



Study Guide

Topic Area A

Promoting peace, security and stability on the African continent; the issue of regional conflicts: The case of the horn of Africa

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Introduction: The African Union's Assembly¹

The AU Assembly constitutes the Union's supreme decision-making organ which consists of the heads of State and Government of all Member States of the African Union. The main goals of the Assembly are to determine the African Union's policies, to set the priority issues, to organize its annual program and to ensure the implementation of its decisions. Moreover, the Assembly directs the other AU's organs, such as the Executive Council, the Peace and Security Council and the Commission on management of conflicts, acts of terrorism and emergency situations.

One of the most important mandates of the Assembly is that it has the right to impose sanctions on Member States in case of violation of the principles provided in the Constitutive Act², which is the main legal framework under which the AU shall conduct itself. The Constitutive Act was signed in

¹ <http://www.au.int/en/pressreleases/24346/extraordinary-session-assembly-union-state-peace-and-security-africa-declaration>

² http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/ConstitutiveAct_EN.pdf

2000 in Togo and was entered into force in 2001. Articles 3 and 4 of the Act list the principles, which can be summarized into the following six key-areas:

- **Regional integration:** The African Union shall be a forum for the establishment of African unity and solidarity, through the development of common policies, common positions and socio-economic integration;
- **Peace and Security:** In order to achieve development in the region, the conflicts among Member States shall be avoided through a collective security system;
- **Protection of Human Rights:** One of the high priorities of the AU is to achieve social development by ensuring the protection of human rights. This is the reason why the AU sets the monitoring of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as a basic principle;
- **Non-Intervention:** The AU does not allow any kind of unilateral intervention between Member States, such as subversive activities which include not only the use or threat of military force, but also the non-military means of interference. The non-intervention principle derives from the principles of independence, sovereign equality and "peaceful co-existence of Member States";
- **Intervention:** The Assembly has the right to decide –either by itself or upon a Member State's request- the AU to intervene in a Member State in case of war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and a serious threat to legitimate order to restore peace and stability;
- **Respect for Democracy and Rule of Law:** In order to promote social justice and economic development, African Union's Member States have adopted the principles of democracy, rule of law, and good governance.

Apart from ensuring the enforcement of the principles, the Assembly has nine main functions:

1. Decides the policies of the Union;
2. Decides upon the reports and recommendations from the other organs of the Union;
3. Establishes other institutions for the Union;
4. Takes into consideration the membership requests into the Union;

5. Ensures that all Member States abide by the decisions and policies of the Union;
6. Decides upon the annual budget;
7. Directs the Executive Council on conflicts, war and other emergency situations and the restoration of peace;
8. Selects and withdraws the judges of the Court of Justice;
9. Appoints the Chairman of the Commission, Commissioners of the Commission and all deputies.

The issue of regional conflicts; causes and factors³

Unlike the most developing States in the world which managed economic growth during the last century, African countries did not achieve the same levels of development in terms of wealth growth in conjunction with population increase. Consequently, phenomena, such as high percentages of poverty, armed transnational and civil conflicts, state break-down, human insecurity from risks or impacts of violence and crime began to be more and more severe. Africa consists of a considerable range of natural environments and societies with different traditions, cultures and mentalities. Moreover, the Sahara Desert divides the African continent into the north part, in which people feel as related to the Middle East as to the rest of Africa, and the Sub-Saharan part, in which people have different characteristics.

The African continent is infested with major issues: the immoderate dependence of the most States' economy on the exports of raw materials and minerals, a phenomenon which leads the economy to instability; the weak political and financial governance; the almost non-existence of public institutions and services; the high percentages of corruption, with the elites which resort to manipulative techniques and taking over of the real governance so as to gain or maintain power.

However, apart from those typical problems which characterize the greatest part of the African region, we shall examine some more issues which are deemed as main factors contributing in the outbreak of the most regional conflicts in the area.

³ For more information, see *Conflict Prevention, Management and Reduction in Africa*

Post-colonial era: After the decolonization of every African state, the problem remained concerning the issue of power. In other words, all the rebel groups that had been fighting for the independence of their country started fighting with each other over power. This is the reason why most of the governments in Africa remain in power for a short period of time and many conflicts among several groups and each central government continue to break out.

