

African Indigenous Institutions and Contemporary Global Security

H.O. Kaya¹ and S.E. Kale²

¹*University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

²*Africa Programme, University for Peace, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

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ABSTRACT This is an examination of secondary sources to interrogate the role of African indigenous institutions in contemporary global security concerns. The paper advances the argument that contrary to colonial historical testimonies, pre-colonial African societies had developed their own indigenous institutions for conflict transformation, peace-building and security within and across cultures. Colonialism marginalized these indigenous institutions in the process of setting up new administrative structures to make their governance and economic exploitation easier. African cultural groups were forced into cohesive institutions which destroyed the roots of traditional governance and security. The marginalization of indigenous institutions still continues in the contemporary search for sustainable global peace and security against transnational terrorism. The paper recommends the development of a strong hybrid derived from interface of indigenous and modern institutions for peace-building and security.

INTRODUCTION

The paper supports the view that the traditional threats which defined global security issues in Africa for the best part of the 20th century have been quickly replaced by new and re-emerging security challenges (Ochieng 2004). These contemporary global security issues tend to have a transnational character. For instance, besides the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa during 2014 which was felt outside the continent, Africa as a whole has experienced unsettled years in its recent history characterised by widespread protests, civil wars, and increasing terrorist practices. The paper further advances the view that contrary to colonial historical documentations, most pre-colonial African societies had developed their own community-based institutions and mechanisms of ensuring peace and security within and across cultures. These indigenous institutions were side-lined by the colonial authorities in their attempts to set up administrative structures to make their governance and economic exploitation easier. African ethnic groups were forced into cohesive structures which destroyed the roots of traditional governance, peace-building and security including creation of artificial borders which contribute contemporary conflicts (Awedoba 2009).

Most of the contemporary conflicts which occurred in Africa during the 1990s have been

approached from a wide range of western institution-based approaches and mechanisms. They involved the use of international statesmen, international and regional organizations, and the involvement of neighboring countries, peace support operations and civil society organizations. These approaches and institutions did not take into account the cultural and internal milieu of their occurrence. As a result, many of the conflicts became protracted and intractable. Even where there was a return to peace, deep-seated issues still remain to be resolved and therefore make peace in these areas fragile. Examples are the conflicts in Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger Delta that continue, despite efforts to resolve them. The challenges associated with the approaches and methods call for alternative resolution mechanisms that can be used to bring sustainable resolutions (Makinda 2002).

Adams (2012) indicates that transnational terrorism is one of the contemporary features of conflict situations in Africa. These is exemplified by acts of terrorism in various parts of the continent. Cillier (2003) defines terrorism as a tactic that uses violence or the threat of violence as a coercive strategy to cause fear and political intimidation. In this context terrorism is not a new phenomenon in Africa. It has been a feature within resistance movements, military coups, political assassinations, and various intra- and inter-state wars that have affected most

African countries at some point during the continent's transition to independence and subsequent post-colonial period. It may have not been universally seen as the most important security challenge in Africa due to the dominance of famine, drought, endemic poverty, diseases and other natural and man-made disasters that undermine human security and have been at the forefront of policy discussions on Africa among Western governments and international organizations (Berman 2000).

The paper argues that one of the factors which tends to be neglected in the transnational terrorism discourse in Africa is the role of domestic causes and local institutions. This is based on the realization that most of the contemporary conflicts in Africa including acts of terrorism are permeated by domestic causes and forms of violence. Community-based and traditional social entities such as extended families, lineages, clans, 'tribes', religious brotherhoods and ethno-linguistic groups tend to become parties to conflicts by introducing their own agendas into the overall conflict setting. However, the development of a strong hybrid derived from an interface of indigenous institutions with modern approaches and forms of peace-building and security, be they state-based or civil-society-based, could be applied in peace-building and global security building (Thomas 2002). It is on the basis of this consideration that we emphasize the importance of understanding the domestic and cultural imperatives of conflicts and their implication on global security issues. Examples are given of Botswana and Malaysia where strong traditional institutions and values have successfully been used to curb corruption and acts of violence (Reus-Smit 1999). Some researchers have gone further to argue that cross-border cultural identities, values and institutions including religion could be mobilized to promote transnational security and trade relations across countries. Examples are given among the Tsonga between South Africa and Mozambique, Luo in Kenya, and Tanzania, Ewe in Togo and Ghana, the Batswana in South Africa and Botswana (Kgomotso 2004). The potential of these cultural relations and institutions in advancing global security and international trade relations has not been adequately researched.

