Insurgency Ecology of Africa
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Abstract
The rising tide of insurgency in the 1990s in many parts of Africa is a new development in African political history. Sadly also, several regions in Africa are still under the threat of insurgency attack. Questions have been raised to decipher why insurgency still persists in Africa. The more the questions, the more elusive the answers on the reason for insurgents taking up arms against the state. Some Scholars argue that only extreme condition of frustration could tempt people to take such a risky venture. If the present trend of insurgency remains unchecked, the burden of its socio economic distress will be disastrous for the already weak states of Africa. The paper contends that in Africa, regime, government, and political party are intertwined, Thus, creating room for personalization of the state, itself a source of insurgency. It concludes by indicting the state for being responsible for the creation of insurgency ecology, now assuming an ugly face in Africa’s political theatre.

Key words: Contested State, Regime Challengers and insurgency ecology

INTRODUCTION
The paper, as its primary thrust, attempts to capture the often, but not much publicized role of insurgency ecology (either visible or subtle) in the preponderance of conflicts and civil wars in Africa, African governments have also contributed largely in making their regimes accountable for the fertilization of conflict ecology through closed political space and utter disregard to democratic norms. By this development, the poor performing governments of Africa induce insurgency as a direct consequence of bad governance and the regime legitimacy question. The protracted civil wars between the states and their regime challengers turned the contested states into rubbles, leading in extreme cases to state collapse. The overriding objective of the insurgents, sometimes called war-lords in many literatures, is to sack the government in power by arm twisting, for no other moral reason than to take over the reins of governance from a sitting government, allegedly ascending to power through manipulated, partial and imperfect elections.

Admittedly, granted that democratization process in many Africa countries is flawed, such electoral defects do not justify insurgents response with resort to war, fought with primitive savagery and philistinism. The regime challengers and the atrocities it generated from parties to the civil wars are as perfidious as governments’ use of full force to silence sound opposition.

Any study on the profile of insurgency in the contemporary African politics that circumvents this overt reality is contorted version of truth, or at best chivvied on the periphery. Much works and Plethora of literatures abound on civil wars in Africa. The emphasis here is not dearth of cognoscenti in contemporary wars in nascent states of Africa, but the shallow attention given to the roles African regimes have played in creating Africa into a continent of wars and insurgencies.

African governments are known for animating and watering insurgency ecology in states sharing territorial continuity with them. Liberia, Sierra-Leon, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Rwanda, Uganda etc have unenviable record of allowing insurgents safe haven, from where they launch attacks on governments of contested states they share common boarders with. Many writers heap the blame on intra-state wars that foraged many African states in the 1990s to 2000s to the collapse of East-West divided (Cold war), following the disappearance of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic- USSR in international power politics, neo-colonialism, European imperialism, Structural Adjustment Programme SAP, poverty, corruption and internal contradictions inherent in the nascent states of Africa, but with scratchy emphasis on African governments provision of buffer zone for some of these wars. Time has come to see beyond heaping all the blames directly on the West.

We must also balance them with how Africa, through many internal contradictions transformed the continents into undeniable ecology for growth of insurgency.

The paper is divided into three segments. The first part takes a look at internal contradictions /typology ecology of insurgency in Africa, followed by examination on the pre-dispositional ecology and dynamics of insurgency ecology debate. The final part attempts a critique on the role of state configuration in creating favourable ecology for the rise of insurgencies and the attendant civil wars.
CLARIFICATION OF TERMS.

Before delving into the main work, it is pertinent here to clarify some of the basic words, used in this study. Insurgency is taken here to mean armed rebellion against a regime and its government for diverse reasons. Warlords are captains of insurgent groups contesting for power with use of violence, and the contest is with a regime already in control of government. Sometimes, they are interchangeably referred to as guerrillas, and regime challengers. Insurgency ecology in context here means all the conditions, events, situations, circumstances and factors that create the socio-political, cultural and economic environment for the gestation, maturity and survival of insurgency. Put differently, it is the environment created by the state that makes for growth and rise of insurgency against the regime/state that created it. This revelation should be instructive to African pilots of state. Configuration of state denotes unjust structures that produce group inequalities, injustices, despotism, discrimination, abuse of due process and constitutionalism.

INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS ECOLOGY/TYPOLOGIES

One ugly face of nascent states of Africa is the startling high wave of political violence. After the end of colonialism, Africans expected non-violent means of power sharing in the spirit and substance of democracy, as was the case in western countries in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries. Far from reality, what emerged in the political scene are simultaneous wave of “democracy” and political violence. Equally striking is the unrestrained use of violence and the willingness of the state to exercise it against anyone who (real or imaginary) inconveniences the interest of the ruling class in feasting on state resources and/or challengers them as contestant during elections, usually manipulated to ensure their undefeat and grip to power.


As would be expected in all human societies, cultures of political exclusion, reservation of privileges for small segment of the society and use of full force to silence demands for change hardens the hearts of the oppressed to remain unyielding to threat. If the desired change does not come by peaceful means, the oppressed and those cheated, short changed or denied opportunity of meeting their needs very often resort to counter use of force on the people responsible for their unmet need and aspiration. Generally, in African political experience, the much sought unmet need is political power for control of government. Competition over the control of the state is largely accountable for the political chaos in large parts of Africa.

Ordinarily, states by its essence are “the centre of political systems everywhere” (Hyden and Bratton, 1992p.16). The application of this political thought has largely come under abuse in many African countries. Villalon (1998) argues that in the modern concept, a state as an institution is more enduring than regimes, regimes more lasting than governments. Contrary to this distinction, “drawing lines between regimes and African states remains difficult, if not impossible” (Villalon p.9). In many African states, the state, regime, party in power are indistinguishably fused together in a single personality, giving rise to what Jackson and Roseberg (1982) refer to as “personally appropriated state” pp300-304.

By this trend of political culture, the political space is closed to other contestants. When the heat of demand for reforms turn too hot for the incumbent as in Zaïre’s Mobutu Sese Seku, Sani Abacha’s Nigeria, Arap moi’s Kenya, Paul Biya’s Cameroun, Laurent Gbagbo’s Ivory Coast, as elsewhere in vast majority of African countries, governments in power respond to pressure of democratization and expansion of political space for other contenders. They succumb to electoral reforms, and sometimes to constitutional changes to affirm trust and remove fear in other political contestants, albeit camouflage of deceit. However, in actual practice, what obtains are intensions to thrall change, and to maintain the status quo, through calculated rules and sharp practices to guarantee “victory” of the incumbent and all other contenders in his good book. Once declared “winner” in the election, many African leaders are known for using their mandate to discredit pressures for reform from opposition politicians, who are tagged as ‘enemies’ of the state. Many a time, opposition parties actually won the elections. Case examples are Kenya 2008 and Cote d’ivoire 2011 presidential elections won by the opposition party. In a swift swing, they were declared losers. Their mandate was passed over to the incumbents who lost in the elections. In Kenya, it sparked off political violence and pogrom. In Cote d’voire, it resulted to re-escalation of the civil war and hostilities, in Zimbabwe (2008), it nearly drove the Mugabe regime into brink of war with Morgan Tsvangirai, his arch political opponent, but was averted through power sharing settlement.

No doubt, therefore, those derived level ground for political contest, after realization of their total blockage in the political space have no other option than to use insurgent route to seize power, or in mild cases, yield to integration into power sharing with government in power. The political climate of Africa and the destructions it has generated in human loss and immeasurable sufferings are at odd with the responsibilities of
the state, as an institution for security and welfare of the citizens. These misnomers have worried and attracted many reactions from scholars in and outside Africa. Among the scholars that have popularized the admission that African political terrain and the supposedly state under its custody is in crisis of social unrest, economic distress and life threatening human insecurity are, Berkeley (1993) Kaplan (1994), Nzerem (2010), and Eze(2012) to mention but a few. Using all indices for measuring performing states, scholars of various persuasions are in agreement that vast areas of Africa are under the ruthless vampire of inappropriate and visionless leaders, who have inflated rather than ameliorating social and political tensions in their different nations.

Either in authoritarian, attempt at democratization or “guided” democracy regimes, large scale war has become the in-thing in many parts of Africa, intractably woven with politics of contest over control of state power, between incumbents on one hand, and their insurgent challengers on the other hand. Basically, the historical survey of insurgency in Africa shows varying degrees in types, depending on context and objective, but the artery running through all of them irrespective of type is politics, either for libration, secession, demand for some levels of autonomy or political inclusion.