Gender and Age Issues: Demography and the way in which the population is distributed in the age groups play a considerably important role when it comes to conflicts and insecurity. In Africa, the greatest portion of the population consists of young people who find themselves marginalized and unemployed or under-employed. As a result, a major part of young men are susceptible to joining gangs or militant groups. On the other hand, young women are also affiliated with the crime, despite the fact that when the conflict ends, they are usually forced to return to their “traditional roles”.

Displacement and Migration: What is considered to be a key-factor for the development of regional conflicts is the presence of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons across the African continent. People who migrate from rural to urban areas, refugees who are forced to leave their homes as a result of a conflict, people who have faced natural disasters and were displaced because of them are only some examples of the considerable flow of migrants and refugees. Although the tolerance that the host countries show is noteworthy, we should not undermine the fact that such phenomena add substantially to the already existing tensions among the countries.

Security and Development in border-areas: Another significant factor which leads to the development of regional tensions and conflicts is the inadequate and ineffective control of the borders between two countries. The lack of control or –in many cases- the fact that the control is conducted by corrupted officials result in the illicit trade of goods such as arms, drugs, minerals and timber while on the other hand the border-regions are governed by armed groups which engage in violence whenever there is a dispute among the traders. Moreover, the deployment of under-paid security forces usually damages more the already fragile balance.

Political Islam: The differences among religions and cultures have always been a noteworthy reason for conflicts and tensions. In the African continent, political Islamism and Islamic-Christian

divisions constitute major problems, more specifically in the Horn of Africa and West Africa. The implementation of Sharia Law was a key factor for the civil war in Sudan and is deemed as an important reason for division in many West African states, such as Nigeria. What is more, in Ethiopia, Kenya, Eritrea and Uganda, political Islam is becoming a considerable focus of division among the rebels.

Access to freshwater: The lack of freshwater in many regions, as well as the unequal distribution of it within societies and among states lead to water competition, riots and conflicts. There are 63 rivers in the continent –amongst them, the Nile, the Niger and the Zambezi Rivers- which are all controlled and exploited by two or more riparian countries. It goes without saying that this phenomenon results in tensions over water resources, such as the tensions between Egypt and up-river states including Ethiopia and Sudan. However, it is worth mentioning that access to freshwater is not one of the primary factors leading to regional conflicts.

Environment and Climate Change: Environmental relegation leads to poverty, lack of resources and insecurity which lead to regional conflicts. One of the greatest issues of the continent is the illicit trade of timber, ivory and rare animal species. Land-reform is a key priority in several states in which land constitutes a main focus in terms of livelihoods and development. To wit, competition over the land was a considerable reason which resulted in the Rwanda genocide or the decline of Zimbabwe.

Diseases: In particular Sub-Saharan Africa is plagued by pandemic diseases linked to poverty, the lack of freshwater, sanitation and health services. Moreover, the HIV/AIDS disease is becoming more and more usual. It is not so clear how exactly the epidemics lead to the increase of the risk of violence. However, the lack of medicine and adequate health services and conditions resort to the rise of tensions among the young adult portion of population which the epidemics affect the most.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation: The illicit trade of SALW and the excessive availability of them to the greatest part of the population are key factors in the development of violent conflicts. SALW are cheap, easy to have and use, and significantly lethal. It is noteworthy that the African Union –as well as the European Union and the United Nations- have

launched several programs and campaigns for the purpose of dealing with the illegal trafficking and proliferation of SALW.

Regional and Transnational Dimension: The focus of the conflict –management programs on the regional and transnational dimensions of violence and conflicts is considerably significant in terms of adequately facing the problem. It is common knowledge that all the UN and AU programs and strategies that address the issue of regional conflicts neglect the “regional” factor and concentrate only on one specific state. To illustrate, the international peace-keeping missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote D’Ivoire were designed and imposed in a rather independent and autonomous way, leading to inconsistencies that did not eventually contribute in the alleviation of the major issue of violent conflicts in the region.

Apart from examining the common reasons and factors which result in the increase of regional conflicts in the African continent, it is important that we identify their common characteristics in terms of the phases that these conflicts run through. These phases include the following:

- Liberation struggles usually linked to the ending of colonial eras;
- Military coups and armed revolutions against corrupted or totalitarian regimes;
- Cold war or post-colonial tensions, including external influences;
- Civil wars and regional conflicts directly linked to weak states;
- Post-conflict destabilization and insecurity.

