A Retrospective Examination of Post-Cold War Conflicts in Africa: Ended, Abated and Prolonged Conflicts

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Abstract

The collapse of the Cold War in 1991 did not usher in the eradication of global conflicts. Instead, a new pattern of conflicts emerged globally in the post-Cold War period after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Africa for example, conflicts unprecedentedly increased throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, affecting and severely impacting on several countries in the continent. This study based on data from secondary sources retrospectively examines the various post-Cold War internal, regional and internationalized conflicts in Africa. It further highlights the conflicts that have ended, those that have greatly de-escalated and some that have witnessed undue prolongation. Finally, the article extrapolates the possible reasons for the continuation of post-Cold War conflicts in Africa till date.

Keywords: Cold War, Conflict, Post-Cold War, Profiling, Prolongation

1. Introduction

The collapse of the Cold War in 1991 did not usher in the eradication of global conflicts. Rather, it has been estimated that, between 1989 and 2001, no fewer than 115 armed conflicts occurred in various parts of the international system (Gleditsch et al, 2002). Conflict is therefore universalistic and not limited to any part of the global system. Yet, a new pattern of conflicts emerged in the post-Cold War period, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Hitherto, the international system was preoccupied with interstate asymmetric conflicts, which were "fought out by power centers which use organized force directed against enemy forces in order to break the opponent's will to continue" (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 1999: 20). However, contemporary global conflicts, which refers to the existing patterns of conflicts in the post-Cold War era, are predominantly symmetric and internal in nature, and "…reflect breakdowns in states, which implies the disappearance of the structures through which internal power balances are organized and the appearance of 'holes' in the international fabric of sovereign states" (ibid). Intrastate or internal, rather than inter-state, conflicts are more prevalent in the contemporary international system. Not surprisingly, several scholars have written extensively on it in an attempt to analyze, understand and proffer solutions to this seeming persistent phenomenon. Holsti (1996: 20-1) commented that armed conflict after the Cold War "are not about foreign policy, security, honor, or status; they are about statehood, governance, and the role and status of nations and communities within states". Corroborating this fact, Pedersen (2002: 176) stated thus:

> The nature of armed conflict and wars has changed substantially over time and, today, wars take on different forms than in the past. Most strategic analysts agree that in the second half of the 20th century, contemporary wars are less of a problem of relations between states than a problem within states…Other forms of war and domestic conflict within states have replaced the classical great-power warfare, which was the predominant form of war in Europe for almost three centuries (1648–1945). The emergence of internal wars, the so-called low intensity wars … is the prevailing form of armed conflict today.

Scholars have acknowledged four basic clusters of factors that can generally be described as being the underlying causes of these internal conflicts. They are: structural factors such as, weak states, intrastate security concerns, and ethnic geography; political reasons as, discriminatory political institutions, intergroup politics, exclusionary ideologies and elite politics; the third are socio-economic causes like discriminatory economic systems and general economic problems; and the last are cultural/perceptual factors like cultural discrimination against minorities and group perception of themselves and others (Brown, 2001: 214-218).

Though there is no consensus by policymakers and scholars on the root causes of these worldwide conflicts as they vary from one country to another, and are at varying degrees of form and intensity, they are of the view that some additional specific reasons responsible for increased intrastate conflicts in the post-Cold war era includes the disintegration of diversified multiethnic federations such as the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the expression of ancient hatreds, the withdrawal of consistent foreign aid assistance usually given to bolster some fragile undeserving regimes during the Cold War power-play, the rise of ethno-nationalism, the political legacies of colonialism and the Cold War, the democratization process in some states, inequalities over access to valuable resources, the continuity of illegitimate authoritarian and repressive regimes, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the aftermath of the Al Qaeda 9/11 saga (Mansbach & Rafferty, 2008: 326; Pedersen, 2002: 175). For example, the intrastate armed conflicts that ravaged and led to the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation (in Eastern Europe) between 1991 and 2001, was primarily traceable to ethno-nationalism amongst its constituent nations. Over 200,000 people were estimated to have been killed and currently six sovereign states have emerged from the ruins of Yugoslavia; while Kosovo, which declared her independence in 2008, is at the verge of being recognized as the seventh independent state (Mansbach & Rafferty, 2008: 723-731). Currently, it has substantial yet partial recognition from the international community.