From the anatomy of the objective and the driving force behind insurgency, four categories have remained copious. They are (i) liberation (ii) secession (iii) reform, and, (iv) warlord insurgencies. Each makes distinct demand from government, differs in organization and goal, but shares a common character in the use of force to press their demand. The target goal of libration insurgencies was colonialism.

Independence movement turned into armed struggle with colonial masters, when dialogue collapsed. This type of insurgency is best represented by the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, and the white settlement minority ruled states of Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Included in this list also are Algeria and Kenya where independence from colonial rule was achieved not by peaceful congresses but by blood and iron.

Secessionist insurgency is best exemplified with Eritrea, Southern Sudan and Western Sahara, while the classic examples of reform insurgency are Uganda and democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire). The last, is warlord insurgency. It differs from the other three forms of insurgency in that it craves not to create a new state out of the existing one, but aims at overthrowing the authorities of the state already in place, without necessarily a new ideology different from the state it seeks to replace. By maintaining and strengthening the greed for personal enrichment after ascendancy to power, the warlords symbolize in all faces, a new wine in an old skin. The people see them and the old authorities of the state they have overthrown (partially or completely) as same bird of prey with two wings of vampire. Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Voire, National Union for Total Independence of Angola UNITA, Mozambique National Resistance Movement Renamed and Somali National Alliance SNA of Mohammed Faarah Aidid represent good examples.

**PRECIPITANTS/PRE-DISPOSITIONAL ECOLOGY**

Insurgency in all its forms is a confluence of many factors that are inseparable. Many scholars have attempted at studying the causes of insurgency with particular interest and concern on warlord type that seeks to overthrow an existing government. What has provoked this concern is the magnitude of destruction, pogrom, unimaginable hostility, and state “collapse” from its induced civil wars. Above all, it is a new development in African political theatre, and therefore calls for tasking studies for proper interpretation of the causes, if fledging states of Africa must be saved from total collapse and disintegration. A close study on insurgency in Africa shows a dichotomy among scholars on the causes. Some blame it on the imperialist West. Another group sees it from internal contractions inherent in post. colonial state and those in between. However, another side of the divide that has not received the desired attention, which I want to put into the debate, is the role of some African governments in energizing insurgency ecology outside their shores. Regimes in Mozambique, Ethiopia, Somalia, DRC, Uganda, Eritrea, Angola, Liberia, etc feature conspicuously in literatures as sponsors of insurgency groups(s) in countries they share territorial continuity/ethnic homogeneity, if not through official voice, but by actions(s). In some cases they are known to have allowed warlords to use their territory for attack on regime/state under contest with insurgent group(s). Villalon (1998), Clapham (1998) are among the best works on complicity of some African regimes in insurgency in states outside their shores.

The first, conceptualizes the ecology of insurgency from Africanist perspective. To the africatans, insurgency in many parts of Africa and civil wars it has generated is a consequence of colonial legacy of grouping of odd nationalities into one nation-state, sometimes cutting across different post colonial states. To them, this wrong grouping of peoples alienated some group(s) from political participation, fuelling a sense of oppression and exploitation in the psyche of the alienated group(s). Their standpoint views insurgency ecology as part of fall-out of European imperialism, carefully designed to chain Africa to dependency on the west, making them susceptible and vulnerable to the whims and caprices of their Western mother countries and Breton
woods money lender institutions. They refer to the burden of debt servicing and Structural Adjustment Programme SAP imposed on African governments as having prostrated the state in the running of the economy without external control. As they diminish in control over the management of the economy, and concede same to private and external interests, state capability dilutes in social provisioning and other critical infrastructures. In their position, they argue, that poverty as offshoot of state withdrawal from basic services in compliance to International Monetary Fund IMF prescriptions, and the competition for scarce resources account for many of the insurgencies in Africa. To them, the problem and incessant rise of insurgency can be located also in the dwindling European interest in African Affairs since the end of the cold war in the 1990s. Their backing out from Africa made erstwhile authoritarian regimes lose the protection they received from either the East or west blocs of Europe, during the high-noon of the cold war. By this development, crippled by debt crisis and declining terms of trade in the World Market, budgetary deficits and poverty, many African states become too weak to contain insurgency. They conclude by stressing on the relationship between weak state and insurgency.

