

Globalization and management of regional conflicts and security in Africa: The case of ECOWAS

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ABSTRACT

Globalization, characterized by liberalism, free market policies, information and communication technology, inter-connection, inter dependence, borderless border, etc, has made the world a global village. The new phase of the international political economy has challenged Africa to face her numerous conflicts, and security issues squarely. The pathology of conflicts and insecurity in such places in Africa as Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Angola, Chad, Congo (DRC), Cote d'ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, etc, have become so endemic in recent times affecting development and good governance, creating serious challenges to regional organizations ability to manage such conflicts and security. The paper analyzes regional conflicts and security challenges in Africa with special focus on West Africa. In the main, it explains several underlying concepts, theories and causes of regional conflicts. Furthermore, the article addresses major security concerns of the sub-region such as small arms proliferation, trans-border banditry and public order in post conflict societies. The study submits that regional preventive (preemptive) diplomacy initiative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) explains the practical design of its defense apparatus as a progressive indigenous institution for managing regional conflicts and security in Africa.

Keywords: Globalization, management, regional, conflicts, security, Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

Africa includes the continental African states, Madagascar and other islands surrounding Africa. The number of independent African states is today over fifty with each state facing internal and external security problems, which reflect in a small scale the larger security challenges of Africa as a continent. Assurance of security at the regional level remained the major dilemma of African security (Aforka-Nweke, 1985:9).

Conflict is part of human society, which exists in various forms, be it religious, political, cultural, social or economic. It is a truism that there is hardly any society without one form or another of conflict challenging its corporate existence. However, reliable conflict resolution measures define societies whether developed or developing (Yakubu, 2005:345). In other words, African conflicts present some unique security challenges such as small arms proliferation, cross-border banditry and public order in post-conflict societies. Notable examples being Liberia and Sierra Leone conflicts of the 1990s and beyond that, challenged Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS).

The capacity of regional security apparatus in managing African conflict is very significant despite the political consequences of globalization in which "the power, authority and influence" of states are in decline as globalization advances (Olayode, 2006:17). Economic globalization leads to development as Ate (2001) asserts that "there has been a new perception that socio-economic development cannot be assumed to result automatically... without a conducive security environment" (Ate, 2001:112). Efforts have been made in this study to link the variables of globalization, conflict and security for better understanding of their convergence and impact of purpose as the next segment of methodology of study attests.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted content analysis based on inter-

disciplinary research approach of the social sciences and the humanities. Primary materials were sourced through publications of specialized international economic agencies, public archival institutions online and within Nigeria. Vital questions were asked and reasonable responses gotten to validate existing information germane to the study as it relates to globalization, conflict and security in Africa.

In the main, the method of analysis involved evaluation and interpretation of written materials from several authors which assisted in validating the statement of the problem, findings for generalization and corroboration. The study considered its purpose, concepts, theories of conflicts and reviews of literature related to the major components of globalization, conflict, security and their obvious linkages.

Nevertheless, the paper considered the vacuum it tends to fill in the problem area by pre-testing and comparatively analyzing its secondary sources to ascertain the trend of information contained therein for validity and reliability.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Globalization

Historically, globalization is not new, although the contemporary globalization process may be different. Its essential features are the integration of the global economy under a neoliberal model with emphasis on monetarism that supports the reserve of hard currencies of the core countries. Adeniji (2002) posits that, "the first wave of globalization lasted for over three and a half centuries (as) it occasioned the pillage of Africa's natural resources and accounted for the enslavement, deportation and the dislocation of normal life for the majority of Africans" (Adeniji, 2002:26).

The United Nations, in lending her voice said, "In the span of one generation, global economic interdependence has grown extraordinarily as a consequence of enormous technological progress and policies aimed at opening national economies internally and externally to competition" (UN, 2011). Omoweh (2000) was of the opinion that globalization does not really mean crossing or opening up borders but the transcendence of the economic, social, cultural, political, environmental constraints across territories (Omoweh, 2000:46). World Bank defines globalization as "an inevitable phenomenon in human history that's been bringing the world closer through the exchange of goods and products, information, knowledge and culture..." (World Bank, 2014).

