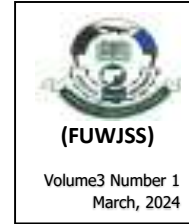


CONFLICT ENTREPRENEURS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

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Abstract

The continent of Africa has been ravaged by intra and inter- state wars and conflicts. This has prompted the thinking that Africa is the home of wars and instability. Most recently, it has witnessed not only conflicts but the resurgence of military coups particularly from its francophone countries. Some of these conflagrations which have defied any meaningful solution have been attributed to the activities of conflict entrepreneurs and their negative impacts have retarded growth and development in Africa while an end to them seems obscure. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the role of conflict entrepreneurs in the protracted, incessant and persistent conflicts in Africa and its implications on regional integration. The paper adopts a qualitative method of analysis with reliance on the secondary sources of data as well as the conflict trap theory as the theoretical framework of analysis. The study identifies conflict entrepreneurs as individuals or groups that benefit from conflict by providing weapons, goods, and services to parties in conflict most especially war. The paper concludes that conflict entrepreneurs are encouraged by excessive profits from black market arms deal and exchange of weapons for resources such as diamond or gold. Arguably, these conflicts erode regional integration efforts and as well foster instability in Africa. The paper suggests the need for good governance, regional agreement and global partnership on war,

transitional justice and the reforms of the international criminal justice system among others as possible means of tackling illegal activities of conflict entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Conflict entrepreneurs, warlords, blood diamonds, regional integration, security

Introduction

Violent conflicts of one type or another have afflicted Africa and exacted a heavy toll on the continent's societies, politics and economies, robbing them of their developmental potential and democratic possibilities. The causes of the conflicts are as complex as the challenges of resolving them are difficult. However, the nature and dynamics of conflict differs across societies. In Africa, one major reason associated with the spread and unending problem of conflict is the phenomenon of conflict entrepreneurship. Conflicts are a complex phenomenon and are often influenced by economic factors which play a large role in determining the actions of actual and potential belligerents. In particular, contests over natural resource wealth are prevalent in most conflicts in the African continent. War provides economic and political opportunities that cannot be achieved during peace (Allison, Le Belion & Murshed, 2000). Of utmost importance to this study is the role of conflict entrepreneurs who in their quest for financial gains of either selling their weapons to make money or profit from real outbreak of armed violence by exploiting the resources of states while conflict rages. These groups of entrepreneurs are prevalent in the African continent where they sell the idea of insecurity to statesmen and African leaders and convince them to patronize their weapons to the detriment of the welfare of the people who are deprived of good governance and its attendant benefits. The dimensions of African conflicts create complex problems from the existence of varying types of conflicts, warlords, and to conflict entrepreneurs which perpetuates conflict for their acquisition of benefits in the form of power, prestige and wealth during conflicts. For instance, in the last 30 years of conflicts in Sierra Leone blood diamond had contributed to the prolongation of the civil war in that country and the entire Mano River conflicts. Conflict entrepreneurs must be viewed as both economic and political actors, in that they foment and fuel violence as a path for attaining economic and political power (Jackson, 2002).

Conflict entrepreneurs often mobilize individuals through three general tactics: appeals to ethnic, religious, and/or ideological solidarity; patronage; and positive or negative promises regarding security (Jackson, 2002:33). Violent conflict can be alleviated by converting militant groups into parties

or other political actors that will still use mobilizational tools such as appeals to ideological solidarity, patronage, and promises of greater security, but in a non-violent way. As a matter of fact, many individuals who incited or benefited from violence often enjoy positions of economic and political power long after the cessation of hostilities, which is the case in many parts of the Africa today. Corruption is an endemic problem in many post-colonial societies, and stagnant economies make access to state power one of the only viable means of acquiring substantial wealth.