Similarly, it was in the post-Cold War era that ethno-nationalist agitations and internal conflicts heralded the collapse of the Soviet Union; fifteen countries emerged as post-Soviet states and several separatist agitations and armed conflicts ensued. Relevant examples are the first and second Chechen wars (Chechnya) of 1994-1996 and 1999-2000 respectively (Vendina, Belozerov & Gustafson, 2007); the Abkhazian wars of 1992; the civil war in Tajikistan and the 1991-1992 (King, 2001) and 2008 South Ossetia wars (Tuathail, 2008; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-Soviet_states#Separatist_conflicts; accessed 30/05/09). These European intrastate conflicts were located in the Balkans and Caucasus, and according to Smith (2001: 4), they "were, rather, the violent and tragic symptoms of social, economic and political readjustment following the collapse of the systems of power in Yugoslavia and the USSR."

However, it is worthy of note that there are some internal conflicts which started prior to the end of the Cold War and continued even during the post-Cold War period. A few examples will suffice:

❖ In Asia, the Sri Lankan conflicts between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as Tamil Tigers started in 1983 and ended in May 2009

❖ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lankan_Civil_War; accessed 18/10/09).

❖ The internal conflict in Burma (Myanmar) is still a recurring decimal in the contemporary global system (Skidmore & Wilson, 2007).

❖ Similarly, in South America, the conflict between the Columbian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) continued beyond the Cold War period (Oritz, 2002).

❖ Also in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a typical example of such conflicts that have lingered into the post-Cold war era.

❖ While in Europe, the intrastate conflict of Northern Ireland, which started in the late 1960s as a result of the asymmetrical contestations between the Protestant and Unionist majority, and the Catholic and Nationalist minority ended with the Belfast Agreement in 1998 during the post-Cold War period (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 1999).

Africa was also unprecedentedly affected by the accentuation of post-Cold War conflicts throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, with several countries affected and severely impacted upon. It is against this backdrop that this study based on data from secondary sources retrospectively examines the various post-Cold War internal, regional and internationalized conflicts in Africa. Furthermore, it highlights the conflicts that have ended so far, some that have witnessed undue prolongation and the possible reasons for their continuation.

2. Conceptual Explications and Literature Review

Various conceptual definitions of conflict have been proffered by scholars. Some definitions emphasize the behavioral disposition of the parties involved in a conflict; others focus on the incompatibility of goals by the contenders, while another group of definitions centers on the divergence in perception of the competitors. One of the scholars whose definition is based on manifest behavior is Deutsch (1973: 10) who contends that conflict occurs "whenever incompatible activities occur: an action that is incompatible with another action prevents, obstructs, interferes, injures, or in some ways makes the latter less likely to be effective". Francis (2006: 6) corroborates this when he defines conflict "as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups." On the other hand, one major definition of conflict based on goal(s) difference is proffered by Jessie Bernards (cited by Bassey, 2002: 10) who posit that, "conflict arises when there are incompatible or mutually exclusive goals or aims or values espoused by human beings". Coser (1967: 232) also agreed with this definition when he described conflict as "a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflict groups are not only to gain the desired values, but to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals." Finally, in the third category, which focuses on perception is the definition of Pruit and Rubin (cited by Bassey, 2002: 10), according to which "conflict means perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously". It is worthy of note however that the "definitional divergences are not mutually exclusive" (Bassey, 2002: 10). Ross (1993: 14) observes that:

Focusing on behavior (what people actually do) emphasizes a component that needs to be understood and certainly simplifies methodology by avoiding the difficult question of the subjective states which precedes action. The perceptual approach by suggesting that differences in interests are subjective, leaves open the question of the extent to which interests are actually incompatible, pointing out a key mechanism by which seemingly intractable conflicts can be resolved.

Against this backdrop, any definition of conflict that lays emphasis on one aspect to the detriment of the others can be described as incomplete, and this informs the conclusion of some analysts that conflict is dynamic; it "…is a process and not a static condition, and (that) an important element involves the change in perceptions during the course of a dispute" (Bassey, 2002: 11). It would therefore be incorrect to categorize conflicts as economic, ethnic, ideological and religious due to the high level of dynamism that characterizes most conflicts.