Globalization has broken down frontiers and other barriers to financial flows and commercial exchanges representing opportunities to be seized in Africa and elsewhere for those capable of using such advantages

(Nwokedi, 2001:151). In line with the above stand, International Monetary Fund (IMF) opined that "there is substantial evidence, from countries of different sizes and different regions, that as countries "globalize" their citizens benefit in the form of access to a wider variety of goods and services, lower prices, more and better-paying jobs, improved health, and higher overall living standards" (Giovanni et al., 2008).

For Obi (2001), globalization is neither uniform in its reach or impact, nor addresses the inequalities in the international political economy, but its implication is that there are winners and losers and the increased exploitation and marginalization of the developing world (Obi, 2001:171). Contributing, Alli (2006) contended that globalization is a process that intensifies the integration of the world economy and the people through technological advancement in several areas, particularly in the area of information technology (Alli, 2006:337).

Wallerstein (2000), observed that "globalization is a misleading concept, since what is described as globalization has been happening for 500 years. Rather what is new is that we are entering an age of transition". In the views of Charles Miller, "globalization, or the joint world-wide expansion of the world's economy, is a popularly debated topic among economists. Proponents of globalization say it brings new opportunities to everyone, while anti-globalization groups suggest it harms the majority of the world's population. One anti-globalization lobbyist, Immanuel Wallerstein, even suggest the world is on the verge of economic failure" (Miller, 2014).

From the above (despite anti-globalization stance), globalization with its logic of history and production process, has temporarily been characterized by liberalism, free market policies, information and technology, interconnection, interdependence, borderless borders etc. In its modernization stance, a big gulf had been created between the developed north and the developing south. As the south is trying to close the gap the north at present is orbiting the universe. Here lies the fate that has befallen Africa at present.

Conflict

Conflict is perceived by people according to their environment. It has been described as the existence of non-compatibility or disagreement between two actors. These actors can be individuals, groups, organizations or national in their interaction over issues of interests, values, beliefs, emotions, goals, space, positions, scarce resources, etc (Okeke, 2006:13). From the psychological interpretation, conflict refers to "a state in which opposite feelings exist and tug at each other, with regards to a particular goal; or opposition between two or more contradictory needs, motives, wishes, impulses or desires" (Makanju, 2009:1).

Philosophically, conflict is a pervasive occurrence in human societies, the manifestation of this pervasive phenomenon cuts across psychological, political, social and anthropological dimensions and spheres of human existence. Conflict starts at the individual level when he experiences personal conflict, because of many pressures from the groups he belongs and roles he plays in the society (Williams, 2005:13).

Oshita (2005) described conflict in developing societies as being linked directly to the forces of social transformation. This understanding is being linked to Nigeria as “necessary and inescapable condition in the creation of political order, and is thus intimately bound up with the process of modernization and political development” (Oshita, 2005:91).

According to Schmid (1998), conflict management refers to the interference in an on-going conflict process in such a way as to contain and if possible reduce the level of violence and destruction, prevent the vertical escalation towards the use of weapons to mass destruction and prevent the horizontal expansion into other theatres.

Conflict resolution, as opposed to conflict management or conflict settlement, implies approaching the conflict in a problem-solving, constructive and non-violent way, recognizing the value of the identities of all parties in the relationship, their human needs and interest, rather than a violent, destructive solution or a mere settlement that freezes the current power distribution between opponents (Schmid, 1998:26).

Security

Security is about the condition of feeling safe from harm or danger, the defense, protection and preservation of core values, and the absence of threats to acquired values. It is about survival and the conditions of human existence. Francis (2006) defined African security as both military and non-military sources of threat. First, African security is about the protection and preservation from fear and danger that threatens the survival of African societies and people. Secondly, he sees it as about the survival and conditions of human existence, about peace, development, justice, whose absence create the condition for conflict and insecurity (Francis, 2006:22-23).