In understanding the history of conflict in Africa, we must first of all agree that the concept of statehood in Africa is greatly contested. African countries are geographical entities that are struggling to relate to the “nations” that exist within their boundaries. Colonial conflicts were not about statehood, they were about group survival and freedom from oppression. Post-colonial upheavals were not. The post-colonial conflict has its own dynamics in nation-building and state-building controversies in Africa. The domino effects of conflict in Africa affect sub-regional and continents’ integration in many respect especially in the dimensions of foreign policy which are conditioned by collective security challenges experienced at the level of intra and inter-state conflicts. These conflicts are usually as a result of resource contestation, communal interest or ideological claims championed by non-state actors. This had been the case in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria and Chad among others. Additionally, most of these conflicts tends to be protracted, persistent and enduring particularly because of the interest of the entrepreneurs who enjoy the greatest benefits from these conflagrations in the continent. Such conflicts have also thrown up some “strong men” in the name of warlords who lay claim to certain factions or regions of these countries. In fact, it is this phenomenon that threw up names like Joseph Kony in Uganda, Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya, Charles Taylor, Yomi Johnson and Sergeant Doe in Liberia as well as Johnny Paul Koroma and Foday Sankoh in Sierra Leone among others in the continent (Herbst, 2000).

Warlords are not a new phenomenon and are common in societies which experience a decline in central control. They exhibit such characteristics as war aims revolving around economic issues, construction of alternative governance structures, use of violence and patrimony and the existence of a shared identity. They equally represent the real power in many areas, with control of economic resources, arms and manpower while they offer security, rewards and stability at a local level without long term stability (Jackson, 2005). The warlords have employed these tactical maneuver in Africa and had succeeded in destabilizing the continent for decades. It is therefore against the above background that this paper attempts an analysis of the role of conflict entrepreneurs in the incessant

and protracted conflicts in Africa and its implications for the much touted integration of the continent. In doing this, we proceed with some clarifications of basic concepts and terminologies used in the paper, protracted social conflict theory as a framework of analysis, types of conflict entrepreneurs, dimensions of African conflicts, the implications of these conflicts for regional integration amongst others.

Conceptualizing Conflict Entrepreneur

This refers to a group or individual who promote conflict for profit. Usually, a conflict entrepreneur engages in or directly benefit from illegal economic activity that promotes violence or undermines efforts for good governance and economic development. They are often viewed as both economic and political actors, in that they foment and fuel violence as a path for attaining economic and political power. Therefore, developing alternative, non-violent routes for acquisition of power can lower levels of violent conflict. According to Obuseh (2014) a conflict entrepreneur is any individual, group or organization that profits from violent conflicts through the sale of weapons, goods and services to both the parties at war, and to civilian non-combatants. It is equally regarded as the businessman profiteer who leverages on the opportunities created by violent conflicts to enrich himself.

Conflict entrepreneurs often mobilize individuals through three general tactics: appeals to ethnic, religious, and/or ideological solidarity; patronage; and positive or negative promises regarding security. Violent conflict can be alleviated by converting militant groups into parties or other political actors that will still use mobilizational tools such as appeals to ideological solidarity, patronage, and promises of greater security, but in a non-violent way. In the words of McCarthy (1995), many individuals who incited or benefited from violence often enjoy positions of economic and political power long after the cessation of hostilities, which is the case in many parts of the Balkans today. Corruption is an endemic problem in many post-communist societies, and stagnant economies make access to state power one of the only viable means of acquiring substantial wealth. A conflict entrepreneur evokes two stereotypes in popular culture. First, he cuts the image of the rich businessman selling military hardware to warring parties, and, secondly, the quasi- criminal black marketer, selling commodities to common folk. The image of the conflict entrepreneur carries the implication of massive influence and power used to actively cause wars for personal gain, rather than merely passively profiting from them. However, for the purpose of this paper, conflict entrepreneur is both the economic and political actors who foment and fuel violence as a pathway for attaining

economic and political power. The use of violence, threats and killings are associated with activities of conflict entrepreneurs in Africa.