The issue of regional conflicts: background of the ongoing tensions

Egypt

On January 25, 2011, a series of violent events, riots and street demonstrations led to the **2011 revolution**, as a result of poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, police severity, phenomena of censorship and the imposition of state of emergency laws. The scope of the demonstrations was to overthrow the regime of President Hosni Mubarak. On February 11, President Mubarak resigned and left Egypt. On February 13, the Egyptian military command announced that not only

the Constitution but also the Parliament had already been diluted and that the elections would take place in September. On March 26, 2012, an Assembly was founded in order to start working for the creation and imposition of a new Constitution. In March to June 2012, the first presidential elections after the previous regime resulted in the announcement of the new President of Egypt who was Mohamed Morsi. However, that was not the end to the Egyptian conflict. On November 22, 2012, President Morsi -on the excuse of protecting the work of the Assembly- declared his decrees and his powers immunized, demanded the retrial of the protesters during the Mubarak-era killings and authorized himself to proceed to any measures needed for the protection of the revolution. This declaration resulted in massive riots and violent incidents throughout the state, during the first half of 2013. Demonstrators accused Morsi of both the alleged mismanagement of Egypt and the increased influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Egyptian Armed Forces took a stand among the protesters and demanded Morsi to resign. Yet, on July 2, 2013, President Morsi declared himself as the only legitimate President of Egypt and refused to quit power. On July 3, President Morsi was deposed and on May 16, 2015, he was sentenced to death. After President Morsi's removal, the military claimed Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt, Adly Mansour, as the new interim President of the state. Immediately after these events, violent protests outburst between the supporters of Morsi, who were seeking for his return and were condemning the military forces, and the supporters of the new interim government. During the next months, Egypt was plagued by massacres and violent conflicts which ended in hundreds of killings, and until now the tensions and protests are still present.

The outburst of the Egyptian crisis in 2011 also led to **the Sinai insurgency**, which constitutes the conflict initiated by Islamist militants in the Sinai Peninsula. The Sinai insurgency begun by militants –including many Bedouin tribesmen- who took advantage of the conflict in the state, attacked the government forces and claimed jurisdiction over the region. The state tried to suppress the insurgency by launching two military operations, the Operation Eagle in 2011 and the Operation Sinai in 2012. However, after the coup d' état in 2013 and the violent incidents that followed, the situation deteriorated in the Sinai Peninsula. In 2014, the regime of the region declared allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and claimed itself as the Sinai

Province. It is also speculated that the regime has developed ties with Libyan militants. As a result of the conflict, many civilians were killed or kidnapped and hundreds of homes were evacuated and demolished. Now, administratively, the region is divided into two governorates; the South and the North Sinai Governorate.

South Sudan

In the end of 2012, the South Sudanese President Kiir started reorganizing his government and his party as a result of some allegations concerning plans for the overthrowing of his power. In July 2013, the President dismissed the Vice-President Machar and suspended the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Secretary-General. As a consequence, Machar claimed that Kiir's government bares a significant resemblance to dictatorship and announced his candidacy for President in the 2015 presidential elections. In December 2013, President Kiir and Machar started a political struggle which ended in Kiir blaming Machar for exerting efforts for a coup d' état. The division between the two members of the SPLM led to a **civil war**, which also included Ugandan military forces fighting alongside the government forces against the rebels. On January 23, 2014 the two opposing sides managed to reach a ceasefire agreement in Ethiopia, after the mediation services provided by the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a trade bloc consisting of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. Nevertheless, a few days later, the rebels claimed that the government tried to sabotage the second round of negotiations and new attacks begun. Yet again, President Kiir and Machar proceeded to the second ceasefire agreement in Addis Ababa, but only some hours after that, the opposing sides engaged in violence. After many efforts and mediation services, in February 2015, the two sides signed a document, agreeing on "Areas of Agreement" for a future transitional government. However, they eventually failed to negotiate in peace and the civil war outburst again in March. In August 2015, President Kiir and Machar signed the "Compromise Peace Agreement", according to which, Machar would return as the Vice-President of South Sudan, something that indeed happened in April 2016. On the aftermath of this Agreement, Uganda withdrew its troops as a gesture of good will. Although the return of Machar was hoped to

put an end to the conflict, in April 2016 South Sudanese militants attacked Ethiopia, killing over 200 people and abducting more than 100 children. Extreme violence was again erupted throughout South Sudan in July 2016, after an attack on the place where Kiir and Machar were supposed to meet in Juba. In the following week, 26,000 civilians migrated to Uganda. South Sudan is once again plagued by the ongoing civil war. Until now, the war in South Sudan resulted in the killings of over 300,000 people, the internal displacement of more than 1,000,000 people and the migration of another 400,000 people to neighbouring states, such as Kenya, Sudan and Uganda.

