

Motivations of greed in civil war politics essay



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Civil war is a form of conflict and security threats which causes poverty and impedes growth and development, Civil war is the most common form of massive violence and is highly destructive to society, life and the economy. James D. Fearon (2006) explained civil war to be a “ violent conflict between organized groups within a country that are fighting over control of the government, one side’s separatist goals, or some divisive government policy”, it is an intrastate war fought as a result of a rising insurgence against the government. Most writers believe that not all conflicts are civil war, for a conflict to be recorded as a civil war, 1000 people must have been killed with at least 100 from each side. Every society is characterized by certain degree of conflict over economic services, political and civil rights, access to social services and employment opportunity. These conflicts are triggered by discrimination against specific group, region, religion, social class, ethnicity or a combination of any of these factors (Murshed and Addison).

Civil wars are characterized by wide spread losses of lives more of which are civilian women and children, cases of rape and lawless society as the state power falls, powers are only with those holding weapons during war. Civil war has a huge economic impact on a nation’s economy as most of the resources are directed to destruction, skills are lost and the damage on the infrastructure cripples economic development and activity. For instance the loss of electricity supplies during war hinders production activities and transportation, the uncertainty that war brings, discourages investment, studies have shown that countries grow at approximately 2. 2 percent slower during war than during peace. (Heo, 2007, p. 11)

The impact of civil war is largely influenced by the nature of the country's economy. Countries with strategic resources such as diamonds and oil would have a higher impact on global economy compared to countries with limited resources i. e. the conflict in Iraq reduced oil production and caused the international price of oil to increase. Civil war is much more common than international war; most conflicts have occurred within the confines of a sovereign state and put two or more groups against the government or against one another, (Heo, 2007 p. 12 and Collier and Sambanis, 2005). Civil war has been a major conflict since World War II, especially after decolonization of the British empires in certain region i. e. Africa. Since 1990s, there have been a large body of research on the causes of civil wars, the most popular understanding of the causes of civil war and results analyzed by economist are termed 'Greed and Grievance'. In this paper we are going to look at some civil war since post-world war II, causes of civil war and the greed and grievance cause of civil wars.

Some Civil Wars since Post- World War II

Civil wars have been a major conflict since World War II. A total of 225 armed conflicts from 1946 to 2001 were recorded of which 163 were conflict that occurred between the government of a state and internal opposition groups without the intervention from other states. According to Heo (2007), full scale civil war started in Costa Rica in March 1948, when President Teodoro Picado Michalski prolonged the transfer of power after he lost the presidential election; there was a war with an estimated death of 1, 000. 1956 to 1959 Cuban communist revolution and civil war took place, 5, 000 lives were lost during the war. The fighting in Lebanon between several

religious and political factions took place in 1958 and ended in 1959 with 1, 300 deaths. After independence in 1960, tensions between the Turkish minority and the Greek majority increased in Cyprus, inter communal conflict and civil war took place from 1963 to 1967, an approximate of 1, 000 people died, (Heo, 2007, P. 2-3).

Nigeria also experienced civil war in the late 1967, an intrastate conflict between the self-proclaimed republic of Biafra and the Nigerian military government (Uppsala). Another war returned to Lebanon in 1975 to 1976 between the Christians and the Muslims, an approximate of 60, 000 people died, the war continued in Lebanon at irregular intervals with many serious violent outbreak until 1992. Uganda experienced civil war from 1981-1994, as the revolt against the government established after the overthrow of Major General Idi Amin grew, it was the precursor for the war in Uganda, the war caused more than 500, 000 lives. The insurgence against the Papua New Guinea government which started in Bougainville island in 1988 took many lives, this crisis originated as a result of the growing concerns over the operation of the Panguna gold mine and copper. War continued in Cambodia when the extreme communist group was overthrown in 1979 by Vietnam, the nature of the war changed when the Vietnamese withdrew in 1989, (Heo, 2007, 3-4).

Civil war continued throughout the world at different time in different region, but is said to be more common in some regions particularly the developing Asia (east and south Asia and Oceania), they have had a very high incidence of war from 1950 -2001. Latin America also witnessed a severe conflict in the 1980s and former Soviet Union in the 1990s. In the 1970s and 1980s, there

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was more bloodshed in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. But by the end of the 1990s, more people were being killed in sub-Saharan Africa's war than in the other parts of the world put together, (Croker et al, 2007).