Warlord, Blood Diamonds and Regional Integration in Africa

Warlord is not an entirely negative or bad word as is often depicted in African conflict. It is a very old concept that existed in history and civilizations around the world. Although the idea of the warlord is universal and is applied to similar individuals and groups within areas as diverse as Colombia, the former Soviet Union, Central Asia and the Far East, it is in Africa where the idea and the systems associated with it appear to have reached their most 'developed'. Taking as its starting point a survey of nineteenth century African governance practices, the idea paints a picture of governance in pre-colonial African empires and draws out themes and issues of precolonial governance that can be traced through the colonial and post-colonial periods. In particular, ideas connected with the core characteristics of collapse of central power, trade, primitive accumulation, use of violence and governance systems are seen to be long-term historical features of many African (and other) polities.

The growth of warlords is intimately related to the overall growth of private, non-state actors in the security sector in Africa, which, quite correctly, is seen as a very clear symptom of state weakness. The growth of private military companies is well documented, but there is a wide variety of military operators available to those who are willing to pay for it (Jackson, 2005). Governments, for example, have resorted to hiring mercenaries to clear areas governing resources. Executive Outcomes, Sandline and others have been hired by a variety of African Governments with the aim of taking control of natural resources and splitting the profits, including Angola (oil and diamonds) and Sierra Leone (diamonds). The companies are, however, the 'top end' of the market playing for high stakes and rich rewards. There are a number of other, less well-paid actors within the private security sector ranging from individual mercenaries from the former Soviet Union (frequently hired as pilots) through to freelance militias consisting of footloose, armed gangs.

This represents an extension of warlordism in two ways. Firstly, the idea of an international mercenary class willing to undertake such work, which evokes images of the medieval Swiss and Lansknacht troops or the itinerant *samurai* of Japan. In other words; warlords willing to work for money, but having no territorial interests. Secondly, it questions the 'legitimacy' of governments (and it is usually governments) who hire such companies and enter into a power struggle over available resources, begging the question: how do we tell the difference in actions between a supposedly legitimate state and a warlord opposing it? In the end, we have

to address the question of privatization of security as a logical extension of the 'big man' idea of African politics and the extension of privatized networks of power and what Achille Mbembe (2001) terms 'private indirect government'.

The growth of warlords is associated with the increase of private, non-state actors in the security sector in Africa. A long-term view of political conflict in Africa reveals a link between pre-colonial warlord empires and the post-Cold War structures. Continuities identified include patrimonialism, use of magic by warlords to appeal to higher motives, need to provide an alternative legitimacy and ethnic ties. In addition, from pre-colonial through to post-colonial periods, characteristics linked with the collapse of central power, trade, private accumulation, use of violence and governance systems can be seen (Obuseh, 2014).

Questions concerning war and warlords in African studies have been discussed in numerous ways. In a seminal contribution William Reno (1988) introduced the concept of "warlord politics," a type of politics where political authority is based on the privatization of power and the subsequent lack of any real distinction between private and the public interests as rulers of such states convert wealth into political resources to buy loyalty or the means to coerce. In this study, warlord remains a military commander, especially an aggressive regional commander with individual autonomy and who lays claim to a particular portion of the state mostly in conflict. These are diamonds mined in a war zone and sold to finance an insurgency, an invading army's war efforts, or a warlord's activity. It is equally used to highlight the negative consequences of the diamond trade in certain areas, or to label an individual diamond as having come from such an area. The United Nations has defined the term blood or conflict diamond as diamonds that originate from areas controlled by forces or factions opposed to legitimate and internationally recognized governments, and are used to fund military action in opposition to those governments, or in contravention of the decisions of the Security Council. According to Ayafor, Chairman of the Sierra Leonean Panel of Experts *"Diamonds are forever, it is often said. But lives are not. We must spare people the ordeal of war, mutilations and death for the sake of conflict diamonds"* (Afzalur, 2001).