Ate (2001) supported the above position of security problem in Africa which he sees as direct threat to human security as a result of the physical and psychological abuses inflicted upon non-combatant individuals, including children, the aged and women in the environment of armed conflicts. This situation is further characterized by forced exodus of population, creating refugee flows, genocide, rape of women, ethnic cleansing, and organized killing of the unarmed, child soldiering anti-personnel mining of farmlands (Ate, 2001:ix).

Contributing, Akinade (2009) said that security is

defined as “a state of being secured, that is, a state of freedom from apprehension, as well as freedom from danger or risk. It is also a state of psychological confidence in the safety of ones person, security is taken to mean the freedom of citizens from apprehension and the creation of a psychological environment in which citizen feels safe” (Akinade, 2009:96).

For Abolurin (2003), security refers to all measures in use or can be used to frustrate the activities of a saboteur. The importance attached to security varies from one country to another. The more complex a society is, the more likely the degree of security is, every society requires some good security measures in other to function effectively.

In another development, Abolurin (2003) was of the view that internal security is a totality of the nation’s equilibrium state, which needs to be maintained so that the nation can carry out its formal function without unnecessary interruption from anywhere. Internal security involves government coordination of all those actions that would ensure that the equilibrium of the state is constantly maintained by any form of civil disturbances. For him internal security could also mean the citizens expectation of government to make provision for protection of life and property and the safety from criminals and armed robbers (Abolurin, 2003:79).

Akinyeye (2001) quoted Arnold Wolfer as seeing security as concerned mainly with such indices as the:

“military aspect of a nation’s goals, competition between satisfied and dissatisfied powers, strategic issues of superpowers alliance-building processes, independence and sovereignty, civil-military relations, economic basis for strategic forces, conflict spots in international relations and problem of maintaining systematic balance” (Akinyeye, 2001:18).

From all the submissions above, one can easily identify the common demand to all definitions of security as that of protection against threats to interest and values of individual state or nation state.

THEORIES OF CONFLICT

Theoretical framework is the conceptual underpinning of a research study which may be based on theory or a specific conceptual model in which case it may be referred to as the conceptual framework. Therefore, theory in its most general sense describes or explains something. Often it is the answer to ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions (Olayinka, 2006:358-359).

Submitting, Faleti (2006) quoting Encarta says that a theory is an idea or belief about something arrived at through assumption and in some cases a set of facts,

propositions or principles analyzed in their relation to one another and used, especially in sciences, to explain phenomena. Having said that, some theories of conflict will suffice, and this section will draw from the intelligent work of this scholar.

According to him, Structural-Conflict theory addresses the reactions of individual, groups, cultures, institutions and societies to change. Scarcity of resources is sometimes responsible for social conflicts because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies; one class dominating others due to the structure and organization of the society.

The Frustration-Aggression theory stems from the inability to fulfill needs. This is different from the natural reaction or instinct. But this is the outcome of frustration where legitimate desires are derived either by the direct or indirect actions due to the way society is structured. There will be a feeling of disappointment which may be expressed in anger through violence targeted at the group responsible.

Human Needs theory states that humans react violently when their basic needs are deprived of them. These basic needs include physical, psychological, social and spiritual, etc. It contends that provision of one, example food, and denies access to another, may be freedom to workshop choice God, make people to react violently. Notable needs theories include Maslow's theory of Motivation, Burton's Human Needs theory, Gurr's thesis on Relative Deprivation, etc (Faleti, 2006:35-57).

Theories such as structural-conflict, frustration-aggression and human needs discussed so far have thrown light on why, how, what and when questions, concerning conflict issues in African societies. The three theories focused on ideas or beliefs about something arrived at through assumption and have proved the endemic nature of African conflict and security challenges. With this understanding, we shall now discuss one of the subject matters of the paper, globalization and its effect in Africa.