Source: Uppsala conflict data programme 18/02/2010

Causes of Civil War

Data has shown that conflicts are more common in low income Africa; Collier (2007) developed the notion of the conflict trap to understand why conflicts are highly centered in low income Africa. This traps which are: natural resource trap, the trap of being landlocked with bad neighbors, the conflict trap and the trap of bad governance in a small country, shows how different economic, social and political factors make a country vulnerable to civil wars. Global data analyzed by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler covering forty years to understand why some country at most times have overcome civil war, and why others could not, they used statistical approach to see what factor in a society can trigger civil war; this includes social factors (like inequality, ethnic and religious composition of the society), politics (the level of democratic political rights), history (like decolonization time) and economic factors (Collier 2004).

The most dominant of all are economic factors, according to Collier (2004), there are three factors that could trigger civil war; a country's rate of growth, the level of income and structure. If a country is poor and is dependent upon natural resource exports, the country is likely to experience a civil. Africa is one region with such economic characteristics and explains the reason for the high rate of civil war in Africa. Africa also has a large ethnic difference as most of the wars are fought amongst ethnic group e. g. the hutu and the

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Tutsi war in Rwanda. These conflicts can be traced to the power structure created by the colonial rulers as they 'grouped long-feuding tribes under the same national identity'. The power passed on from the colonial masters made one group to rule over the other group which later turned to severe inter-tribal rivalry and has now turned into conflict. As tribalism grew, the fight for central power and control of natural resources increased, this was the case of democratic republic of Congo, Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone as their greed grew for the control of natural resources (Rupesinghe and Anderlini, 1998)

The greed cause of civil wars

The greed causes of civil war are common amongst countries with lootable natural resource and are dependent on these resources. Collier (2004), explained that these natural resources yield what is termed 'rents'- meaning making more profits that are higher than the normal level needed. The selfish desire to control these natural resources creates a politics of corruption and a politics of violence as these natural resources can also be used to finance opportunistic rebellions. According to Collier (2004), there are six ways by which natural resource rents can increase the risk of violence, four of which involves 'political economy' and the other two are straight economy'. The political economy involves the struggle to control the revenues from the natural resources, these rent-seeking shifts public funds from its original purpose of achieving all the necessities for the supply of public goods, providing low or no social and economic infrastructure that the society needs. The society loses twice as other resources are used frivolously

in the struggle for resource rents and the provision for public goods drops. Nigeria provides a good example of this kind of politics for oil rents.

Natural resources can also cause civil war by detaching the government. This is because governments that are rich in natural resources do not need other tax revenue from their electorates, unlike in some societies where electors pay high taxes and they question the government on how the tax money is used. ('No taxation without representation'). But this is indeed not the same with countries rich in natural resources; the government is able to disregard the interest of the population ('No representation without taxation'). Some society believes that the resource rents does not belong to the common people, hence the detachment. Mobutu of Zaire is a striking example of this detachment. Natural resources also leads to secessionist political movements as the inhabitants of that area might feel that their resources are being embezzled by corrupt and alien elite. Most African secessionist war has often been associated with natural resources; Kanga, Biafra and Cabinda are examples of such wars. The last political route by which natural resources can advocate civil war is that it provides funds used to finance rebel groups. Leaders can purchase arms and also pay recruits from the revenue gotten from these resources. Rebel groups have access to natural resources in different ways. One is to protect the company or exporters, to have their own extractive businesses; another is the concession of natural resource rights in anticipation to finally have control over the territory. The gangs in the Niger delta region of Nigeria, the rebels of Laurent Kabila in Zaire, the RUF in Sierra Leone, and the Sasson-Nguesso in Congo Brazzaville, are examples of rebels financed from the proceeds of natural resources. The

work of Fearon (2004) concludes that civil war resulting from coup or revolutions tends to be short because the 'technology' for coup depends on the weakness of the security apparatus. Whereas civil war involving natural resources or land tends to last longer, it can also last long if rebel groups have access to contraband goods like cocaine.

The grievance cause of civil war

This is a popular view that rebels are motivated by genuine and intense grievance; rebels are heroes fighting for justice. Based on analysis, rebellions are seen as a form of organized violence; both parties to civil war have different explanations for their actions. The rebel organization hires a public relations firm to help push their explanation for their movement and the opposition party would also hire a public relation firm. Most explanation from rebels groups are usually what Collier (2007) called the 'litany of grievances against the government for its oppression, unfairness, and perhaps victimization'. This victimization could be on some area of the population that the rebel organization represents. Rebel movements are driven by intense violence, by the intense conditions of the rebels or the group they represent (Cited in Crocker et al, 2007).