Diamonds are identified by a Certificate of Origin. If a strong system is in place to ensure that only those diamonds whose certificates indicate that they came from legitimate, government-controlled areas will reach the world market, then the profitability of conflict diamonds will dwindle. Such a system would need to be supported by each participant in the trade to be effective, and could require the standardization of the certificate of origin amongst the various exporting countries to help ensure that only legitimate diamonds get through, as well as the development of

legislation that will give a protocol for how to deal with participants who fail to comply (Briggs, 2003).

One of the main problems presented by conflict diamonds has been the use of conflict diamonds by rebel forces to purchase arms and facilitate other illegal activities. These forces will often smuggle their diamonds through and trade their diamonds in neighboring countries. In doing so, they make it quite difficult for others to trace the origin of these diamonds once they hit the market. And as the rough diamonds are polished, it is no longer possible to trace them back to their source, and they can therefore no longer be distinguished from legitimate diamonds. The international diamond community has made efforts to help stop the spread of conflict diamonds by passing a resolution at the World Diamond Congress in Antwerp, July 19, 2000, that has bolstered the diamond industry's ability to block such diamonds. The resolution imposed what is called the Kimberly Process, an initiative that established a worldwide council that consults diamond producing countries, industry and civil society on how to deal with conflict diamonds. The ultimate goal of the Kimberly process is to set in place a certification process for all rough diamonds. Certificates of origin would be placed on all rough diamonds in sealed boxes, and be transported as such from their countries of origin to their final destination. If adopted, the Kimberly Process would ensure that any diamonds from any conflicted area would never make it to the world market.

Regional integration is the process by which two or more nation-states agree to cooperate and work closely together to achieve peace, stability and wealth (Haas, 2009). It allows countries to overcome these costly divisions by integrating goods, services and markets, thus facilitating the flow of trade, capital, energy, people and ideas. Regional integration can be promoted through common physical and institutional infrastructure. Specifically, regional integration requires cooperation between countries in trade, investment and domestic regulation; transport, ICT and energy infrastructure; macroeconomic, financial policy and the provision of other common public goods.

According to Maydeen (2020), the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank compiled the second edition of the Africa Regional Integration Index Report which assessed African countries' status and efforts toward the goal of improved regional integration. The report analyzes five dimensions of integration namely the free movement people, trade integration (including tariffs and shares of intra-regional trade), productive integration (including integration into regional value chains), macroeconomic integration (including investment treaties, currency

convertibility and regional inflation), and infrastructural integration (including flight and road infrastructure).

The experience of regional integration schemes in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is however mired with several challenges particularly because of the language divide that has pervaded the continent. Regionalism in Africa has always had a strong political motive. "Pan-Africanism, as an expression of continental identity and coherence, distinguishes regional integration in Africa from other regions in the developing world" (McCarthy, 1995, p. 14). But the economic arguments for regional co-operation are also particularly strong given the small size of many SSA countries in economic terms. Furthermore, most African countries remain highly dependent on agriculture and suffer from high levels of food insecurity. In these circumstances, one would expect African regional integration schemes to be most focused on exploiting whatever synergies may exist to promote food security. Despite the force of these arguments, virtually all regional integration efforts in SSA to date have failed. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) became the champion of regional integration, already in the mid-1960s proposing the division of Africa into regions for the purposes of economic development. Existing African integration arrangements can be divided into two broad groups: those that fit into the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) adopted in April 1980, and those that were either in existence or came about outside the LPA.

