that "this periodisation do not, however, overcome the problem of diversity since not all classical writers agree on the causes of war, or whether the balance of power is a natural state or one which must be created for the effective management of global power".

The relevance of the theory to the study is hinged on the fact that war is an instrument through which states pursue their national interest. Most of the war fought in the global system and Africa continent in particular is predicated on national interest. The interest varies from one state to another as states are willing to go to war in protection of their national interest

Methodology

The historical research design was adopted for the study; it involved looking at past events so as to understand present events in order to be able to predict future events. The secondary source of data was utilised for the study. The secondary source of data refers to the set of data collated or authored by another person, archives, in the form of documents collected for a purpose other than the present one in which it is being used (Asika, 2006). Selltiz et al (2008) have declared that the usefulness of secondary sources of data lies in the fact that information of this sort is collected periodically. Also, gathering information from such sources does not require the cooperation or assistance of the individual about whom information is being sought. The sources of data for this study include; magazines, textbooks, journals and seminar papers, among others.

Results and Discussions

Factors Responsible for War in Africa

The factors responsible for war in Africa include arbitrary borders created by the colonial powers, heterogeneous ethnic composition of African states, inept political leadership, corruption, negative effects of external debt burden and poverty among others. They are briefly discussed below:

1). Creation of Arbitrary Borders by Colonial Powers

Alabi (2016) and Cammack et al (2014) have observed that the colonisation 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, the boundaries of most African states were arbitrarily drawn without regard to ethnic and cultural affinities. 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 Ivory Coast; the Ewe ethnic group has also been split between Ghana and Togo, while many Yoruba are found in the Benin Republic and Nigeria. It should be noted that since the 1950s, when African state started to gain political independence, these arbitrary borders have more often than not become a source of war.

2). Heterogeneous Ethnic Composition of African States and the Resultant Problem of Ethnicity

Carment (2014) and the United Nations (2007) have submitted that out of the over 180 states in the world, only a small number are ethnically homogenous. This perhaps suggests that multi-ethnic states are likely to continue to be a feature of global politics and that ethnic war is not only a threat to the African continent but also a threat to the whole international community. However, one cannot deny the fact that ethno-political conflicts have been on the surge in Africa throughout the 20th century. This is possibly not unconnected with the factor of ethnic diversity of most African states and the resultant problem of ethnicity. Eminue (2014) and Osaghae (2012) submit that of all the factors, multi-ethnicity is the most commonly associated with war. Truly, given the fact that ethnic cleavages are already deep and political discrimination against minority groups is widely practiced in Africa,

ethnicity cannot but be a great potential for separatist activities. Ethnicity has bred feelings of suspicion, hatred, and distrust among members of the various ethnic groups in Africa and has no doubt re-traded political integration in Africa. It is therefore not surprising to note that at least twice (1967-70 civil war and 1993 -1999 friction), ethnic rivalry has been the major cause of internal conflicts in Nigeria. Similar situation also played out in Liberia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, Congo, and a host of other African states.

3). Inept Leadership

Africa has consistently suffered from the problem of incompetent leadership which has slow political integration and unity in almost all African states. Given the varied composition of most African countries, perhaps what they needed most were the virtues of administrative tact, political tolerance and social justice. These indispensable ingredients are to be provided by the continent's leadership. Inappropriately, however, the realities on the ground in most African nations have revealed that most African leaders are weak, corrupt, and unpatriotic. Apart from hindering national integration and socio-economic developments, the attitudes of these rulers have sparked off widespread bloody violence. Sudanese, Nigerian, Algerian, and Liberian civil wars lend credibility to the fact that African leaders have failed to forge national unity in their respective countries. Judging from the above remark, one cannot but agree with Adedeji (2009, p. 11) when he asserts that "what African countries have lacked during most of their history, as independent states are leaders who are unifiers, chiefs in the true sense, who bind wounds, hold everything and everyone together, mobilise and motivate their people, pursue a policy of inclusion rather than exclusion and are seen by one and all to be of the highest integrity and beyond suspicion". The point, therefore, is that African leadership must be acceptable to all sections of the community if the process of integration is not to be halted. Until then, a relapse of war across Africa may continue to be a common occurrence.

4). Corruption

One of the major factors responsible for war in Africa is the disturbing impact of corruption. Corruption, manifested in the embezzlement and misuse of public funds, has paralysed development efforts and caused countless hardship in Africa. Africa's resources have been badly managed over the years, and the masses are

fed up with their leaders. This has provoked militant nationalism against African leaders. The result, expectedly, is the unending war across African states. The African Union itself acknowledges the debilitating impact of corruption on the political and socio-economic stability of African 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.

5). Poverty

Africa is one of the poorest continents in the world. This is largely due to harsh environmental conditions, corruption, and huge foreign debt that exacerbate the conditions of poverty (IIiffe, 2005). For instance, desertification has contributed to famines in a number of African states, such as Ethiopia and Mali. As a result, the number of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa grew from 317 million in 1997 to more than 400 million in 2015 (World Bank, 2016). If, therefore, the saying is true that a hungry man is an angry man, then war may for long be a part of African life owing to this situation of absolute poverty prevalent across the continent

Measures of Combating Wars in Africa

As a way out of the difficulty of wars that have bedeviled Africa, it is apt to offer some cherished suggestions based on a thorough analysis of the causes of the problem. In this way, two major broad solutions may be experimented with to bail Africa out of recurrent wars and conflict. These are committed and sincere leadership and eradication of poverty.

