

Trending Patterns of Political Threat in African Sub-Continent



Surabhi Gupta

Assistant Professor,
International Affairs and Security
Studies,
Sardar Patel University of Police,
Security and Criminal Justice,
Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

African continent achieved independence in second part of 20th century. Cold war between two superpowers i.e. USSR and the USA embarked its beginning in the same time period. Consequently, enough attention was not paid to smooth transition of Africa in a democratic setup. Moreover, the USSR and the USA were busy toppling governments practicing rival ideologies in African continent. Africa is a complex mosaic consisting of different tribes and it made it very difficult to draw political borders. Time followed by decolonization in Africa witnessed lots of civil wars, genocides, poverty, military rules, slavery, Apartheid etc.

Now Africa has entered 21st century. Numerous challenges await Africa. 21st Century is the biggest test of Character of Africa. Africa has to struggle against all such odds and trace its way to development and success. Different parts of Africa are facing different sets of problems.

Neo colonialism and increasing intervention of rising powers has added to the complex political situation in Africa. If Africa do not fight well and take progressive steps, at the end of 21st century, Africa will be doomed and dusted, a pack of failed states.

The paper highlights some perspectives on conflict resolution and peace building initiatives, the relevance of the Diaspora input and on the issue of peace building, migration and development.

Keywords: Fractured Nations, Rigged elections, Plemology, Accountability, Mitigation, Ombudsman, Disenfranchisement.

Introduction

In November 2003 the UN secretary-general Kofi Annan complained that since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the USA, the world's attention had focused on the war against terrorism, and that Africa and its problems had been, if not exactly forgotten, then certainly neglected. Resources that might have gone to help Africa have been diverted to Afghanistan and later to Iraq, which turned out to be a much more difficult problem than the USA had expected. He appealed for \$3 billion (about £ 1.8 billion) to help provide basic services such as food, water, medical supplies and shelter. It was pointed out in comparison that the US Congress had voted to spend \$87 billion on rebuilding Iraq. After gaining independence from Ethiopia in 1993, Eritrea had a difficult time. There was continuing tension with Ethiopia over the exact position of their frontiers. Border clashes broke out in 1998. Both governments seemed to be obsessed with building up large armaments in case of a full-scale border war and spent millions of dollars which they could ill afford on warplanes and weapons. Unfortunately, as well as using up vital resources, this also took men away from the farms where they were needed for ploughing and bringing water. Fortunately, a peace agreement was signed at the end of 2000. Eritrea also suffered four consecutive years of drought; the once fertile plains were barren, and the wind was blowing away the topsoil. The harvest was only 10 percent of normal, and it was estimated that 1.7 million people were unable to feed themselves. Border tensions continued and clashes between frontier forces at some stage every year, the most serious recent skirmish being in January 2010 when Eritrean forces killed 10 Ethiopians. Tanzania had the problem of how to deal with hundreds of thousands of refugees who had fled from the civil wars in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similarly, in West Africa, Guinea's frontier areas were crammed with refugees from neighbouring Sierra Leone and Liberia. Southern Africa was feeling the effects of drought. Malawi was badly affected. In January 2003 the

government declared a national emergency after a drought and the failure of the maize crop. Then storms and heavy rains washed away bridges and flooded riverside fields; by April the World Food Programme Claimed it was feeding around 3.5 million Malawians - a third of the population. Things Did not improve in 2005 when more than 4 million people had insufficient food. Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland were suffering from similar problems. The outlook for the future was not encouraging experts were predicting that unless global warming could be controlled, droughts would become progressively worse and some parts of Africa might become uninhabitable. On top of this, all the countries of Africa were suffering in different degrees from the HIV I AIDS pandemic. In fact, although the West was understandably obsessed with the threat of terrorism, Africans were most concerned about AIDS, since, by and large, it was affecting the most active generations - the 20 to 50 age group. The advance and retreat of democracy in Africa since the end of the Cold war has resulted in a new mosaic of political systems. Popular uprisings can still sweep away autocracies, such as that of Blaise Campaoré in Burkina Faso, or block their consolidation as under Abdoulaye Wade in Senegal, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe. However, such movements can also be thwarted by determined autocrats as exemplified by Uganda's Yoweri Museveni.