The Lagos Plan was promoted by the ECA and launched in a special initiative by the OAU. It envisaged three regional arrangements aimed at the creation of separate but convergent and over-arching integration arrangements in three sub-Saharan sub-regions. West Africa would be served by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which pre-dated the Lagos Plan. A Preferential Trade Area (PTA) was established in 1981 to cover the countries of East and Southern Africa, which was eventually replaced in 1993 by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). For Central Africa the treaty of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) was approved in 1983 but remains to be fully ratified. Together with the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in North Africa, these arrangements were expected to lead to an all-African common market by the year 2025. The Lagos Plan was followed up in 1991 by the Abuja Treaty, re-affirming the commitment of the OAU's Heads of State to an integrated African economy (McCarthy, 1995). In April 2001, African Heads of State launched the African Union at Sirte to replace the OAU. All these efforts at African integration has not yielded much positive results because of the incessant and protracted conflicts that have bedeviled the continent most of which are the handiwork of conflict entrepreneurs.

Theoretical Framework: Conflict Trap Theory

The Conflict Trap is the theory that countries that have experienced civil war suffer a greater risk for new conflict than other countries with no prior history of civil war. Paul Collier argues that conflict occurs disproportionately in the countries in the 'bottom billion' population of the world because they have not had the 'have not had any growth at all.' Furthermore, he finds that the civil wars in these societies aggravate structural forces; poverty, poor governance and non-participation in the modern political economy and thus makes them more susceptible to further conflicts (Kahl, 2004).

The theory was developed by Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (2002) who used the term to describe the pattern when civil wars repeat themselves as a result of the accruable gains for belligerents or combatants. According to them, a civil war can aggravate the causal political and economic conditions which lead to a repeat civil war. Other reasons can be because the combatants are fighting over stakes that are valuable to both parties, combatants are unable to defeat each other or are engaged in a serious war of long duration (Walter, 2015). They equally observed that political and legal institutions play an important role in inhibiting repeat civil wars, and thus preventing a country from entering a conflict trap. Strong institutions can put checks on the incumbent's power, hence ensuring public welfare, which means rebels have fewer reasons to restart a civil war, and which removes the need for the rebels to maintain an army or a threat of war. Strong political and legal systems also give a non-violent platform to rebels to bring about desired changes, so they may not feel a need to adopt violent ways of protest.

However, there can be other reasons why a civil war may start and repeat itself. There may be intense grievances held by the groups, which motivate them to fight. Inferior health conditions, lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and poor human development create conditions for dissatisfaction, and hence civil wars. If a country is poor, it may be easier for rebels to organize an army to start a civil war. Weaker states provide an easier path for rebellion, since they lack sufficient capacity to effectively keep rebels in check. A country's geography may also contribute in wars, since rebels can easily escape and evade detection. However, where a population holds significant grievances, governments can be reluctant to make concessions to violent groups if they were previously unwilling to submit to nonviolent pressure. If they are willing to make concessions, a resolution could be prevented due to commitment problems (Collier et al, 2003). The basic assumption of the conflict trap theory is that once a country experiences civil war, its risk of further conflicts soars. Conflict weakens the economy and leaves a legacy of atrocities. It also creates

leaders and organizations that have invested in skills and equipment that are only useful for violence. Disturbingly, while the overwhelming majority of the population in a country affected by civil war suffers from it, the leaders of military organizations that are actually perpetrating the violence often do well out of it. The prospect of financial gain is seldom the primary motivation for rebellion, but for some it can become a satisfactory way of life. This is a further reason why the participants in a civil war should not be left to fight it out among themselves. Some evidence suggests that decade by decade, civil wars have been getting longer. While this may be due to circumstances in individual countries, it more likely reflects global changes that have made civil wars easier to sustain by allowing rebel groups to raise finance and acquire armaments more easily.