1). Committed and Sincere Leadership: African states need committed and sincere leaders who will lead by example and who act as good, responsible, and responsive fathers to all the component sections and peoples in their countries so as to promote peace and harmony within the confines of their respective countries. This can be done in a number of ways:

2). Even distribution of resources: African leaders must ensure an even distribution of resources among the various geo-political zones in their countries. Marginalisation of one unit/ group should not be allowed in order to win the support and cooperation of all and sundry and to avoid any feeling of alienation

3). Promotion of the rule of law: African leaders should also endeavor to promote the rule of law. This involves equal access to justice by all citizens irrespective of their status, respect for court decisions by the government and influence, and conduct of free and fair periodic elections, among others. When and where leaders promote the rule of law, as indicated above, there is a guarantee of peaceful coexistence among people and a peaceful transition of power from one government to the other. Succession dispute-related wars that are very rampant in Africa may thus be easily eliminated.

4). Protection of Fundamental Human Rights: African leaders should also promote, protect, and guarantee the fundamental human rights of their citizens. In particular, the fundamental rights of freedom of speech, association, and religion should be guaranteed. People should be free to assess and criticise the performance of the government without fear of persecution. Opposition must be tolerated, while the fourth realm of government, the press, must not be censured. In this way, governments would always be kept on their toes to provide qualitative and sincere leadership in their countries.

5). Eradication of Poverty: Without much controversy, one may boldly declare that poverty is the root of all evils in Africa. A poor man who has been economically humiliated and financially traumatized may not be said to be in his right senses. Hence, it may be apt to observe that a hungry man is a madman. He can steal, kill, maim, and destroy. Poverty can demean a man and affect his psychology negatively. Hence, a major policy instrument for peace and stability in Africa, which is riddled with wars and conflicts, is the eradication or, at worst, a reduction of the monster of poverty. This can be achieved in several ways, as suggested below:

Equal access to qualitative education: Governments in Africa should give their citizens equal access to qualitative education. The importance of education to the socio-economic development of a nation has been well articulated in the Millennium Development Goal. Education, no doubt, is a lever to human and societal development. Apart from imparting skill and knowledge to the citizens, it will also eliminate ignorance. Education will also empower citizens for employment in the future. It makes labor more mobile across the globe. Opportunities for survival are very much available to the educated people.

Provision of gainful employment for the youths: Governments in Africa should also strive to provide gainful employment for all their citizens, especially the youths. Industries and factories should be established to absorb the teeming graduates of higher institutions of learning in African countries. The government should also encourage farming through mechanized agriculture. Modern farm implements and technology should be provided for farmers at low prices. Apart from eradicating the problem of hunger, this will no doubt equally enhance the economic empowerment of youths and eradicate idleness.

Findings

The following findings were made from the study:

1. Poor governance is one of the drivers of war and insecurity in Africa. Over the years, a good number of factors have led to the disintegration and shift in focus of the African security discourse to other considerations, such as the satisfaction of basic needs, the right to a sustainable environment, and the protection of cultural and religious identity, among many others (Nnoli, 2006). As Nnoli (2006:8) contended, "African states are yet to realise that the best guarantee of state security is the security of their citizens and the willing acceptance by the latter of the political rules of the game on which the legitimacy of the state rests". The inability of the political class to deliver the dividends of democracy to the people has fueled war and created an atmosphere for security challenges. For instance, the menace of banditry in the Northwest region of Nigeria and Boko Haram in the Northeast are fuel basically as a result of poor governance failure of the state to address the collective concerns of its citizens.

2. The study also found that state-perpetrated human rights abuse and citizens' perceptions of unjust treatment by the state are one of the factors responsible for the war in Africa. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2023), the threat of violence, rights abuses, military coups, and armed conflict remains pervasive in Africa. The report further noted that African leaders failed to tackle widespread abuses against civilians by state security forces and non-state armed groups and insufficiently prioritized justice efforts for victims of atrocities across the continent" (HRW, 2023). Countless civilians remain caught up in conflict with nowhere to turn due to lax efforts to address the plethora of crises plaguing the continent, said Mausi Segun, HRW's Africa director. The HRW report also stated that government troops or non-state armed groups have been connected to atrocities against civilians in at least 15 armed conflicts, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Mali, Burkina Faso, and South Sudan. Authorities in transitional governments, such as Chad and Sudan, have "cracked down on peaceful political dissent and criticism," the report said (HRW, 2023).

Conclusion

No single state can achieve the changes that we need, but together we can do it. The problem of building a stable, just, and war-free world is difficult, but it is not impossible. This can be achieved through the collective effort of nation-states. Although survival and the actualisation of national interest have always been the goal of states in the global system, the need to protect the human race through the abolition of wars should be a major guiding principle. This is so owing to the devastating effect of war on human society. States need humanity and society to actualise their national interest.

Recommendations

1. African leaders should implement people-oriented policies that will have a positive impact on the socio-economic well-being of the people. Once the issues of poverty, hunger, and squalor are addressed, it will help scale down wars in the continent.

2. There is a need for African leaders to be committed to constitutionalism and the rule of laws that govern their respective states. Public office holders,

especially elected leaders, must not elongate their term of office nor create a constitutional crisis to enable them to remain perpetually in power. These scenarios create an avenue for war.

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