Some of the most enduring systems of personal rule in the world can now be found in Africa, as the cases of Cameroon, Gabon, and Togo attest. Regimes that came to power by armed force, and have permitted restricted electoral competition, can crush political opponents with little harm to their external relationships. Such systems can be seen in Angola, Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Waning Confidence in Institutions is one of the major threats in African Continent. After completing 50 years of independence, Africans are still facing many problems. Human Rights violation is common in Africa. Selfish nature of states in international arena has kept national interest in supreme position. This has ultimately resulted in ignorance of interest of African states. Weaker African states are in no position to put any significant effect in this power centric world. As a result, African nations have been reduced as pawns of mighty powerful states. International institutions reflecting power realities have not yielded enough efforts to spur development of African states, along with this, propaganda run by authoritative regime to protect themselves from clutches of International institutions questioning their misuse of power and alleged human rights violations has led them to opt out of International bodies. And by doing so, they are preparing ground for Democratic Deconsolidation. This eroding of norms is clearly evident in decision of Burundi and South Africa to opt out of International criminal court.

Over a decade ago, Robert Cooper predicted that the number of "fractured nations," lacking states with effective authority, was likely to increase in the developing world. In the case of Africa, his prediction

is confirmed by the absence of governmental authority in much of Somalia, Eastern Congo, Darfur and other Sudanese provinces, northern Mali, northeast Nigeria, Central African Republic, and Libya. While the number of pure tyrannies has declined, those that persist—in Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, and Gambia—are very resistant to external pressure.

In 2006, the Gallup World Poll asked sub-Saharan Africans in 19 countries about their confidence in eight social and political institutions. Overall across the continent, they were most likely to say they were confident in the religious organizations (76%) in their countries, followed by the military (61%), and financial institutions (55%). Africans were least likely to place confidence in the honesty of their country's elections (33%), and their national governments (44%). As a general principle, channeling foreign aid through local religious organizations may be more likely to maximize optimism among African populations than if they perceive it to be directed through their governments, which could introduce an element of cynicism.

Aim of the Study

This paper aims to study the major problems which impinge on the political and economic stability of Africa. There have been problems in Africa for several decades even after many countries in the continent went through transition from colonialism to independence. In terms of political instability in Africa it is undeniable that the continent has had some difficult moments during the last fifty years or so. Africa is still haunted by historical injustices and oppressive structures that were bequeathed to the post colonial leadership. Plundering of natural resources, politics of exclusion and deprivation to tilt the balance of power continue to dominate the public sphere. The paper studies the trending patterns of political threat in African sub- continent and highlights some perspectives on conflict resolution, peace building initiatives, economic development and political stability.

Rigged Elections

Democracy in Africa is difficult to flourish, because there are too many kleptocrats, autocrats and opportunists flooding the political parameter. A free, fair and transparent election on the continent is rare due to anti-democratic precedents mostly devised by failed and corrupt regimes. Democracy in Africa is eclipsed by immaturity, impropriety and intolerance. Africa has democracy in theory, but not in practicality. It is mostly in Africa that the interest of the minority supersedes the collective aspiration of the majority.

The lingering and vicious clash for state power and dominance among egoistic politicians in Africa has been creating a gloomy cloud of uncertainty over Africa's young democracy. Heightening political crises and tensions have been seriously endangering the peace, security and stability of Africa. These conflicts continue to reverse gains made in dozens of nations across the continent. Democracy in Africa is on life-support in most countries. This form of government which is supposed to guarantee the supreme interest and willpower of

the majority has been experiencing serious miscarriage and mishap. Year after year, it is becoming convincingly glaring that the practice of democracy in Africa seems almost inapplicable. The fatality of democracy due to all forms of electoral manipulation remains widespread and alarming. There are protests almost everywhere by opposition politicians and parties against vote rigging orchestrated by incumbent or ruling political establishments. The impact of such autocratic trend (vote rigging) is breeding chaos and crises across Africa. Trend (vote rigging) is breeding chaos and crises across Africa.

The bias nature of electoral officers and monitors, coercion, secret ballots, late printing of ballots, inadequate civic education, ballot stuffing, disappearance of ballot boxes, vote buying, invalidation of votes, disenfranchisement, artificial result, confusing ballot papers, voter impersonation and inaccurate recording of votes are concocted and anti-democratic strategies employed by incumbent regimes to rig elections in most African nations. Rigging elections nowadays is a common political phenomenon in Africa. Incumbent governments that have betrayed public confidence by failing to deliver on their promises to the people employ this crafty scheme (rigging elections) to forcibly detest the popular will of the people and retain political control by all means. During this process of clinching unto power without the popular mandate of the people, incumbent regimes gruesomely target perceived political enemies and crush key opposition figures either by intimidation, imprisonment or capital punishment. In some cases, they use the army and police to crackdown on mass gatherings geared towards protesting fraudulent electoral results. Sometimes, these despotic missteps perpetrated by kleptocrats and authoritarians lead to massive electoral violence, bloody coup d'état and civil conflict (war). Africa and Africans have been severely victimized by this carnage and concatenation of political contention. The volatility and fatality of democracy in Africa has been fuelled mainly by egotism, chauvinism, nepotism elitism and ethnicity.