In the context of this discussion the concept of security in its relationship to culture refers to the maintenance and protection of the well-being of the members of a given society or

demographic culture, as defined by the members of that society or culture itself. This makes culture central to security concerns as it creates a sense of "we" and "they". This distinction can be a source of conflict but also provide opportunities between diverse cultures. This is not only because many contemporary conflicts have significant cultural dimensions, but also due to the fact that arts and culture resources can be powerful tools for employment creation, mutual understanding, conflict resolution, appreciation of diversity, peace-building, and sustainable security (Ullman 1998).

Thus, investment in understanding and acting on the cultural aspects of conflict could quell emotional tensions and help save lives. Furthermore, various cultural activities including music can be an important tool in the rehabilitation of communities and individuals recovering from conflict, natural disasters, and wars. The existing limitation is the insufficient awareness of the interdependence of cultures, community-based knowledge systems, and socio-economic development including trade, peace, and security. This situation undermines security-related efforts in a globalized world which requires continued dialogue, communication and peaceful co-existence (Mathew 1999). Global security or international security is viewed as the amalgamation of measures taken by states and international organizations, such as the United Nations, European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and others, to ensure mutual survival and safety (Makinda 2002).

METHODOLOGY

The study used secondary sources and cases from different parts of Africa to discuss the role of African Indigenous institutions as instruments of advancing contemporary global security. The secondary sources used include journals and magazine articles, news reports, encyclopedias, books and past research reports. They were readily available and provided historical and cultural information relevant to the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Link between Domestic Circumstances and Global Security: Theoretical Perspectives

Yousuf (2003) indicates that the cultural based nature of conflict and security necessi-

tates the importance of understanding domestic circumstances and cultural background related to security issues including transnational terrorism. This is based on the realization that the person or group responsible for terroristic acts is first motivated by his/her own domestic realities. Examples are given with regard to the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 and Osama bin Laden and his "coalition" as having started with domestic grievances, that is, the perception that Muslim leaders are not considered to govern in accordance with the principles of Islam (Dhillon 2008).

The paper reveals that one of the outcomes of the global security challenge imposed by transnational terrorist insurgencies in Africa has been the emergence of various theories that attempt to explain the motives of these developments, especially with regard to the participation of African youth in transnational terrorism:

First, is the "grievance perspective" which advances the view that there is a link between horizontal inequalities and armed violence. Barbero (2002) sees armed violence (including terrorism) as a response to relative deprivation or exclusion. For instance, many people in the marginalized communities, especially the youth in areas such as the townships in South Africa resort to restorative justice because they are 'aggrieved and hurt' socially, politically and economically by being neglected by the state. They feel that their grievances with regard to poverty, unemployment, criminal activities in the communities are not taken seriously by state institutions including the municipalities, police and courts. Another "grievance view" argues that in most African countries the youths are becoming politically conscious and aware of their political rights which have been constitutionally disfranchised (Ejizu 1996). This perspective is more relevant in a situation where people do not feel the dividends of democracy. The African youth, for example, feel that they are only good to be used and dumped by politicians during elections but not as electable politicians themselves. This political attitude tends to fuel a militarized sense of "we will do it ourselves" when provoked by the failure of government to provide for them in the mist of plenty.

Second, is economic perspective, especially with regard to poverty, unemployment and the growing gap between the elite and the overwhelming majority of the population, in produc-

ing people who have nothing to lose. These widespread conditions of conflict and poverty in Africa often generate a breeding ground for alienation and radicalization. However, as Sommers (2009) rightly indicates that poverty alone is not a reason for individuals or groups to resort to acts of violence including terrorism. It is the west and the African governments' neglect of the poverty conditions and associated cases of terrorist acts that partly contributes to transnational terrorism. It contributes to double standards and the domestic perception in Africa that a Westerner's life is more worth than that of an African (World Bank 2008; Adams 2012).

This perception is also linked to the economic opportunity perspective, especially among the youth. Terrorism and armed violence, are viewed as the outcomes of rational individual choices to maximize economic, social or political benefits. It argues that rebellion is only feasible when the opportunity and potential gain from joining an armed group outweigh the benefits of not fighting and pursuing alternative income-generation opportunities. From this perspective, the costs of organizing rebellion are lower where there is a large youth population (which is relatively cheap to recruit), where there are high levels of poverty and illiteracy or where there is an abundance of easily loot-worthy resources. Suffice to say that these identified variables abound in most African countries and could perhaps explain why some African youth are more inclined to armed violence in contemporary times (Stewart 2008; Sommers 2006).