The lead scholars are Shaw (1993, 1994), Simons (1995) Sklar (1994), Sandbrook (1985), Ajayi (1990) Adekanye (2007). Sound and appealing as their arguments are, the major defect is their silence on the role of African governments in the mismanagement of statecraft, disaffection and regime legitimacy question that are fertile ecology for rise of insurgency. Closely related also, is their weak emphasis on sham and guided elections, denial of mandates and franchise will of the electorate that have triggered off post election violence, and contest over incumbent legitimacy, precipitating insurgency/ecology.

Scholars who seek for the cause(s) from the internal contradictions, contrary to the position of Africanist school of thought, base their arguments on the features of post colonial states. To them, the causes are decipherable from lack of and or absence of national cohesion, bad and purposeless leadership, weak institutions, autocracy, mismanagement, endemic corruption, unhindered exploitation, state decay and “inversion”, alienation, privatization of the state, and looting impulse, blocked political space, post independence disillusionment arising from desperation and excessive abuse of human rights. Despite some degrees of variations, post independence African states reflect these characteristics. These features became sources of tensions and under-mined economic growth that eventually turned into state created ecology for dissent, instability, social unrest, and state “collapse”.

Scholars who stand on the position that African insurgency ecology are reactions against internal colonialization include Ake (1994), Boone (1992), Leys (1976), Longman (1994), Anaeele (2012) etc. However, both sides of the divide in the argument, concede to dilution in the sanctity of non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, as a development that has benefitted insurgent group(s) to be seen in the international environment as social and democracy crusaders. From whatever side it is viewed, the main stream of insurgency ecology is political. From it, other tributaries bifurcate.

Tributaries of insurgency ecology mainstreamed from the political are of diverse forms. In some parts of Africa, decolonization process gave birth to unavoidable rise of insurgent movement by amalgamating strange peoples and their territories into states and authorities alien and provocative to the amalgamated. Their consent for the desirability or otherwise for such odd unions was ignored. The ceding of Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia to Ethiopia later became source of ecology for separatist insurgency. The civil wars it generated ended with Sudan’s independence in 1950 and that of Eritrea in 1993. Another striking example is the ‘integration’ of South Sudan into North Sudan. The civil war it generated stand out as the longest in contemporary Africa. The war ended with full independence and the recognition of South Sudan as sovereign state in 2012. The same is true of Chad, a fictive and shadow state, under perpetual violence and antagonism between the south and predominantly Moslem North and East. Since independence in 1960, Chad remains a state without empirical and domestic statehood. Included in this category, though in a milder intensity, is Senegalese Northern region of Casamance, in revolt against political alienation from the Senegalese State. Mali is another empirical example where the Moslem North is embroiled in war with the state. The north are predominantly Touaregs and their insurgency is for capture of central government for full islamisation of Mali. The international community and indeed Africa see the civil war in Mali as nothing less than Al-queda desired for grip of power that must never be allowed, because of its obvious implications on terror in Africa. At present, the combined forces of United Nations and African Union are pounding the land locked country from air and land to ensure total conquest of the Islamic fundamentalists who have never disguised their alliance with al-queda.

Privatization and ownership of the state by a segment of the population to the exclusion of others is another underlying ecology for insurgency. In Ethiopia, for instance, it was the privatization of the state by the Orthodox Christians of the Amharic Speaking people in the Central province that forced Tigray people into insurgency that engulfed the country in a protracted civil war. The civil war in Rwanda 1994 and the pogrom targeted at the Tutsi and compromised Hutu by Hutu extremists is another classic example, of how alienated
group from power, can boil violently when the awaited opportunity presents itself. That opportunity came with the death of General Juvenal Habyarimana, (Rwandan President of Hutu extraction), in a plane crash 1994, believed by the Hutu to have been master-minded by the Tutsi.

Autocratic regimes in Africa and democratization when tailored to favour the incumbent, instead of yielding smooth transition of power from military to civil or civil to another civil democratic regime, turns into a man made bomb that explodes, in most times, into civil war. Cote’ d’ Ivoire represents a classic example, while Kenya, Zimbabwe etc came to verge of war, though not without mass violence that claimed many lives after elections in both countries were turned upside down in favour of incumbent in 2008.