Globalization and African conflicts

In spite of pessimism of anti-globalization, Africa stands to benefit from it. As Immanuel Wallerstein opined here, where he rejected the notion of a "third world", to him "there is only one world connected by a complex network of economic exchange relationship, that is, world economy ...as a result only one global network or system of economic exchange exists". In another development, Wallerstein (1999) enthused:

The 1990's have been deluged with a discourse about globalization. We are told by virtually everyone that we are now living, and for the first time, in an era of globalization. We are told that globalization has changed everything: the

sovereignty of states has declined; everyone's ability to resist the rules of the markets has disappeared; our possibility of cultural autonomy has been virtually annulled; and the stability of all our identities has come into serious question. This state of presumed globalization has been celebrated by some, and bemoaned by others (Wallerstein, 1999).

Economic and Social Development of the United Nations observed that "globalization has brought benefits and opportunities for many people of the world. However, many others have been excluded from its positive impact. Extreme poverty remains a daily reality for more than 1 billion people who subsist on less than \$1 a day" (United Nations, 2011). In same vein, International Monetary Fund submitted that "it is probably no more coincidence that over the past 20 years, as a number of countries have become more open to global economic forces, the percentage of the developing world living in extreme poverty - defined as living on less than \$1 per day - has been cut in half" (Giovanni et al., 2008). World Bank advises that "for all countries to be able to reap the benefits of globalization, the international community must continue working to reduce distortions in international trade (cutting agricultural subsidies and trade barriers) that favor developed countries and create a more fair system" (World Bank, 2014).

One of the biggest challenges facing Africa is how to strike the right balance between her conflicts and the forces of globalization. Insecurity occasioned by conflicts is detrimental to investment flows, mobility of capital and rapid integration of markets which are among the forces or characteristics of globalization. As Olayode (2006) pointed out that "the combined effects of globalization and economic liberalization have thus intensified African countries' needs for external aid and development assistance."

Having the effect of globalization on African investment flows and development assistance in mind, it is also to be noted that the benefits and costs of globalization are unevenly distributed with developing countries facing special difficulties in meeting this challenge. Then, with conflicts and insecurity in many parts of Africa, invariably, Africa faces monumental loss as foreign assistance programmes find alternative areas with stable polity where returns on investment are assured (Olayode, 2006:10-11).

Conflicts have characterized political processes in Africa. It is true when one reminiscences the four decades ago, there are scarcely any part of Africa without its own peculiar conflict. In West Africa, the post independence Nigeria witnessed a-three-year civil war 1967 to 1970, the Liberia civil war 1990 to 1997, the Sierra-Leone civil war that began on 25 May, 1997 and lately Ivory Coast, once a peaceful state, was engulfed in internal crisis. The Great Lakes Region witnessed the

Congo Crisis August 1998 to April 2000; northern and western Uganda crisis began in 1971 unto December 8, 1999; Burundi civil war began in 1993 up till 21, February 2000; Rwanda civil strife April 6, 1994 up till 23rd march, 2000.

Conflicts in Southern Africa especially the Angolan civil war 1975 to 2000; South African conflict 1948 to April 1994 were the two most notable conflicts in this region. Conflicts and wars in the Horn of Africa, the Sudanese a civil war 1956 to 2005; the Somali conflict April 1978 to 2011, and the Ethiopia-Eritrea war, May 1998 to 2000 (Adeyemo, n.d:15-105).

There are a number of typologies describing African conflicts. These include secessionist, ethno-religious, self determination, military intervention, national liberation, political exclusion, and conflict over territories or boundaries. West African conflict especially in the Mano River area is characterized by spill over effect. In Sudanese conflict, the intractability is of great effect lasting up to two decades, spilling over to other countries.