Third, are particular psychological factors perspective, which make some African young people more prone to engaging in violence. It argues that adolescents may be more susceptible to recruitment by rebel groups or to engage in violence for a number of psychological reasons, including emotional development or identity construction. It is on the basis of this consideration that some scholars have the view that employment creation schemes could provide the restless youth with a means of channelling their energies and thereby resisting a natural propensity to violence in its various forms.

Fourth is the social and political exclusionism perspective. This sees youth violence as a product of their social and political marginalization. Research shows 'the social and economic statuses required for adulthood are increasingly unattainable for young people'. Studies of

young people in a number of different conflict-affected countries have identified various social, economic and political barriers that block young peoples' transition to adulthood, and highlighted the central role these barriers can play in driving violent conflict. For instance, Sommers' (2006) work on 'youth men' in Rwanda and on blocked youth transitions in West Africa (Sommers 2007), on 'waithood' in the Middle East (Dhillon 2008), and on youth violence in Sri Lanka (Al-Mashat 1995) all emphasize a blocked transition to adulthood emerging as a result of a complex combination of demographic, economic, social and political factors. Therefore, taking up arms against the state or the political elite in these contexts provide a means by which they can integrate into society (by fire, by force), or gain the sense of purpose and recognition denied them by the society. This perspective implies that, youth employment creation alone will not address violence unless it also deals with the social and political exclusionism that underpins youth grievance. This is why there is no escaping the fact that terrorist attacks have almost exclusively been led and executed by young men isolated from the rest of society.

African Indigenous Communication Systems and Institutions for Sustainable Security and Livelihood

Communication is central to human life because it sustains and maintains human relationship and social interaction. Therefore, indigenous communication in the context of security is the product of the interplay between a community's customs and conflicts, harmony and strife, cultural convergences and divergences, cultural specific tangibles, interpersonal relations, symbols and codes and moral traditions. This includes methodology such as oral literature (proverbs, story-telling, poetry), rites, rituals, music, dance, drama, costumes and similar abstractions and artefacts which encompass a people's factual, symbolic and cosmological existence from birth to death and even beyond death (Ejizu 1996). Communication in this context refers to the purposeful activity of information exchange between two or more persons in order to convey or receive the intended meanings through shared system of signs and semi-otic rules (Ray 2006).

Mcrae (2000) indicates that the nature of indigenous communication system is in such a way that the channels are linked by a network of mutual dependencies. There is interdependent relationship among the different forms of communication systems. Elements of extra-mundane media are found in institutional media; elements of visuals media are found in extra-mundane media. Institutional systems of indigenous communication, involve the use of cultural or traditional institutions to communicate symbolically, and as an extension of the extra-mundane mode of communication. The most important of such indigenous institutions are marriage, chieftaincy, secret societies, shrines, masks and masquerades. Other important African indigenous institutions include traditional rulers, age grades, kingmakers, modern religious organizations, market women and others. Two types of African traditional communication systems are identified, that is, verbal and non-verbal are identified.

Verbal traditional communication systems include: market place, town crier, visits, church, and village square. Other scholars include names of people, proverbs, riddles, narratives, simple commands, requests, exclamations, and statements. What is imperative about the traditional verbal communication systems is the significance of language, especially thought, feelings and words as important ingredients. Non-verbal traditional communication systems are more than speaking. They involve the sharing of meaning with others non-linguistically. Ebeze (2002) identifies the following as systems of non-verbal traditional communication: idiophones; membrane phones, aerophones, signals objectifics, colour scheme, music, extra-mundane communication and symbolic displays. This includes physical appearance, hair, facial expression and gesture communication.

Wilson (1998) further classifies traditional communication systems into six broad categories based on insights and approximations on the subject. The categories are instrumental, demonstrative, iconographic, extramundane, visual, and institutional systems. He further sub-classifies each of the classes into sub-categories:

- (i) instrumental media is classified into idiophonic, aerophonic, and membranophonic communication instruments;
- (ii) demonstrative media into music and signal modes of communication;

- (iii) Objectified and flora communication instruments make up iconographic media while colour and appearance make up visual media;
- (iv) Extra-mundane is sub-classified into incantations, chant, ritual, prayers, sacrifices, invocation, vibration, conjuration, witchcraft, exorcism, vision and contemplation;
- (v) All forms of social and spiritual institutions make up institutional media.