Conventionally, conflicts occur at the individual, interpersonal, national and international levels and can be categorized into different stages. The Interdisciplinary Research Program on Causes of Human Rights Violations (PIOOM) at Leiden University classified national and international conflicts into five stages: peaceful stable situations; political tension situations; violent political conflict; low-intensity conflict; and high-intensity conflict. Whilst peaceful stable situations are described as a situation where there exists a high measure of political stability and regime legitimacy, political tension situations are defined as mounting levels of strain on the system and rising socio-political cleavages along factional lines. At the level of violent political conflict, there would have been a wearing down of political legitimacy of a government, and tension would have spiraled to a political crisis point to the extent that the number of people killed in a year would be up to but not exceeding 100. At the fourth stage- the low-intensity conflict stage- there would be open hostility and armed conflict among factional groups, state repressive violence, rebellion and total fatalities of between 100 to 999 people in a year. Finally, the fifth stage is characterized by complete war between and among rival groups or between factional groups and the state, mass destruction, infrastructural damage, and displacement of sectors of the civilian population with at least 1,000 or more people killed (Jongman & Schmid, 1997).

Africa experienced an assortment of conflicts that passed through the various stages discussed above in the post-Cold War period. Several African countries were ravaged by conflicts immediately after the Cold War and they were characterized by terrible complex emergencies. According to Mackinlay (1996: 14-15):

> A complex emergency is a humanitarian disaster that occurs in a conflict zone and is complicated by, or results from, the conflicting interests of warring parties. Its causes are seldom exclusively natural or military: in many cases a marginally subsistent population is precipitated toward disaster by the consequences of militia action or a natural occurrence such as earthquake or drought. The presence of militias and their interest in controlling and extorting the local population will impede and in some cases seriously threaten relief efforts. In addition to violence against the civilian populations, civilian installations such as hospitals, schools, refugee centers, and cultural sites will become war objectives and may be looted frequently or destroyed.

Therefore, the civil populace was usually targeted for massive destruction, plundering, exploitation and displacement. Even humanitarian and developmental aid and workers are never spared. Statistics have shown that "in the First World War, over 80% of battlefield deaths were combatants; by the 1990s over 90% of war related deaths are civilians, killed in their own homes and communities which have become the battlefields of international-social wars" (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse**,** 1999: 164).

3. Profiling African Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era

As with other regions of the world, Africa witnessed the accentuation of internal, regional and internationalized conflicts in the post-Cold War period. In the words of Gilbert (2010: 40):

> Internal conflicts are usually localized and they occur between a state government and a/some domestic resistance group(s). Regional conflicts are those that occur among two or more countries in a given geographical locality of the world, while international conflicts can be described as the conflicts that involve two or more states from different geographical parts of the world. It is however pertinent to note that a regional conflict can also be generally categorized as an international conflict because of the involvement of sovereign countries within the international system. Secondly, an internal conflict could be transformed into either a regional or an international conflict when there is overt intervention by other states.

From the eight countries involved in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) imbroglio in the Great Lakes region, through the conflicts in Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, and Rwanda in Central Africa to the border conflicts between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and Somalia in the Horn of Africa, and the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Nigeria in West Africa, the continent was littered with post-Cold War conflicts. As rightly noted by Joao Gomes Porto:

> Africa has been the stage for high-intensity conflicts in the past 25 years, with casualties ranging between 4 and 6 million people, and with an astounding 155 million people directly or indirectly affected by war…In the first decade of the twenty-first century alone, the civil wars in Cote d Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Sudan (Darfur as well as Western Upper Nile), Somalia and Guinea Bissau or the medium-intensity conflicts in the Central African Republic, Nigeria (Niger Delta) and now Chad, have been stark reminders of the severity of violent conflict on Africa's socio-economic development (Porto, 2008: 46-47).

A survey of conflicts in the global system between 1946 and 2006 shows that the African continent had the highest number of conflicts (74), in comparison to Asia (68), the Middle East (32), Europe (32), and the Americas (26). Statistics show that by the end of 2000, there were 11 major conflicts with more than 1,000 battle fatalities raging in Africa; above 50% of African states were battling with one form of conflict or the other; at least 13 African states had well over 100,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); more than 20% of the people were affected by conflicts; almost 11 million people were internally displaced (IDPs); over 14 million were uprooted (refugees and IDPs); and "the extent of conflict was greater than in any other region in the world" (DFID, 2001: 8).

The Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region were particularly noted for some of the deadliest conflicts in Africa especially since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. All the countries in the region have been enmeshed in one form of conflict or the other, except Djibouti, and Tanzania. Sudan, for example, has been entangled in a series of protracted conflicts since 1956, with only a brief period of accord, which ended the first civil war in 1972 and a more relatively permanent pact known as Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed on 9 January 2005 by the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) representing Southern Sudan (Sharife, 2007). The pact eventually led to a six-year autonomy granted to the South, a referendum in January 2011 and the peaceful declaration of independence on 09 July, 2014. This was one of the conflicts in Africa that started in the Cold War era and steadily progressed into the post-Cold War period. Nevertheless, the Republic of South Sudan had a conflict with the Republic of the Sudan over the Heglig oil fields in South Kordofan in March 2012. Currently, there exists an internal conflict arising from power tussle between the president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir and his former Vice, Riek Machar.