The above establishes the relevance of this theory to this paper as most of the conflicts in the African continents are resource based and often fueled by conflict entrepreneurs who benefit from these conflicts either through sales of weapons and ammunitions or through the continuous exploitation of the resources while the war rages on. The advent of blood diamonds and many other resource conflicts lends credence to this theory and the protracted and persistent nature of African conflicts cannot be separated from it. As a matter of fact, it is in the best interest of conflict entrepreneurs that conflicts remains persistent and protracted as they smile to the banks from proceeds accruing from wars.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a purely qualitative research method using content analysis as its analytical tool with reliance on the secondary sources of data. Qualitative research is especially effective for studying subtle nuances in attitudes and behaviors and for examining social processes over time. As such, the chief strength of this method lies in the depth of understanding it permits. Whereas other research methods may be challenged as 'superficial', this charge is seldom lodged against qualitative research (Rubin and Babbie, 2008:428).

African Conflicts and Regional Integration

Conflicts in Africa are usually categorized broadly into intra and inter-state although conflicts can be categorized in various ways depending on the type of criteria used. For instance, Salim (1999) classifies conflicts in Africa into boundary and territorial conflicts, civil wars and internal conflicts having international repercussions, succession conflicts in decolonized territories, political and ideological conflicts, as well as others including those related to transhumance and irredentism. Similarly, Collier and Binswanger (1999) classify conflicts into loot seekers and justice-

seekers, a classification which is based more on value judgment rather than analytical criteria. Nevertheless, both Salim and Binswanger use what they consider to be the objectives of the rebel groups as criterion for classifying conflicts. Others, classify conflicts on the bases of the actors involved in a conflict. Still others are concerned only with conflicts in which the state is a party to the conflict.

In general, most writers tend to think of conflicts in Africa as being political conflicts such as wars between states, armed rebellion against states (ranging from small-scale low intensity conflicts to large-scale civil war), armed secessionist rebellion (also of various scales), and coup d'état. Indeed, most African conflicts which are reported and which draw international attention are those which fit the above description. Military contractors and war profiteers also constitute another group of conflict propellers in the continent.

The UN Secretary-General's Report on Africa (UN 1999, p.5), discusses the causes and dimensions of African conflicts. The Secretary-General highlighted such issues as historical legacies and colonial boundaries forced on newly independent states with a simultaneous task of state-building which led to heavy centralization of political and economic power and the suppression of pluralism. But the challenge of forging a genuine national identity from among disparate and often competing communities has remained while the character of the commercial relations instituted by colonialism, also created long-term distortion in the political economy of Africa. The consequences of this pattern of production and exchange spilled over into the post-independence state. As political competition was not rooted in viable national economic systems, in many instances the prevailing structure of incentives favored capturing the institutional remnants of the colonial economy for factional advantage. Across Africa, undemocratic and oppressive regimes were supported and sustained by the competing superpowers in the name of their broad goals but, when the Cold War ended, Africa was suddenly left to fend for itself. The multi-ethnic character of most African States have equally been fingered as part of the internal drivers of conflict in the continent.

Collier and Binswanger (1999) argue that Africa has the highest level of ethnic diversity than any other continent and that African countries have small populations and therefore large numbers of ethnic groups, and that many African countries are distinct in having many multiple groups with strong identities or loyalties it is hard to organize rebellion across ethnic division", and (c) that "many of Africa's conflicts can be linked directly to contests for the control of resources such as diamonds, rubber, gold and oil among others. What this means is that the basic dimensions of conflict in Africa is resource based or induced.

Alliance Structures for Conflict Entrepreneurs and Regional Integration in Africa

Most of the conflicts in Africa are intra-state hence the implications of these conflicts will be felt in either the political, economic or social realms with far reaching consequences for continental security. Non-state actors collaborate to decimate nation-state power by arming belligerents and terrorists that operate on international level. This situation in most cases leads to civil war, political instability, coups and genocides which undermine national interests by creating national emergencies due to population displacements, internally displaced persons (IDPS), refugees, child soldiers, and above all human rights abuses.