Besides Wilson's categories of indigenous communication systems, other categories include myths and legends; names as communication; and folk tales and proverbs. All the above categories and sub-categories of indigenous communication systems are found in most African societies. The paper emphasizes that these media systems are better understood when they are considered holistically. The following section looks at the African traditional or indigenous authority as an instrument of social mobilization for peace and security building.

African Traditional Authority Institutions and Social Mobilization for Security

The African traditional authority as a social institution is so much prized as an important instrument for mobilizing social change. In most African rural communities traditional rulers are still being relied upon as an important force for mobilizing and persuading their subjects towards ethical values in society. This is in spite of the fact that the credibility of some elements of traditional authority in recent times is waning, because they have allowed themselves to be used by outside forces for personal benefits. These weak and corrupt elements of traditional authorities provide opportunities for foreign forces to manipulate and recruit the youth for violent activities including terrorism. Therefore, the restoration of their credibility and respect would give them the legitimacy to exercise full authority on their subjects. Ejizu (1996) provides the example of the structure of traditional authority in Igbo society in Eastern Nigeria, as organised in two broad ways: (i) The assemblies and (ii) the societies. Within the assemblies is found the general assembly, the men's assembly and the married women assembly. There are basically three types of societies: (a) The title holders' society; (b)

the age-group societies, and (c) the married daughters' society (Umu-okpu, Umu-ada).

These different groups meet to discuss and ensure the development and security of the community. The issues discussed at such meetings usually concern the social welfare, security and development of the community, settlement of disputes among members, arrangement for feasts and title-taking and manners of procedure in matters connected with other communities or societies. The societies of elders and titled men treat the religious and ritual-political matters separately at their private meetings. The Ozo title, as a machinery of government in traditional Igbo society, is an important institution in bringing about peace, security and tranquillity in the community. The individual who has taken the Ozo title must live a holy life, uphold publicly and privately the morality of the land and observe all the taboos, and religious ceremonies of his community (Ezikeanyi 1997).

The following section looks at the role of African religion in sustainable livelihood and security.

African Religious Institutions for Sustainable Community Livelihood and Security

Religious affiliation is one of the salient features of African societies. Almost every African cultural group subscribes to one form of religious belief or the other. The common thing in the different religious beliefs is that they all believe in one supernatural being –God as the source of all we do, live for and have. God can punish for any wrong done and reward for any good done. All the three major religions in Africa, that is, Christianity, Islam, and Traditional Religion, preach one thing, that is, to do good. Most Africans live in a religious environment, and motivated in many of their actions by religious influences and impulses internally and externally. Campaign messages about the need for social security will readily get to the people and persuade them when religious institutions are used. The custodians of the religions (Priests and Imams) serve as effective opinion leaders in the diffusion of the peace and security messages (Wefwafwa 2014).

The sense of community is an important value in African traditional life. This view is still valid in spite of the conflict situations in the various parts of the continent. For traditional

Africans, the community is basically sacred, rather than secular, and surrounded by several religious forms and symbols. Someone from outside Africa is usually struck by the frequent use of the first person plural 'we', 'ours' in everyday speech. In modern African urban areas, primary community loyalties of one's extended family and village continue to exert their hold over people who live away from their home communities. People generally return to their villages from time to time to join members of their village community to celebrate important traditional rituals and cultural events like initiation, weddings and funeral. They send financial contributions to their rural home communities and relatives to support various functions and obligations including funds to send young men and women on further studies.

Shorter (1995) indicates that traditional Africans share the basic instinct of gregariousness with the rest of human-kind. Families and members of kin-groups from minimal to maximal lineages generally live together and form community. There are communal farmland, economic trees, streams, barns, and markets. There are also communal shrines, squares, ritual objects and festivals for recreational activity, social, economic and religious purposes. Members of the same kindred or clan could distinguish themselves by their proficiency in a particular trade, skill or profession. Some traditional African communities or even entire language group may be experts in rain-making, wood carving, practice of traditional medicine, or blacksmithing. Examples are given of the Lovedu of South Africa, the Ibibio of southeast Nigeria and the Awka in Igboland as widely reputed for their skills in rainmaking, woodcarving and blacksmithing respectively. These and similar features characterize the communal life of both agrarian and nomadic groups of traditional Africa. Closeness to nature, the experience of life in terribly hazardous environment, and the crucial need for security and better performance in means of livelihood are some relevant factors that combine to deepen the natural impulse for gregariousness and sense of community among different African peoples.