However, the Darfur conflict was also one of the many conflicts that have bedeviled the Sudanese state and, though it has an ethnic coloration, the root of the conflict is competition over fertile land and water, exacerbated by desertification in northern Sudan and the drought that has affected Darfur on and off since the 1970s. The murderous and dehumanizing conflict formally started in Darfur in February 2003, when the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) commenced an armed insurrection against the Sudanese government, accusing it of oppressing black Africans in favor of Arabs.

In an attempt to neutralize the effectiveness of the insurgency, the Sudanese state mobilized Arab militias known as Janjaweed to counter the SLM and JEM. Thus the Janjaweed militias armed with an explicit racist ideology and ably supported by the Sudanese government purposefully embarked on genocidal actions against non-Arab African (Zurq or Black) civilians based on the notion that they were in support of the rebel forces, even when some are practicing Muslims (ICG, 2007).

It is estimated that the death toll arising from this conflict has claimed the lives of between 300,000 and 400,000 people, and not less than 2.5 million Darfuris have been displaced either as IDPs living in various camps in Darfur, or as refugees in camps in Chad and Central African Republic (http://darfur.3cdn.net/46c257b8e3959746d5_ttm6bnau2.pdf; accessed 01/11/09). The high level of organized state-sponsored destruction (using the Janjaweed as a front), the influx of refugees into neighboring Chad, and the fact that some elements of the insurgency are from Zaghawa, also brought Chad into the conflict. The Zaghawa-dominated Chadian government of Idris Deby is known to have openly courted and supported some of the insurgents (ICG, ibid).

However, the central government in Khartoum consistently denied its support for the Janjaweed (Youngs, 2004). Similarly, the Central African Republic (CAR) became involved and that gave a regional coloration to the conflict in north-central Africa (CAR, Chad and Sudan). It was against this backdrop of deliberately orchestrated destruction of lives and property, mass rape, ethnic cleansing and genocide against civilians (who were not known to have taken part in armed conflicts) that a warrant for the arrest of the Sudanese president, General Omar el-Bashir, was issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in March 2009. Yet, the Darfur conflict continues despite the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) by Khartoum and a faction of SLM/MM led by Minni Minawi and the de-escalation of conflict.

In Somalia's case, the end of the Cold War occasioned the withdrawal of support by the US for the government of Siad Barre, which eventually fell on 26 January1991. However, due to power struggle among the various factions that overthrew him, the country was thrown into an unprecedented internal conflict that resulted to the collapse of the state with various armed groups led by clan warlords and militias scattered over the country, the secession of Somaliland in the northwest, the declaration of the autonomy of Puntland in 1998 and the near impossibility of rebuilding the state till date (Mutunga, 2006). The international community intervened at the early stages of the Somali conflict through the instrumentalities of the United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM 1 and II), and the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), championed by the US. As it is the case with Sudan, neighboring Ethiopia and the US (a second time) got involved in the raging Somalian conflict respectively in 2006 and 2007 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somali_Civil_War; accessed 01/12/08). Currently, in spite of the end of the civil war, the constitution of the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012 and the progressive reconstruction of the capital city - Moghadisu, peace is yet to return to Somali due to the palpable threat of Al-Shabaab, an Islamic fundamentalist group.

The conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia over territorial claims led to an interstate war that was fought between 1998 and 2000 after the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1993. The war claimed the lives of about 140,000 soldiers, 120,000 civilians and millions of dollars from both sides which could have been used for the socio-economic development of the states (Adetula, 2006). It is one of the numerous examples of prolonged conflicts that litter the continent due to the arbitrary demarcation of Africa's borders by the colonial powers, in this instance, Italy. Although there was a protracted 30-year conflict between Eritrean liberation forces (fighting for Independence) and the Ethiopian government, after the annexation of Eritrea by Ethiopia in 1962 (Italy stopped ruling in 1952), Eritrea eventually gained independence after the conduct of an internationally-supervised and acclaimed referendum held in April 1993, "where 98.5% of the registered voters voted, and 99.8% of these voted for independence" (Shah, http://www.globalissues.org/article/89/conflict-between-ethiopia-and-eritrea, accessed 01/03/07).