Berdal and Malone (2000) explained that rebels 'litany' or 'narratives' as they may call it are based on four factors which are; first economic inequality this involves unequal distribution of income, unequal allocation and ownership of resources and assets, unequal distribution of resources and anything that has to do with increasing poverty rather than reducing it would provide a fertile ground for insurgency and readily available combatants, this case was common in central Africa (Berdal and Malone, 2000; Murshed and <https://assignbuster.com/motivations-of-greed-in-civil-war-politics-essay/>

Addison). The second narrative of grievance is based on religious or ethnic hatred; this also depends on the ethnic and religious composition of the state (ethnic and religious diversity), civil war caused by ethnic and religious difference has always been based on power, where the other group does not want the other group to rule over them as a result of perceived discrimination in public office, this was the case of the Northern Nigeria and self proclaimed Biafra in the late 1960s', the Tutsi superiority and the Hutu's inferiority in Rwanda as they both struggled to gain a place in the emerging democratic institution of the country (Uppsala). This can also be mere religious hatred, the war in Lebanon 1975 to 1976 between the Christians and the Muslims, such religious conflicts are happening in Nigeria till now. The third narrative of grievance is based on lack of political rights; if a government of a state is perceived to be autocratic, people would want to overthrow the government and this result to war in the fight for democracy, the insurgency in Romania is often regarded as a fight for democracy. The final narrative of grievance is based on government economic incompetence; according to Berdal and Malone (2000) ' if a government is seen to inflict sufficient economic misery on its population, it may face an uprising'. This was the case in Uganda in the early 1980s'; this is usually a case of mismanagement and a fallen state, Latin America, the former Soviet Union has suffered economic mismanagements. Corruption in these countries has also helped fuel conflict and prolonged misery on the population. The failure of the government to provide the needs of its people and security could lead them to rely on more ethnic ties which can trigger civil war as they fight over economic resources (Berdal and Malone, 2000; Murshed and Addison pg. 5).

The interaction of greed and grievance

Government and rebel groups may exploit civilians in order to fight a war or may fight a war in order to exploit civilians. The misery inflicted on civilians gradually creates their own justification like in Sudan; the misery inflicted on the civilians strengthened the civilians. The idea of civil war provides a suitable disguise both for greed and grievance. Rebels are thought by some economist to be opportunist and their grievances are most times deliberately forged. Some economist use the term 'predators of productive economic activities' they believe that rebels are not heroes fighting for a reasonable cause but lust for powers and loots. Rebels use war as a means to exploit civilians, they may hope for government to commit atrocities which give them an opportunity to fight for a true or false cause. This group including the government officials, soldiers, and traders uses conflict period as an opportunity to plunder, Democratic republic of Congo and former Yugoslavia only to name but two among many are examples of such practice. For most people, conflict time is a time for them to make more money apart from their usual salaries, during warfare; money is gotten from those whose lives are spared from being massacred. War time may also lead to inflation which is very profitable for some as there may be trade restrictions from government and only those officials who are able to infracture the law can have their businesses going but at a very high cost. On the other hand, there might be no trade restriction as the states power falls during conflict, goods like drugs which were not allowed to be traded in the state would be traded during war, Cambodia and Burma in Asia, Sudan, Angola, Sierra Leone, and Somalia in Africa, Colombia and Peru in Latin America. War may also bring about exploitation as people are threatened to work cheaply or for free, there were

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cases like this in Sudan and Burma (Berdal and Malone, 2000 p. 29-30). It is very obvious that not all grievance are true, some are just an end to a means.

Conclusion

Greed and grievance do play a major role in contemporary civil war, but one cannot truly measure between 'greed and grievance'. Both greed and grievance work simultaneously to trigger civil, they both interact no matter which comes first greed or grievance the other follows, this is to say that greed triggers grievance and grievance triggers greed. Civil wars motivated by greed can be followed by genuine grievance as rebels fight for justice. people who do well out of war will not be particularly concerned at restoring peace while those who do not do well or are hurt badly will have an interest in restoring peace. As individuals in pursuit of different goals and objectives, there would always be a misunderstanding and conflict in one form or the other, Institutions have emerged to resolve civil conflicts and restore peace. Greed and grievance would therefore be irrelevant as long as these institutions called the social contract exist (Murshed). In Africa, conflict has helped bring about slow growth, poverty and underdevelopment, especially countries with natural resources which according to Fearon James are the reasons for the last longing conflicts in such countries especially in Africa. Countries should work hard to have strong institutions to restore peace within their state and international level as economic development is somewhat dependent on the level of peace and tranquility within the state.