Military related conflicts especially the insatiability of the armed forces in governance characterized the two decades after independence in Africa. Mention will also be made about the destabilizing force of apartheid in South Africa. While other Southern African countries were involved in wars of liberation from colonial shackles. Angola particularly was engulfed in civil war caused by power struggle that lasted more than two decades (Adetula, 2006:389).

Contributing to issues of conflict in Africa, Yakubu (2005) went into memory lane, "in the era of conquest and annexation which began in 1885 in Berlin where European countries met to define their spheres of influence" in Africa. Colonization defined African boundaries where it did not consider the affinities and ties of the people of African Kingdoms and territories. The seed for African conflict was therefore sowed. "The separation of Kith and Kin and the emergence of some ethnic groups as dominant groups and others as minority groups led to various wars".

Economic disparities among African states have roles to play in African conflicts, because "nations that are less endowed with natural resources have not infrequently supported insurgents from the naturally endowed countries for the purpose of improving their economic fortunes". Religious differences accounted for many violent conflicts in Africa particularly followers of the two main religions, Islam and Christianity (Yakubu, 2005:346-347).

Wars of liberation also accounted for instability in most African states. These wars "were fought to relieve some individual colonial states of foreign rule and it's disaggregate influences on their territories". In another development, "independence was obtained only after extensive dialogue and negotiations, while in others, Africans were only able to gain their freedom after armed confrontation" (Faleti, 2005:368).

The above African conflicts and their induced factors generated extensive security concerns which Africa faced

in her chequered history, which we now turn to.

Security concerns of regional conflicts

A vast area of Africa is currently strewn with landmines, there are guns everywhere; and the youths, especially the underage who should otherwise be in school, are abducted or conscripted to serve as child-soldiers, and transformed into gun-totting fiends who relish sadistic acts" (Faleti, *ibid*).

The understanding above, obviously concerns insecurity in Africa given the spate of conflicts and attendant consequences. These conflicts have thrown up security issues such as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), cross-border banditry, dissident armies, paramilitary bodies, mercenaries and armed mafias (Cawthra and Luckham, 2003:xii)

Luckham (2003) argued that insecurity is sometimes orchestrated by the state which may involve direct military or police action, sometimes the subcontracting of repression to para-militaries and militias. The author was of the view that competing groups emerge outside the framework of the state. They include party militias, guerillas, warlords or mafias, with their own commercial and political interest in fighting. According to him, the fragmentations of military powers create difficulties in security sector reform because combatants have to be demobilized politically and militarily to allow for peace agreements (Luckham, 2003:23).

Defining Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), Nojeem (2009) said that they could be automatic, semi-automatic, or self-loading, local guns, revolvers, pistols, machine guns, assault rifles, carbines, hand grenade launchers, light mortars, illuminants, portable antitank, anti-aircraft and anti-personnel missiles (Nojeem, 2009:6-7).

Badmus (2005) revealed that:

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) have become one of the greatest threats to human security and peace in the twenty-first century as they are at the centre of most of the conflicts in the world. Africa is no exception (Badmus, 2005:63).

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been described as a lucrative venture globally due to their unique characteristics because they are compact, mobile, distinctive and concealable, also easy to move around with undetected. Largely across a larger part of Africa, there are increasing belief that the well-being and survival of the individual and the state can only be guaranteed by the possession of SALW (Nojeem, *ibid*).

Impact of African conflicts

"Protracted civil wars and armed insurrections" according

to Faleti (2005) results in massive destruction, hardship, refuge flow, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and “catastrophic consequences for human, economic and political development”, in such places in Africa as Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Angola, Chad, Congo (DRC), Niger, Algeria, Mozambique, Cote d’Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, etc (Faleti, 2005:368).