However, the underlying reason for the 1998 conflict was that the reality of Ethiopia's geographical status as a landlocked country cut off from direct access to the Red Sea meant it has to import and export goods through other countries like Eritrea, which hitherto formed part of the Ethiopian state. For such transactions to occur peacefully, Ethiopia felt it needed a regime favorably disposed to its interests in power, therefore though disagreement over the border was the declarative trigger, the conflict (from the Ethiopian perspective) operatively sought for a change of regime in Eritrea. Despite the comprehensive peace agreement signed in December 2000, the UN Mission sent for the implementation of the peace agreement and the demarcation of the disputed border between both countries, tensions continue between Addis Ababa and Asmara over grazing land (ibid).

In East Africa, Uganda was seriously troubled by the insurgency championed by Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). After the defeat of Alice Lakwena's insurgency (which was purportedly inspired by the Holy Spirit!) in 1997, Kony became the head of the Holy Spirit Mobile Force II, which later transmuted into the LRA. As at 2006, in spite of the attempts made by the Yoweri Museveni's government to broker lasting peace with LRA in 1993 and 1997, the conflict remained unresolved with tens of thousands of people dead, over 1. 9 million people were IDPs and not less than 25,000 (including about 7,500 girls who had given birth to over 1,000 babies in captivity) children were kidnapped by LRA (ICG, 2010: 7-8). In December 2008, the Ugandan government in collaboration with the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and South Sudan launched a military campaign codenamed "Operation Lightning Thunder" against Kony and his LRA rebels. The operation was unsuccessful because Kony was not killed; he escaped to southern Dafur in Sudan while his rebels dispersed into the three countries, where they still constitute sources of insecurity (ICG, 2010).

In the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa, the scars of the ethnic conflicts in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis, which culminated in genocide in 1994, cannot be forgotten in a hurry. Although ethno-political conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis (engineered and reinforced by German and Belgian colonialism) bedeviled Rwanda since 1959, the 1990 post-Cold War invasion of the country by the predominantly Tutsi Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) backed by Uganda, in an attempt to topple the Hutu dominated government of President Juvenal Habyarimana, became the harbinger of the civil war, which eventually led to the horrendous genocide in 1994. Commenting on the efficiently coordinated 100-day genocide by Hutus against Tutsis and moderate Hutus Sheila McCoy stated thus:

> It is, however, worth briefly mentioning the magnitude of the slaughter that occurred. The pace of killing, it has now been confirmed, was so rapid that it by far exceeded that rate at which Jews were exterminated at the peak of the Holocaust. Estimates of the number of those killed range, on the conservative end, from 500,000 to 1 million at the other extreme. Most scholars and international observers seem to have come to some agreement that approximately 800,000 civilians lost their lives during the brief span of three months in 1994 during which the ethnic cleansing campaign was waged in Rwanda
> (McCoy, 2001 http://www.drake.edu/artsci/PolSci/ssjrnl/2001/mccoy.html; accessed 02/03/07).

While the genocide continued, RPF eventually emerged victorious in July 1994, ended the genocide and has remained the ruling government in Rwanda till date. However, due to the unrelenting armed invasion by members of FAR and Interahamwe (Peuple en Armes Pour Liberer le Rwanda) from refugee camps, especially in DRC, Rwanda is yet to achieve complete peace and national reconciliation in the post-genocide era (Gilbert, 2010). Although some scholars like Reyntjens (1995) and Uvin (1999) have argued that ethnicity was responsible for the post-Cold War conflicts in Rwanda, others while not completely denying the ethnic factor, explain that ethnicity was a colonial (manipulative) creation, fostered and perfected by post-colonial Rwandese politicians for the consolidation and perpetual control of politico-economic power in the country. Therefore, it would be too simplistic and tantamount to over generalization - to limit the analysis of the Rwandan conflicts to ethnic struggle (Prunier, 1995).

Furthermore, another country in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa that was engulfed by conflicts in the post-Cold War era is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); which was embroiled in high intensity conflicts that involved the military of seven countries (Burundi, Rwanda and Ugandan armies supported the rebels against Kabila's regime, while Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe fought on the side of Kabila) and twenty different armed groups.

The intensity of the war was such that it was referred to as Africa's world war (Nabudere, 2004); the deadliest conflict since World War II, with an estimated death toll of 5.4 million people (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo; accessed 02/03/07).

The Cold War bipolar politics led to the death of Patrice Lumumba and the eventual enthronement of Mobutu Sese Seiko's ignominious regime, which lasted from 1965 to 1997. In the context of Cold War international politicking, Mobutu was overtly supported by the US and "military hardware and training valued at more than $400 million was provided to prop up the cruel dictator despite his well-known proclivity for extensive human rights abuses and corruption" (Gilbert, Uzodike & Isike, 2009: 269).