The general sense of desperation, disillusionments, emiseration, state decay, abuse of human rights, embarrassing pervasive poverty, vis-à-vis stinking wealth of political office holders and their clientele have pushed many to reason if they are actually legitimate citizens of the state. The classification of the majority as citizens of hell, and a few minority as privileged heavenly children, for no other reason than flawed power relations, undermined class harmony. The consequences became class struggle, class conflict and class antagonism which the insurgent groups and leaders capitalize on for sourcing and outsourcing support for insurgency. Chad, Somalia, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Sudan, Uganda, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cote d’ Ivoire, Burundi, were enmeshed in insurgency midst civil wars by this phenomenon among other inter related reasons.

**CONFIGURATION OF STATE INSURGENCY ECOLOGY**

Politics and governments of Africa are institutions of incredible amazement. Stagnation remains the norm, worsened by political, social and economic crisis. African leaders manifest in all faces, crass incapacities in organizing the public realms. Trajectories on African politics mirror divergence in political systems and power relations, viz fictive, guided, transitory democracies wrapped in authoritarian deceit.


Undeniably, inappropriate leaders, brazen corruption, sham elections, political exclusions, persistence of injustices and unjust structures, social violence, institutionalized constitutional and electoral defects, abuse of human rights etc. exacerbate rather than ameliorate insurgency ecology and social unrest. These attributes of African states are copious in the work of Ana-ndu (2009) Anaele (2012), Keane (20040, Kaplan (1994).

Elections and transition from one regime to another, instead of being peaceful transition of power by non-violence and transparent means, turn into ethnic contest, violence, and intimidation. The results of elections are carefully scripted to guarantee “victory” of the incumbent, and/or the party in power, when the incumbent’s tenure is at constitutional bar. Interesting examples are, Paul Biya of Cameroun, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda etc are several among longest sitting African presidents. Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Kenya etc are among numerous African states with history of electoral violence. Sit tight presidents in North Africa: Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco, Libya provoked in 2011 what today is known in political literature as Arab Spring that consumed Mubarak of Egypt and Ghadafi of Libya. Of truth, if voting and election change bad government, many African presidents would have abolished them. Little wonder, the high wave of insurgency. Specifically, African states and their leaderships create, and recreate knowingly or unknowingly the ecology on which insurgency thrives.

In Togo, for instance, since November, 2012 elections are on suspension. Reason? Rift and uncompromise between government and opposition parties. As at now, Togo has no parliament. There is fear of her general election slated for July, 2013 ending in breach on democracy. Zimbabwe’s general election, now around the corner, is generating political violence. Tsvangirai’s Movement for Democratic Change, MDC-T is under severe violence from Mugabe led ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union, ZANU-PF as reported in Daily Trust (Wednesday, July 30, 2013 p27). If this trend continues, a repeat of 2008 mayhem is everybody’s guess. Mali too, exhibits similar fear. The routing of the rebel group, National Movement for Independence of Azawad, MNLA, by the UN and African Union co-ordinated military attack leaves much behind, tensions and fears over Mali’s general election, now under scheduling.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Insurgency has re-enacted regime legitimacy question in many African States. Its driving force is political, and the target, the regime in power. The paper attempted a critique on insurgency ecology/typology which it derived from the internal dynamics and contradictions in Africa’s insurgency ecology. It further addressed how these dynamics and internal contradictions have combined with state configuration in the creation of insurgency. The paper identified the favourable conductions for insurgency to include misrule, autocracy, political exclusion and alienation, marginalization and exploitation of one group(s) by another, weak institutions, extreme poverty and desperation, corruptions, ethnic chauvinism, abuse of human rights, and electoral process, injustices and persistence of unjust structures, odd grouping of nationalities with wide group inequalities, personalization of state, stiffening of opposition, closure of political space and access to resource control, discrimination, abuse of power etc.

It emphasizes that in states where these anomalies persist; they provide pre-dispositional forces and precipitants for insurgency ecology.

The paper concludes by deposing that African states and regimes are accountable for creation of the insurgencies, undermining many regimes and states.

It recommends for opening up of the political space, good governance, and strict adherence to democratic norms as most effective of tools for discouraging insurgency.

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