Integration processes in the continent are hindered not only by the remnants of the political and socio-economic hangovers from colonial past but also from the deficiencies in the political, economic, social, administrative and cultural systems of African countries as well as unforeseen developments in the process of growth and nation building in most of the countries of Africa. Basically, conflict entrepreneur are drivers of conflict and as such their operations must of necessity be antithetical to any process of development since no meaningful development can be achieved without peace and security. Additionally, integration cannot be attained by countries torn apart by conflicts just as no meaningful development can be attained in the midst of conflicts. Thus, as these countries battle with conflict entrepreneur's induced wars, the agenda for integration is not only relegated to the background but completely jettisoned in the continent.

These contractors empower African leaders by their supplies of different categories of weapons and in the process give them a false hope of power and security. In fact, some of them have used such powers to intimidate other weaker or less strong states in the continent, a development which manifests in the continuous division of the states in the continent along these acclaimed powerful and weaker states. A divided Africa remains a fertile ground for their nefarious activities while a united African continent will defile the manipulations of conflict entrepreneurs in all ramifications. Mikhail Margelov former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council of Russia supported this position when he observed rightly that:

African integration today is a fight among different groups of countries for the influence on the continent, which represents not only the interests of African states but also the USA, the European Union, China and other serious international players, that is why political and economic

unity of the continent being the optimal way-out from a number of crisis situations in Africa still is a matter remote future and it is a long way to go till all the problems AU faces are solved (Gomez, 2014:32).

Conflict entrepreneurs in their bid for relevance also penetrated the one organization, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that was out to unite the continent and equally planted divisions in the continental body. This they do through their constant bid to sell weapons used for intra-conflicts between African states in their efforts to exploit and explore the God given resources in the continent. The involvement of Tanzania in Uganda is not far from this school of thought. Many Africanists think that Organizations of African Unity (OAU) – the biggest political unity of African continent was created in 1963 on the basis of African solidarity and unity principles and from the very beginning concentrated on the fight for the complete freedom of Africa from the colonial dependency. One more priority was the fight for the destruction of apartheid regime in South Africa and all forms of racial discrimination. Particularly in this the organization demonstrated outstanding decisiveness and firmness and managed to mobilize the efforts of all countries on the continent and draw the attention of the world to these problems, which resulted in final success of its intentions. Without transforming into the African Union (AU) and taking on the garb of economic emancipation of the continent as part of its agenda, it is believed that the OAU would have done better in terms of the unity of the continent that has been witnessed today.

These merchants of death have also succeeded in creating unnecessary alliance structure in Africa by inciting some group of countries against the others in a way that further polarizes the entire Africa for their selfish interest. This development manifest in skirmishes as witnessed in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda. Similarly, the conflict planting roles of conflict entrepreneurs has taken roots in the conflict in South Sudan and even Sudan as a country. At the moment the real reasons for creating the African Union which substituted OAU were cardinal changes in the alignment of political forces in the world at the period of its existence (1963–2001) and the fulfillment at the brink of the new millennium some high priority tasks that were appointed to OAU. The problems of current economic development in Africa call for new approaches and mechanisms. The main difference of AU from OAU is that economic integration is proclaimed the main priority of the new organization while OAU viewed political integration as the main task for taking measures to guarantee national independence and territorial integrity of young African states.

Many of the countries in the continent have inadequate infrastructure, weak institutions and political instability. Cross-border and civil conflicts or unrest remain a tragic reality in different parts of Africa. Many countries in the continent rely on agriculture as the main economic activity and source of income. Political instability and conflict impede agricultural production and productivity. Political instability and war, apart from negatively impacting agricultural production and productivity, destroy physical and human resources and cause social disorder which increases the cost of doing business (UNECA, 2004). Ultimately, this adversely affects the growth and development of the country and food security of its inhabitants. The neglect of agriculture by most African states where they have comparative advantage encourages the concentration on solid minerals and other resources, a development which gives impetus to the activities of conflict entrepreneurs.