Libya

After the 2012 elections, Libya was governed by the General National Congress (GNC), which was accused of providing Islamist armed groups with public governmental funds, showing tolerance towards phenomena of assassinations and abductions, avoiding inconvenient inquiries by deleting them from the agenda, working for the imposition of the Sharia law throughout the state, growing gender discrimination in Libyan universities by declaring hijab compulsory, and refusing to launch new elections when its mandate expired in January 2014. On December 23, 2013, the GNC unilaterally decided to expand its mandate for another year, leading to riots, protests and street demonstrations. On February 14, 2014, General Haftar demanded the GNC to resign and let the state be governed by a transitional government. After the GNC's refusal, General Haftar initiated the Operation Dignity in order to force the GNC to dissolve. Eventually, the elections were held in the 25th of June and resulted in the government of the Council of Deputies, which Islamists could not accept. On July 13, 2014, a regional conflict between the internationally recognized government of the Council of Deputies, also known as the Tobruk government, and the Islamist government of the GNC, based in the capital Tripoli, was escalated, leading to the second **Libyan Civil War**. The government of the Council of Deputies is stronger in the East, controls the Libyan Army and has the support of Egypt and the UAE. On the other hand, the Islamist government controls the western part of the state, it is led by the Muslim Brotherhood and aided by the Islamist coalition "Libya Dawn" and by Qatar, Sudan and Turkey. In December 2015, the

United Nations started negotiating a ceasefire agreement and on March 31, 2016, a UN-led “unity government” arrived in Tripoli in order to take control and mediate between the two opposing sides, despite the fact that it is not yet obvious whether this arrangement is aimed to succeed. Apart from the internal crisis, it is noteworthy that the civil war in Libya has also led to the instability and insecurity of neighboring states, such as Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia, which did not avoid engaging in violence with several Libyan armed groups.

Algeria

After the **Algerian civil war** which ended in 2002, military activities in Algeria led to the **Insurgency in the Maghreb**. The Insurgency begun by the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which was the only active and significant rebel group in 2003 and which claimed allegiance to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in order to oppose the government. The aforementioned allegiance resulted in a clash within the GSPC and the development of the Free Salafist Group (GSL), a military group which is also standing against the legitimate government of the state. The GSPC launched an assassination campaign against the military and the police forces in the region of Maghreb and achieved the expansion in the Sahara desert. Since 2007, the United States of America and the United Kingdom have provided assistance not only to Algeria but also to the other Maghreb states, initiating on February 6 the Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara, so as to effectively deal with the rebels. However, until today, the insurgency has led to the spillover of the conflict to neighboring states, such as Niger, Chad, Mali, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania and Morocco where countless killings and kidnappings have taken place. The most affected countries are Tunisia and Mali which the crisis in Algeria destabilized. On February 12, 2016, an insurgent attack led to the assassination of five UN peacekeepers in Mali. Raids, attacks and violent incidents constitute an ongoing phenomenon in the Algerian borders with the neighboring states, while the instability and insecurity in the region has rendered it susceptible to terrorist attacks by ISIS and Boko Haram. The last noteworthy escalation of the conflict was in May 11, 2016, when two alleged ISIS men and four Tunisian soldiers were killed in the Tunisian capital, as a result of a raid.