For most traditional Africans, the community is much more than a social grouping of people bound together by reasons of natural origin and/or deep common interests and values. It is both a society as well as a unity of the visible and invisible worlds; the world of the physically

living on the one hand, and the world of the ancestors, divinities and souls of children yet to be born to individual kin-groups. In a wider sense, African traditional community comprehends the totality of the world of African experience including the physical environment, as well as all spirit beings acknowledged by a given group.

The network of relationships among human beings is remarkably extended and deep. In fact, the words 'family', 'brother', or 'sister', etc. define far more for Africans than what they mean today for the average Westerner. The family for the traditional African usually includes one's direct parents, grand and great grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews. And normally, a child would refer to any of his uncles or aunts as his father or mother, his nephews and nieces as his/her brothers and sisters. People generally do not ask a child his/her personal name. Rather, a child is identified as 'a child of so and so parents'. The extended family system is the model. The molecular family pattern is alien and believed to be inimical to the traditional value of community. Ikenga- Metuh (1991) notes that it is only in recent times that the latter system began to surface mainly in urban areas as a result of external influences. The extended family structure is held up to people as a model, one in which parents, grand-parents, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces live together and are cared for by their children grand-children and other relatives in mutual love and respect.

The invisible members, especially ancestors and spiritual beings are considered more powerful than human beings. Their reality and presence in the community are duly acknowledged and honoured among various traditional African groups. Neglect could spell disaster for human beings and the community. The invisible beings are represented by different kinds of symbols like carved objects, shrines and sacred altars. They may also be recalled in personal names given to children, especially in cases where particular ancestors or spirit beings are held to have reincarnated in individual children. The presence of the ancestors is particularly felt in traditional African community. They are believed to be benevolent and powerful representatives of the community in the spirit land. Their symbols and shrines are common features among most traditional African societies.

The reality and presence of spiritual members are equally acknowledged through several taboos found in most African communities. For example, in most African ethnic groups, women within the child-bearing age are bound to observe several prohibitions. They run a serious danger of becoming childless if they flout such taboos. It could result into scaring away souls of unborn babies that are believed to hover around homesteads and families wanting to incarnate in wombs of potential mothers. In most traditional African societies, there are intriguing sacred stories or myths that tell how the world, human beings and important institutions came into being. These sacred stories underscore the involvement of ancestors and mythical beings in the life and affairs of the community of the physically living. They also try to explain the significance of different rituals for human beings and their important life-interests (Ray 2006).

The Importance of Age Group Institution in Community Peace-building and Security

In most African traditional societies the age group as a community institution was widespread and very much prized. Every person in the community, both men and women, belonged to an age group. The institution had socio-economic, political and cultural values. Belonging to an age-group meant adhering to its specific set of rules, duties and rights. It demanded discipline and created a lasting sense of comradeship among the people who belonged to the same age group. Thus, conflict between age-group mates was considered taboo. Age-group parents were also expected to be peace-makers whenever conflicts existed between their offsprings or relatives.

For example, in the Tiv traditional society in Nigeria, the age group, referred to as *Mbakwagh*, carried out judicial functions as well as settling disputes among community members. One example of such dispute which *Mbakwagh* settled was assault on elders and constituted authority, including refusal to comply with elders' decisions. The *Mbakwagh* would arrest the accused, try him or her, and when found guilty, the culprit would be chastised and fined. In addition, the culprit is made to publicly apologise and thereafter to obey the decision he/she had hitherto defied. In extreme cases of disobedience, *Mbakwagh* could send the culprit on exile and enforce it. The *Mbakwagh* in Tiv society, even today, discourages laziness, im-

morality, dishonesty and other vices that could arise in society. It is suggested that this social institution could be galvanized and utilized to contribute meaningfully to the smooth running of the local communities, thereby contributing meaningfully to the campaign against social insecurity (Leonard 1998). The National Service systems for the youth in Tanzania in the 1960s and 1970s was modelled on similar aspirations of providing service and security to the nation and community.

The African Indigenous Principle of Common Humanity for Peace and Security

This principle stressed the central values that despite cultural, religious and ethnic differences, human being are basically the same. A person realizes his/her humanity through others. The Bantu of East, Central and Southern Africa call this principle and value system "*Ubuntu*". This principle applied to other forms of creation including the natural environment. The important norm of this communal living was the acceptance that access to basic needs, especially land and water, was a human right to be accorded to every member of a given society. This explains the communal ownership of these resources in most pre-colonial African traditional societies (Kgomotso 2004).