However, several factors were responsible for his exposure to security vulnerabilities, which finally culminated in the First Congo War and the toppling of his administration by Laurent-Desire Kabila's led Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) expressly backed the Rwandan and Ugandan military forces. They include: the withdrawal of Western financial and military support for his regime at the end of the Cold War, the worsening of the state's economic fortunes and the deterioration of state control mechanisms due to institutionalized patronage practices. Others were the pressures of democratization, the attacks against the Banyamulenges (local Congolese Tutsi populace), and the anti-Tutsi campaigns spearheaded by the Interahamwe. Rwandan Hutu militias accused of perpetrating the 1994 genocide found safe havens in refugee camps in Eastern DRC, and with the tacit support of Mobutu's government, militarily organized themselves for periodic destabilization incursions into Rwanda.

Clearly, in an attempt to present himself as an independent leader free of manipulation by foreign countries, and consolidate his domestic political power base, Kabila was accused of treachery by his former allies. Specifically, the expulsion of Rwandan and Ugandan military forces in July 1998 became the trigger for the Second Congo War, which also had the overt involvement of formidable foreign and local forces (Tutsi) purposefully geared towards the dethronement of Kabila; in the same manner that Mobutu was overthrown. However, the involvement of the armies of three Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries on the side of Kabila checkmated the aim of the rebels, who retreated and established their strongholds in the mineral rich region of eastern DRC (Vlassenroot, 2006: 57-58).

The obvious participation of the foreign armies of the invading countries (especially the Rwandan army), some multinational corporations, elite networks, local militias and some government forces/agents in the illegal exploitation of various mineral resources such as cassiterite, coltan, copper, diamond, gold, timber and tin, explains why some scholars expressed the view that despite some declarative political reasons for the destructively protracted conflict, operatively, it centered mainly on the access to economic control (Mutunga, 2006; Shah, 2005; Prunnier, 1995). Currently, in spite of the relative political stability, numerous mineral resources and great potentialities for prosperity, DRC is still battling with conflicts in the eastern Kivu province, remains one of the poorest countries in the world with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of $91, with over 1.1 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in the eastern part of the country, 20% child mortality, and 43 years as life expectancy (ADI, 2007).

In the Southern African region, Angola is a classical example of an African country terribly afflicted by conflict, which started during the bipolar era of the Cold War and continued with greater intensity in the post-Cold War period until it officially came to an end in 2002 after the death of Jonas Savimbi. The Alvor Accords signed in 1975 between the retreating Portuguese colonial government and the three parties involved in the pro-independence armed insurgency – the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) – for the formation of a transitional coalition government failed due to lack of cooperation. The internationalization of the conflict therefore ensued at about the same time, as each faction was supported by foreign allies sympathetic to their ideological professions. MPLA was propped up by the USSR and Cuban troops; FNLA was ably backed by Zairean troops, while UNITA's bid for political power was shored up by the South African military.

However, the MPLA, aided by Cuban troops, successfully defeated the other parties, consolidated its presence in Luanda, declared independence and formed the ruling government till date. Although the FNLA was defeated by the MPLA-led government in 1979, UNITA ably supported militarily and financially by the US and South Africa continued fighting; as Angola became a major theatre of one of the proxy wars that characterized the Cold War bipolar politicking between the US and the USSR (Leech, 2006; Malaquias, 2001). Unfortunately for the Angolans, however, despite the end of the 27-year Angolan civil war, there is still an ongoing conflict in the oil-rich Cabinda province between insurgent groups calling for total independence and the Angolan forces.

There is also a proliferation of literature on the various dimensions of conflicts experienced in the West African countries of Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Casamance in Senegal, Sierra Leone, and the Niger Delta of Nigeria in the post-Cold War epoch.