Mali

In January 2012, military activities in Mali led to the **Northern Mali Conflict**, also known as Mali Civil war or Mali war, between the northern and southern parts of the state. On January 16, 2012, military groups started a campaign of assassinations against the legitimate government of Mali in order to achieve the independence or at least a greater autonomy of Azawad, a region in the northern Mali. By April 2012, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) had already declared jurisdiction over the area. On March 22, the Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré was deposed by a coup d'état launched because of his handling of the armed conflict. The international community, including the UN Security Council, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States unanimously condemned this coup. Despite this condemnation, a group of soldiers, known as the National Committee for the restoration of Democracy and State (CNRDR) gained control of the country and suspended the Malian Constitution. As a result of the general chaotic situation, the three largest northern cities, Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu, were controlled by the rebels. On April 6, the MNLA declared Azawad's independence. After that, the Islamist group Ansar Dine and other groups, which originally supported the MNLA, started imposing the Sharia law in the region. However, soon enough, the MNLA found itself opposing this vision of Ansar Dine and started fighting against it. By July 2012, the Islamists had taken control over the northern cities. On January 11, 2013, the French military forces and other AU states initiated operations against the Islamists upon request of the government. Consequently, by February 8, the Malian government had regained control over the northern region. On June 18, the government and the rebels signed a ceasefire agreement but on September 26, the two sides engaged again in violence, when government military forces opened fire against several unarmed civilians who were protesting. On January 25, 2014, a French operation in the region of northern Mali led to the killings of 11 Muslim militants. One month later, on February 20, Germany and France announced that they will provide assistance to the training of the Malian army. This constitutes the first deployment of EU military forces in the African continent. Eventually, on

February 19, 2015, a peace agreement was signed again in Algeria, but violent attacks have not ended yet.

Central African Republic

On December 10, 2012, the Seleka rebel coalition started opposing the legitimate President of Central African Republic, François Bozizé, leading to the civil war known as the **Central African Republic Conflict**. The crisis was the result of the allegations of the rebels concerning government's not abiding by the peace agreements signed in 2007 and 2011. The Seleka forces consists of two important rebel groups in the north-eastern part of the state, named the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) and the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), and the less known group of the Patriotic Convention for Saving the Country (CPSK). After the start of the regional conflict, many AU States including Chad, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, South Africa, Republic of Congo and Angola decided to send military forces in the region in order to support the legitimate government. Despite the aid provided, on March 24, 2013, the rebels gained control over the capital city of the state and the leader Michel Djotodia claimed himself president. On April 18, the so-called president was recognized as the transitional president of Central African Republic and on May 14, the country's Prime Minister asked the UN Security Council to send a UN peacekeeping operation. During the summer of 2013, the situation deteriorated, with reports of more than 200,000 internally displaced people, and human rights violations, such as the recruitment of child soldiers, rape, torture, forced disappearances and arbitral executions. In August, despite the signing of a peace agreement between the two opposing sides, the conflict was escalated leading the President of France to request that the UN Security Council and the AU intensify their efforts in order to deal with the rebels and stabilize the area. Yet, the situation got worse and in January 2014, President Djotodia decided to resign. On January 20, Catherine Samba-Panza was elected as the new interim President of the state, a move that was welcomed by the international community but it did not put an end to the conflict due to the fact that the Seleka coalition continued the violent attacks in several parts of the country. On July 24, representatives of the two sides signed a ceasefire agreement in the Republic

of Congo but on the next day the leader of the rebel coalition rejected it and continued the violent attacks. Although the conflict is still present, the last noteworthy event was in September 2015 when Muslims opened fire against Christians. During this attack, it was reported that over 42 people were killed and more than 100 were injured whereas over 500 prisoners from the Nagaragba Central Prison escaped.

The case of the Horn of Africa

The region of the Horn of Africa constitutes one of the most perplexing and conflicted area on a global scale. The Horn of Africa comprises four states –Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Djibouti- which are all plagued by political struggles and inter-state conflicts. During the last 150 years, the region has been the center of strategic focus among the UK, Egypt and the United States. The Ethiopian conflict for the installation of President Yousif, the Somali conflict, the inter-state conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the creation of the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia and the US attacks to alleged al-Qaida members have contributed in the general turmoil of the area. The AU has concentrated its efforts on the alleviation of the situation.