Related to this social value was the principle of reciprocity which emphasized both the ethic of sharing and as a sense for collective security through a social and cultural set up which supported an egalitarian social living. This norm transformed individual and group obligations into a social welfare security system, that is, a sense of social justice and fairness based on mutual trust and support. Another important value inculcated among all members of society was the principle of respect, especially for elders, parents and ancestors. It was codified in taboos, and the concept of social distance with regard to what one could do, whom to talk to and how to relate to one another according to gender, age and social status.

The Affinal Kinship, Blood Brotherhood and Joking Relations (Utani in Kiswahili) as Instruments for Trans-cultural Community Peace-building and Security

Affinal relationship was recognized to exist between different cultural communities. An example given in the *athoni* (in-law) relationship

between the Kamba and Kikuyu people of Kenya. This relationship forbid the two cultural communities from fighting each other irrespective of how provocative the circumstances might be. Thus, it is almost next to impossible to have an “ethnic cleansing” conflict between them. Contemporary politicians have used this relationship to mobilize support across the cultural divide.

Blood brotherhood was a mechanism which was used as a “passport” for people to pass across territories of different ethnic and cultural communities. Trade was the primary force behind blood brotherhood among the people. In most African countries, especially in East Africa, pre-colonial inter-community trade was conducted under such circumstances. Once an individual had a blood brother in a different community, then through the extension of the kinship ideology, such relations created peaceful relations among their respective communities. In case of conflict between these communities such relations were mobilized in the search for sustainable peace and mutual security (Patrick 2005).

Furthermore, different African communities, especially in East Africa, such as between the Kamba between Taita people in Kenya; and the Zaramo and Nyamwezi people in Tanzania, used joking relationships to maintain sustainable peace treaties among themselves. They were bound to offer support and protection to their respective community members who happen to be within their respective territories.

The Role of Elders in Conflict Resolution and Peace-building

In most African societies both male and women elders played a pivotal role in conflict resolution, peace-building and security. Women were regarded as the embodiment of these principles and values. This made them better emissaries of peace as they were regarded to be the most none partisan when it came to wars and extreme distressing situations. This explains why, in war situations in most traditional African societies, women and children were never killed. They were simply captured and later fully assimilated into the community which had captured them. This is the total opposite of what is happening to African women and children in contemporary wars in Africa. Traditionally, male elders were

accorded respect due to their personal wisdom and temporal powers. Whereas women elders’ respect was due to their spiritual powers (Rigby 1968).

The Third Party and Consensus Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Patrick (2005) states that irrespective of whether the deliberations were being held in private or in the open, in most African traditional societies conflict tension was minimized by the protagonist not addressing each other directly. They stated their cases through a third party who acted as the “voice”, spokesperson, advocate and agent provocateur all rolled in one. In this way, parties could openly accuse one another without being rude. It is an approach which is still being used in African marriage negotiations. Moreover, in most conflicts, resolutions were reached based on consensus, rather than on winner-takes-all approach. This is a mechanism which attempts to save face of those in conflict by finding that both of them were not entirely free of blame. The emphasis was put on what united them than on their differences. It was an approach which appealed to the individual’s sense of decency, self-introspection and therefore the need for reforming oneself so that harmony, peace and security could prevail.

CONCLUSION

The paper discussed the role of African indigenous institutions in contemporary global security. It argued that contrary to colonial historical testimonies, pre-colonial African societies had their own ways of conceptualizing conflict and security. They also had their cultural-based approaches including indigenous institutions of ensuring peace and security within and across communities. In the process of colonial attempts to set up administrative structures to make their economic exploitation and governance easier, many African ethnic groups were forced into cohesive structures which destroyed the roots of traditional governance, peacebuilding and security. These forced administrative structures including artificial borders separated cultural groups and contributed greatly to conflict situations in contemporary Africa including transnational terrorism.

The contemporary approaches to global security including the fight against transnational terrorism tend to marginalize these domestic circumstances and indigenous institutions. This explains the fact that despite efforts to resolve conflicts in various parts of the continent, these conflicts continue. The paper also looked at the various internal explanations associated with the participation of African youth in violent activities including transnational terrorism. These ranged from various grievances against the state, to socio-economic, political and psychological factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is, therefore, a great need to understand the link between domestic cultural factors including indigenous institutions and contemporary conflicts, especially their implications on global security. The development of a strong hybrid derived from interface of indigenous institutions with modern approaches and forms of peace-building and security is recommended, be they state-based or civil-society-based.

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