Road Ahead

Africa is the world's second largest and second most-populous continent. Political associations such as the African Union offer hope for greater cooperation and peace between the continent's many countries. Extensive human rights abuses still occur in several parts of Africa, often under the oversight of the state. Most of such violations occur for political reasons, often as a side effect of civil war. Countries where major human rights violations have been reported in recent times include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Côte d'Ivoire. The European imperialist push into Africa was motivated by three main factors, economic, political, and social. It developed in the nineteenth century following the collapse of the profitability of the slave trade, its abolition and suppression, as well as the expansion of the European capitalist revolution.

Racism in Africa is multi-faceted and dates back several centuries. It is a phenomenon that may have been strengthened by European colonialism, under which boundaries were drawn that did not take into consideration the different peoples dwelling within the newly formed provinces. The boundaries were little changed when former European colonies gained independence. As a consequence, some African nations have been plagued with inner conflicts, racist attitudes and tribal warfare. Africa is torned by competing and often conflicting claims of bounded and flexible ideas of culture and identity. Sadly, the overthrow of the colonial governments did not guarantee a just society for native Africans. The rise of the United States and the Soviet Union as world powers resulted in a state of "neocolonialism," in which the two nations vied to secure allies during the cold war. Even after the end of the cold war, the continent was plagued by violence among ethnic groups. Especially noteworthy is the Rwandan genocide of 1994. During that conflict, ethnic tensions between the majority Hutus and minority Tutsis led to civil war and mass killings in which an estimated 800,000 people were slaughtered in just 100 days.

Life expectancy is a statistical measure of the average time an organism is expected to live, based on the year of their birth, their current age and other demographic factors including gender. According to the UN's Human Development Report 2016, life expectancy has fallen dramatically in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa since 1990, when it saw a brief increase. The Global South is being drained of resources by the rest of the world and it is losing far more each year than it gains. Africa alone loses \$192 billion each year to the rest of the world. This is mainly in profits made by foreign companies, tax dodging and the costs of adapting to climate change. Military rule, political regime in which the military as an organization holds a preponderance of power. The term military rule as used here is synonymous with military regime and refers to a subtype of authoritarian regime. With the advent of independence in the late 50's and early 60's euphoria and new hopes swept through Africa as nation after nation attained self-government. There were new dreams and expectations as the colonial masters packed A civil war, also known as an intrastate war in polemology, is a war between organized groups within the same state or country. The aim of one side may be to take control of the country or a region, to achieve independence for a region or to change government policies. Not so long-ago civil wars raged in Mozambique, Angola, Sudan, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Chad and Uganda. Today we have Congo and Somalia, and most recently the Central African Republic, and perhaps Nigeria, though Boko Haram is still no match for Biafra, the secessionist state in south-eastern Nigeria which went to war in the 1960.

African continent has constant injection of problems. Though fighting odds at every tunnel, Africans have to strengthen themselves to get them in good position at the brink of 22nd century.

Few Recommendations for better future of Africa

Rising above some of these existing democratic threats, each nation in Africa must put into place the following: -

1. Establish strong and independent democratic institutions such as Elections Commissions, Good Governance Commissions, National Democratic Institutes, Human Rights Commissions, etc.
2. Reform electoral laws promote massive civic education and increase citizen participation.
3. Strengthen civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Enforcement Agencies (AE), and anti-graft institutions such as Anti-Corruption Commissions, Auditing Commissions and Accountability Labs.
4. Promote the Rule of Law and overhaul the Judiciary system by making it more aggressive, independent and unbiased.
5. Build non-police and an un-militarized state. (Security forces must play a neutral role during political crises).
6. Establish office of the Ombudsman and Public Protector/Defender to limit the abuse of power and public resources.
7. Reduce presidential powers and tenures to 4 years. (African presidents are too powerful, because they have a long tenure – 6 plus years).

Conclusion

A strong African leadership and a complex of national and international factors can only provide perennial solution to this problem. Key to the process is strengthening election machinery and Africa's institutions that promote democracy and accountability. Africa's human, intellectual and social capital should be used to its full potential to reap the maximum benefits of natural resources and prevent any sort of economic imperialism.

The changing security conditions require an immediate and adapted response by both African and

international actors. The international community could contribute by promoting comprehensive peace building and conflict mitigation strategies, clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of different actors and strengthening the development- security nexus. Such kind of international support and reorientation would prove to be effective in addressing the structural causes of insecurity and political turmoil in the African continent.

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