Somalia

In the 1980s, the Siad Barre regime gained considerably important opponents and rivals leading to an ongoing tension in Somalia, known as the **Somali Civil War**. At the end of the decade, the military forces of the state started to grow ties with several rebel organizations, such as the Somali Salvation Democratic Front in the north-eastern part, the Somali National Movement in the north-western part, and the United Somali Congress in the southern part. In 1991, the rebel groups managed to depose the Barre regime. After the overthrowing of the regime, many armed groups exerted efforts in order to gain the power within the country. As a consequence, the Somali legal order collapsed resulting in the arrival of UN military observers so as to maintain public order. However, the fighting continued and the lack of central government led Somalia to being a “failed state”. Eventually, in 1995 the United Nations withdrew its forces due to the killings of many UN

peacekeeping observers. In 1991 and 1998, the northern part of the state was controlled by two autonomous regional governments, something that contributed in the reduction of the violent incidents. In 2000, a central government known as the Transitional National Government was installed and it was followed by the Transitional Federal Government in 2004. The decrease of the conflict lasted only until 2005 when violence escalated again in the southern part of the country. In 2006, military forces of Ethiopia managed to capture most of the members of the recently established Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which was then divided into more rebel groups –including the notorious Al-Shabaab- that have been opposing and attacking not only the government but also the African Union’s peacekeeping forces. In October 2011, Kenyan armed forces launched the Operation Linda Nchi and entered the southern parts of Somalia in order to fight against the rebels and create a Somali buffer zone. Later, in August 2012, the Somali first permanent government was established, known as the Federal Government of Somalia. The establishment of the government led to the decrease of the intensity of the conflict and in August 2014, the state initiated the Operation Indian Ocean so as to fight the remaining rebel groups. On September 1, a US drone strike achieved the assassination of the leader of Al-Shabaab. Currently, the civil war is still present in Somalia and according to reports, since its beginning, it has resulted in the killings of more than 500,000 people.

Inter-state conflicts

After the first destroying inter-state war between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1964 and in 1977, the area remained peaceful until the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict in the period 1998-2000. The conflict was resolved after the signing of the Algiers Agreement on December 12, 2000 and the border dispute ended by a decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in April 2002, although there is still a “no war no peace” situation in the region. Despite the fact that the war is considered officially ended, it still plays a significant role and influences the violent conflicts taking place in the Horn area and especially the inter-state war between Djibouti and Eritrea over border issues.

The war between Eritrea and Ethiopia (1998-2000)

On May 1998, while the relations between the two states were supposed to be amicable, a violent conflict outburst. In order to overthrow the Dergue regime, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) made an alliance overlooking their fundamental differences. However, after the struggle against the regime and their rise to power, the relations between the two fronts and consequently between the two states begun to deteriorate. Nonetheless, in 1993, the two fronts signed the Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement, by which they agreed to provide one another with financial, diplomatic and political support and to allow the movement of people and goods freely. Yet, the so-called peaceful relations between the two states did not resemble the reality. On the one hand, the aim of Eritrea was to take advantage of the bigger Ethiopian market, whereas on the other hand, Ethiopia secretly hoped that it would gain power over Eritrea and lead to the unity of the two states. In 1997, Eritrea's issuance of a new domestic currency clearly indicated that the vision of the unity between the states would not become true resulting in the inter-state war of 1998-2000. After the Algiers Agreement, one major obstacle in the stabilization of the conflict was the non-imposition of the legally binding Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission verdict concerning the region of Badme in the borders of the two states. In late 2007, the border was deemed as legally demarcated. Nevertheless, Ethiopia considered this demarcation illegal whereas Eritrea endorsed it by accusing Ethiopia of illegally occupying part of its sovereign territory. The situation is still contributing to the instability and insecurity of the region.

The war between Eritrea and Djibouti (2008)

The relations between the two states are negatively affected by border disputes arising usually. The first time was when Djibouti blamed Eritrea for making a map consisting of Djiboutian parts, in 1996. In 1999, Djibouti claimed that Eritrea had been assisting rebel groups against the government and had been having claims over the Ras Doumeira area, whereas Eritrea accused the other state of supporting Ethiopia in the war between them. In April 2008, Djibouti once again blamed Eritrea for having control over parts of its territory, while Eritrea rejected the allegations. The fragile balance between the two states as well as the fears of Eritrea of a possible Ethiopian

attack led the country to send military forces in the borders with Djibouti, while the latter instantly referred the incident to the African Union, the United Nations and the Arab League. The violent conflict began when Eritrean civilians trespassed the Djiboutian borders and Djibouti refused to return them. In June 2008, it was reported that in the region of Ras Doumeira there were 35 killings and many injuries. The international community has delivered the opinion that so long as the region Ras Doumeira in the borders of the two countries is not officially demarcated, the problem will always be present.