In Liberia for example, the end of the Cold War, the downgrading of support for the Samuel Doe's administration by the US, economic crisis, the promotion of ethnic/patronage policies in favor of his Doe's Krahn ethnicity to the exclusion of other ethnic groups, corruption, electoral manipulations and the dismissal of Charles Taylor in 1989 on charges of corruption, all contributed to the conflict which officially commenced on 24 December 1989. The first Liberian Civil War effectively started on that Christmas eve when Charles Taylor-led National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invaded Liberia through the Nimba County from neighboring Cote d' Ivoire. The military reprisal attacks by the Doe controlled Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) against the civilian population of the entire county, further undermined the credibility of the government and increased geometrically, the popularity of the insurgency, which was considered a liberation struggle by the Gio and Mano ethnic groups in particular from the kleptocratic regime of Doe (Gilbert, 2006; Utas, 2006). Despite the rupture of the NPFL into groups, the mainstream NPFL headed by Charles Taylor and the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) led by Prince Yormie Johnson, NPFL almost captured political power but for the intervention of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in August 1990. Eventually, Taylor became the president of Liberia through democratic elections in 1997 on the platform of the National Patriotic Party (NPP) – an offshoot of NPFL, after seven years of conflicts, which had claimed the lives of about 200,000 people and thrown up about a million Liberians as refugees in neighboring countries.

The Second Liberian Civil War commenced in 1999 during Taylor's presidency, when a group of disgruntled rebels on the platform of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) invaded the northern part of the country through neighboring Guinea. The emergence of a second rebel movement known as Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) in the country's southern part in early 2003 exacerbated the conflict, rattled Taylor, hastened the demise of his government and accelerated his acceptance to abdicate the presidency for a life of exile in Nigeria; before his arrest and current trial in the Hagues (Utas, ibid).

Finally, Sierra Leone was also engulfed by conflicts in the immediate post-Cold War period. The war, which began in 1991 and officially ended in 2002, commenced when rebels from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh invaded the eastern part of the country from neighboring Liberia. Over 60,000 fatalities were recorded, 600,000 people became refugees in neighboring countries and two-thirds of the populations were IDPs within the country (Reno, 2003). Several reasons were attributable to the origin and perpetuation of the conflict but three were outstanding: the high level of poverty as a result of the state's inability to provide basic services to the populace, personalized patronage system and especially the predatory quest of the belligerents for diamond (Bellows & Miguel, 2006; Keen, 2003).

A near consensus exists among scholars on the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone to the effect that the inclination and character of the conflicts and wars also signified a focus around resource-rich territories. Rival rebel factions and warlords fought to be in command of the main diamond and gold producing areas, and the external commercial networks, as it happened in Angola and the DRC (Keen 2003: 67; Reno, 2005; Nafziger & Auvinen 2002: 158; Ellis 1998: 157). There was a high level of economic and financial profiteering to the extent that violence and armed conflict became a form of business venture rather than a tool for "furthering any coherent ideological or ethnic interest" (Ikelegbe, 2005: 210).

A similar scenario also occurred in Sierra Leone as RUF under the leadership of Sankoh basically concentrated their war efforts on the diamond-rich parts of the country; persistently exploited the resource for the continuation of the conflict and for their personal enrichment; this was clearly done with the support of Liberian Taylor and his NPFL.

In the same vein, several government officials, politicians, military officers, Civil Defense Forces (CDF), international criminal networks from Lebanon, Russia and Israel were involved in the predatory activities in Sierra Leone (Keen, 2005). Thus, the derivable profits became a major motivation for the prolongation of the conflict by the various parties (Vroom & Vlassenroot 2001: 79; Keen, ibid). Therefore, as noted by Allen (1999: 372) rebellion and violence are used as an instrument for accumulation and looting of mineral resources. Warlords and militias see it as a new opportunity to access and accumulate wealth, personal enrichment, and the establishment of international commercial connections for the purpose of trading in mineral resources.

Despite the seeming dissimilarities of the post-Cold War conflicts bedeviling the African continent, they shared some characteristics. Commenting further on this issue Tom Porteous stated that:

> Africa's wars in the 1990s were all very different in their specifics. But they shared a number of important characteristics. First, one of the main underlying causes of these wars was the weakness, the corruption, the high level of militarization, and in some cases the complete collapse, of the states involved. Secondly, they all involved multiple belligerents fighting for a multiplicity of often shifting economic and political motivations. Thirdly, they all had serious regional dimensions and regional implications. And fourthly they were all remarkable for the brutality of the tactics (ranging from mass murder and ethnic cleansing, to amputation, starvation, forced labor, rape and cannibalism) used by belligerents to secure their strategic objectives (Porteous, 2004: http://www.crimesofwar.org/africa-mag/afr_01_porteos.html; accessed 02/03/07).

In addition, there is also the similarity of heavy civilian casualties, unlike during interstate conflicts. This quality was also a recurring decimal in all post-Cold War conflicts on the continent: in the DRC, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, CAR, Algeria, Angola, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Nigeria (the Niger Delta region and the current Boko Haram insurgency in the North East geopolitical zone).