Supporting the views expressed here, Faleti quoted Cleaver (1996) as saying:

Over 10 million households have had their entire livelihoods wiped out by war. About 25 million refugees and internally displaced persons, most of whom are women and children, live in border camps or urban squatter settlements. Children have been especially victimized by the ravages of war. There are an estimated 5 to 10 million war orphans and numerous child-soldiers traumatized by observing or directly participating in mass violence. Approximately 20 million landmines render vast proportions of fertile agricultural lands unproductive and prohibit the free movement of persons, goods and services (Faleti, *ibid*).

On the part of small arms and light weapons proliferation, the effects are too numerous to mention. For example, the war in Liberia and by extension Sierra Leone which are connected with the wider politics of the region, the proliferation of SALW are attributed to protracted conflict there (Badmus, *ibid*: 82). At a glance the predicaments posed by the SALW are enormous and devastating. Cross border banditry, criminals; political tugs misuse these weapons and thereby increasing threats to national unity and security even in countries that are at peace.

SALW fuelled inter and intra state crises making many orphans, widows, homeless. Equally, weapons have found their ways into the hands of non-state actors, whose motives and intentions are at variance with those of the state. These weapons pose threat to domestic and regional security, African stability, human security, development and post conflict public order.

There are other effects of SALW as informed by this security expert:

Besides being a direct cause of death and mutilation, the effects of small arms are far reaching when consideration is given to its economic costs, social upheavals, resource allocation away from human needs, undermining of the legitimacy of the state in Africa, (and) psychological dimension to the damage done (Nojeem, *ibid*:7).

Management of regional conflicts and security in Africa

...from the rudimentary and uncertain beginning of

ECOMOG in 1990, West Africa now has permanent machinery within ECOWAS for conflict and security management (Ate, 2001:120).

The management of regional conflicts and security in West Africa lies squarely with out regional defense apparatus of the West African Economic Community known as ECOMOG. It is argued that the challenge for Nigeria in West Africa is how to substitute for external intervention a credible indigenous sub-regional leadership rooted in collective solidarity with other states of the sub-region which is at a great cost to her as stated as follows:

Nigeria spent a total of about ₦800 billion (\$8 billion) in Liberia alone in the prosecution of “Operation Liberty” from 1990 to 1997, and lost about 500 men, not including the wounded and those declared missing. The operation in Sierra Leone is estimated as costing Nigeria about \$1 million per day (Ate, 2001:111).

It is on record that, when the Liberian problem came up, it looked like an internal issue. Because many in the international community saw the Liberian case as purely internal, no state or the United Nations was ready to intervene aggressively to provide a solution. United Nations intervention was limited to sending some observers and providing funds for ECOMOG operation in Liberia. ECOWAS rose creditably to the challenges of conflict management and peace keeping in West Africa at a time when the great powers had literally abandoned West Africa, and indeed the continent as a whole and focused their attention on Bosnia in Europe.

CONCLUSION

Globalization, conflicts and security are without doubt inevitable but must be consciously chosen by societies in Africa in order to receive the benefits of globalization to wit: investment flows, mobility of capital and market integration.

As World Bank pointed out that some countries have profited from globalization, “China, reform led to the largest poverty reduction in history, between 1990 and 2005, 60 to 16%. India cuts its poverty rate in half in the past two decades. Uganda, poverty fell 40% during the 1990’s and school enrollments doubled. Vietnam, surveys of the country’s poorest household’s show 98% of people improved their living conditions in the 1990’s” (World Bank, 2014).

Conflict and insecurity in Africa must be jettisoned to allow foreign economic assistance to take root; otherwise stable societies will turn the attention of foreign investors toward them. In order to understand the linkage, Africa needs effective information dissemination of globalization opportunities, investments by global institutions and

stable polity characterized by good governance devoid of endemic conflict and security challenges.

Managing regional conflicts and security in Africa brings to fore the reality that the rest of the world can no longer be expected to take on the burden of protecting its people from activities committed by African governments. With ECOMOG operations, Africans have demonstrated a bold effort to ensure direct responsibility for managing conflicts and its security component in their own regional environment devoid of extra-African interventions.

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