Apart from the regional conflicts, however, one of the major problems in the region of the Horn of Africa that needs to be taken into consideration is the issue of the external intervention to the area. Many third countries and international organizations have tried all these years to exert power and influence this part of the African continent in order to control its geostrategic position. As a consequence, such intervention results in more tension in the region and deteriorates the situation among the Horn of Africa states. For instance, the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia was mediated by the African Union, the United Nations, the United States and the European Union. All of these third parties had their own political motivations and interests. When the mediation led to the Ethiopia- Eritrea Boundary Commission and the region of Badme was eventually awarded to Eritrea, the tension between the two states was again escalated and the mediation parties proceeded to measures that reinforced the conflict and resulted in the “no war no peace” situation. On the other hand, the Djibouti-Eritrea conflict is mediated by Qatar –which is considered to be neutral- having more possibilities of success.

The issue of regional conflicts; challenges

The main challenge arising from the existence of civil wars and inter-state conflicts in the African continent is that the ongoing tensions develop a pole of unsteadiness and insecurity in the whole region. This instability contributes to the rise of terrorist groups and other criminal organizations which take advantage of the chaotic situation and proceed to illegal activities in order to finance

themselves. To wit, the illicit smuggling of goods, such as weapons and drugs, and human trafficking constitute common phenomena.

Besides the illegal activities as a consequence of the tensions, one of the major problems created is the fact that a state under a civil war does not have an actual central government to take all the appropriate decisions for the fortune of the country and to participate in international organizations. Hence, the function of the executive, legislative and judicial power as well as the public services begins to fail and the state falls in recession and decadence.

Another important result of the issue of regional conflicts is the fact that after taking over control, the rebel groups usually wish to extend their authority in the region. Therefore, the problem is gradually expanded to the neighboring states, leading the whole continent to destabilization.

Last but not least, it goes without saying that the unsteadiness which characterizes Africa affects the trade and other economic activities in a considerably negative way. Africa consists of many developing states which need trade agreements and foreign investments in order to start ameliorating their economy. However, when a country is plagued by internal conflicts and violent attacks, not only the state itself is unable to take measures in order to attract those economic activities, but also foreign investors and third countries hesitate to trust it.

Conclusion

After analyzing the most important current conflicts and civil wars in the African continent, we can safely conclude that although each violent conflict has its own history and background, they all share some common characteristics, which are the following:

- The excessive exploitation of the regions across borders, as a result of the poor state control over them;
- Human rights abuses, including the use of child soldiers;
- The use of manipulation methods in terms of ethnicity and tribal loyalties in order for the opposing sides to recruit soldiers;

- The trafficking of natural and mineral resources being an important factor to the maintenance of the conflicts, and
- The existence of many UN and AU peacekeeping operations in each region of conflict, despite the fact that they have not always improved but rather deteriorated the situation.

The existence of so many regional conflicts in the continent has always drawn the attention of many international organizations, including the United Nations and the African Union. However, it is common place that none of them managed to establish ways of effective conflict management mainly because the issue is complex and needs more spherical solutions. To illustrate, the first step that should be taken is the full comprehension of the roots of the problem. In addition, the promotion and establishment of good and stable governance so as to enhance the states and the regions across borders seems of utmost importance. Furthermore, the international community shall take any appropriate measures for the strengthening of democracy and the imposition of international law concerning especially the human rights sector. One major issue that needs to be addressed is the one regarding the gender and age problems that many African states face, as well as the other issues that are deemed as factors leading to the aggravation of violent conflicts. Moreover, since in many conflicts there are already established mediation services, it is urgent that they contribute to the launching of crisis-management and peace-building programs, along with the development and designation of ways to ensure peace and security during the sensitive post-conflict era. Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that especially the African Union can contribute to the establishment of stronger regional bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Issues to be taken into consideration

- Is the African Union mandated to take effective measures for the alleviation of the regional conflicts occurring in the continent?
- Which are the roots of the problem?
- Do the peacekeeping operations of the UN and the AU contribute to the resolution of the conflicts?

- How can the international community deal with the current civil wars?
- Is the mediation services an adequate tool for the tackling of the ongoing tensions?
- Does the geostrategic position of the Horn of Africa influence the interests in the region?
- Are the inter-state conflicts of the Horn of Africa effectively resolved?
- What spillover effect do the regional conflicts have and how can this phenomenon be dealt with?

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