4. Prolongation of Conflicts since the Post-Cold War Era in Africa

A critical examination of the above-profiled post-Cold War conflicts in Africa reveals that some have ended, others have de-escalated but there are still a few that have unfortunately, continued till date - they are still smoldering. For example, the conflicts in Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, have ended. The conflicts in Cameroon, DRC, Mali, Uganda, Casamance in Senegal, Somalia and the Niger Delta of Nigeria have appreciably de-escalated but with great possibilities of re-escalation, if not sagaciously handled by the respective governments. However, the post-Cold War conflict in CAR though transformed, is still on-going and active.

Scholars generally believe that most of the conflicts in Africa are caused by a combination of several factors. They include (but are not limited to) the following: colonial legacies, poverty, withdrawal of financial and military aid to African dictators after the Cold War, exploitation of ethnicity, corruption, political cum social exclusion, population explosion, incompetent governments, politics of democratization, unemployment, competition for scarce resources, inequality, economic decline/shock, state failure/collapse and economic dependence on natural resources (Konteh, 2006: 257; Shah, 2005).

In CAR for example, since 13 August 1960 that the country gained political independence, she was inundated with military coup d'état and dictatorships until in the post-Cold War era when the pressure of democratization led to the conduct of elections in 1993. Virtually all the rulers in the country have been accused of corruption, ethnic favoritism, politics of exclusion and persecution of the opposition. From the presidency of David Dacko (August 1960 to January 1966) to Michel Djokodia (March 2013 to January 2014), these accusations ran through the body politic of CAR like well-knitted threads of notoriety. However, one major reason responsible for the persistence of conflicts in CAR is the permeability of her borders with neighboring countries. As a land-locked country with unmanned long stretched borderlines with five different countries (Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Sudan), the porosity and fluidity of CAR's borders expose her to trans-border migrations and therefore, persistent security vulnerabilities. The borderline between CAR and both South Sudan and Republic of Sudan is about 1,200 kilometers with only two border posts (ICG, 2007b). The implication is that the bulk of the border between both countries are unmanned, thus creating ample opportunities for the unhindered flow in and out of transnational criminal networks and insurgent groups.

This is the pattern with CAR's borders with Chad (1,197 km), DRC (1, 577 km) and Cameroon (467 km). Commenting on this issue, Giroux, Lanz and Sguaitamatti (2009: 12) stated that "this has facilitated the regionalization of conflict insofar as it has allowed trade of military material across the border. It has also fostered the proliferation of small arms and the emergence of a pool of combatants with fluid loyalties..." Herein lays the main reason for the prolongation of the conflict in CAR. As long as those borders remain porous and far from the supervision of well motivated security personnel, they will continually encourage the flowering of trans-border insurgents and the prolongation of conflicts and instability in CAR and poor African countries with similar geographical experiences including, DRC and Nigeria (Gilbert, 2014: 153-154).

5. Concluding Remarks and Policy Options

Several post-Cold War conflicts on the African continent have virtually ended or greatly de-escalated. Perhaps, the conflict in CAR would have also abated or ended but for the porosity of the borders that facilitates its continuation. Arising from this, is the fact that the conflict in CAR is a regionalized one - it is interconnected with the conflicts in Dafur and Chad because of the easy flow and fluidity of arms and insurgents from one country to another (Giroux, Lanz & Sguaitamatti, 2009). As it currently stands, CAR is virtually a failed state and does not have the wherewithal to mobilize and organize the relevant issues of statehood. With the ousting of François Bozizé and Michel Njotodia by different insurgent forces in 2013 and 2014 respectively and the raging conflict in the country, the international community perhaps, under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) should decisively intervene, encourage the establishment of a Transitional Government of National Unity to be composed of representatives of relevant stakeholders with a view to conducting peaceful and credible elections.

Furthermore, adequate security measures should be put in place to ensure the sustainability of any government that shall be enthroned and the leaders of such government should be encouraged to transparently conduct subsequent elections in the country; while concerted efforts should also be made by the international community to reform, motivate and equip a virtually new security apparatus for the country. Advisedly, this could be done by experts through the integration of some of the insurgents from the various groups involved in the conflicts with due cognizance to the ethnic composition of the new establishment. Of course, these can only be implemented successfully if the ramifications of the conflict with respect to Sudan and Chad are also simultaneously, properly addressed. And as a long term project, with the establishment of government and good governance structures, deliberate efforts should be made by CAR to establish well equipped and effective bilateral border joint patrol teams with her neighboring states with the aim of checkmating transnational criminal networks and the free movement of possible insurgents in and out of the country.

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