Another major challenge in the African integration effort is that of infrastructure. Problems with roads, rail, ports, air transport, energy, telecommunications and other infrastructure are cited by the business community as one of the chief constraints to economic growth and integration in Africa (Abuka, 2005). Inadequacy of roads that connect African countries poses a challenge in boosting cross border trade. As a matter of fact, this problem persists because of the incessant conflicts experienced in the continent as a result of these conflict entrepreneurs as even countries that had hitherto developed its infrastructure retards into underdevelopment once it is afflicted by conflict.

Lastly, on the economic front, Africa has witnessed various efforts of economic integration at the continental and regional levels. While the idea of regional integration is as old as the Organization of African Unity now renamed as African Union, recent summits have reaffirmed Africa's commitment toward boosting intra-Africa trade and integration. With the grand aim of forming a continental economic community (African Economic Community) in the future, African countries aspire to use the various regional economic communities as building blocks. Despite such endeavors, however, the continent's economy has remained fragmented, *inter alia*, due to low level of infrastructure development and the state-centric nature of the integration efforts. The overlapping multiple memberships of countries to the regional groupings has complicated the integration effort. The absence of clear rule on the relationship between the existing regional economic communities and the 'to-be-formed' African Economic community has also contributed to the uncertainty in the integration process (Hailu, 2014).

Tackling the Menace of Conflict Entrepreneurs in Africa

For African states to reduce, curb or eliminate the influence of conflict entrepreneurs in the continent, they must as a matter of priority initiate regional partnership among member-states. This will not only re-awaken their consciousness to the activities of these conflict profiteers but will assist them in creating a greater avenue for interdependence where one country can stand in the gap for the other.

Secondly, there is need for these countries to re-visit the old methods of conflict resolution that is indigenous to Africa rather than rely on the western foisted methods of managing conflicts. This in fact will rejuvenate the old system of African solutions to African problems.

Thirdly, good governance is key to diffusion of tension and structural conflict and violence. It is on record that most African leaders are lacking in the area of transparent and accountable leadership coupled by their tendencies to remain in office in perpetuity. An accountable and transparent governance process will not only restore confidence in the people but galvanize support for leadership in the face of conflict and other forms of criminality.

Fourthly, African states must reform their criminal justice system as most of them are far outdated. This will allow for a justice administration system that is not only responsive to the yearnings of the people but would allow for prompt dispensation of justice in a fair and equitable manner. For some that have been involved in outright cases of conflict there is need for a truth and reconciliation commission that would heal the wounds of the aggrieved and as well reconcile the different warring factions and also implement truth and reconciliation commissions.

Finally, African countries need to address the process of improving their peace, stability, political environment and governance so as to create a suitable operating environment for business. Peace and security in the member countries is an essential asset to further integration. So far, the incidences of internal or cross border conflicts have adversely affected intra-regional trade. Hence, priority should be given to securing peace. As Udombana (2002) notes, African states must turn their swords into ploughshares, because the concept of a union and by extension regional integration will continue to be a façade in a continent that is plagued by conflicts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined the role of conflict entrepreneurs in African conflicts. It established that the continent is perpetually in conflict because of the role of those who profiteer from it and that these incessant conflicts has far

reaching negative consequences and implications for the regional integration efforts in the continent. The paper further discovered that these conflict entrepreneurs are involved in these illegal and destructive activities either for political power, economic power or prestige while they equally create warlords in the process which on its own is responsible for this sad development in Africa where diamonds, gold, and oil aid prolonged conflicts in most resource rich areas of the continent. It cited prolonged conflict in Congo, Sudan, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria's Niger Delta, Sierra Leone, Mali and Libya as the result of the activities of conflict entrepreneurs who are often supported by foreign countries with geopolitical interests in the continent. It acknowledges the role of both the OAU and AU in Africa's effort at regional integration and concluded that a pragmatic pledge to regional integration requires realistic grass-root pursuits which must go far beyond declarations and promises but a strategic plan of action embedded in the dictum of "African solution to African problems".

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