



Politico-Economic and Legal Examinations of Civil Wars in African States: A Comparative Analysis between the Nigerian Civil War and the Republic of Rwanda

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INTRODUCTION

This study is a comparative examination of civil wars in African States, with Nigerian and Rwanda as a case study. The study observed that most of these wars are caused by political, economic and ethnic domination by the larger ethnic group against the lesser ethnic group and the resistance by the lesser ethnic group being dominated by the larger ethnic group, usually give rise to suppression by the dominant ethnic group and thus the escalation of aggression and the resultant effect, is "Civil Wars". It will examine the Civil Wars in both Nigeria and that of Rwanda States to prove that both countries' wars were fought as a result of dominations by one ethnic group to the other and that the main reasons of these wars were triggered politically and economically. We will now examine the causes of the Nigerian Civil War and also that of Rwandan States and will make political, economic and legal comparisons of both countries.

HISTORY AND CAUSES OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR, 1967-1970

The Nigerian Civil War commenced on the 6th day of July, 1967 and ended on the 15th day of January, 1970. The war was fought by the Nigerian government and Biafra, made up of South-Eastern part of Nigeria. The cause of the war, according to Biafra was as a result of ethnic domination by the federal government, in both political governance and also the inequitable sharing of natural resources obtained from oil or petroleum, located in the Niger Delta. Cultural and religious differences were also traced as part of the cause of the Civil War.

Resulting from Nigeria's amalgamation in 1914 by its British Colonial Master that established the Northern and Southern protectorates for easier administration, it caused some imbalance between 1914 and October 1st 1960 when Nigeria became an Independent

State. From 1960 to 1963, the country was operated by Independence Act, which made the Queen of England.

The following political, economic and ethnic domination that angered the igbos and which led to the Nigerian Civil War, was as follows: -

- (a) That Nnamdi Azikiwe became a ceremonial President of Nigeria from 1963 to 1966, full political power was vested on the prime minister, Tafawa Balewa.
- (b) From 16th day of January, 1966 to 12th day of July, 1966 Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi took over power, he was assassinated on 12th day of July, 1966, following a military coup and the head of state was handed over to Yakubu Gowon, who ruled from 1st August, 1966 to 29th July, 1975.
- (c) From 1966 to 1967, there was an unsuccessful counter coup made up of Easterners, who were not happy on the gruesome manner in which Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi was assassinated. Following the unsuccessful coup and several leader crisis that ensued, the Igbos residing in Lagos and other northern states, felt unprotected and which act led to the Nigerian Civil War.
- (d) Over three million Igbos lost their lives and several of their properties were destroyed, as the war did not go beyond Ore (now Ondo State).

HISTORY AND CAUSES OF THE RWANDAN CIVIL WAR 1990 TO 1994

While Rwanda was experiencing economic and political difficulties, repatriation sentiments intensified among the Tutsi diaspora. The Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) initiated a military solution in late 1990 effectively launched an attack which was to last until July, 1994. The combination of the Civil war, Rwanda's declining economy and a movement within Rwanda for political pluralism compelled the Government to change the Constitution to allow for multi-party democracy. Several of the newly formed parties' harboured extremists' ideologies whose positions hardened as the war and the international community forced the Government into peace negotiations. The success of the RPF's military campaigns provoked retaliatory massacres against Tutsi around Rwanda which were, for the most part, orchestrated by the local authorities, assisted by senior Government representatives from Kigali. The cycle of RPF military successes and unchecked Government tit-for-tat revenge killings remained a pattern throughout the early 1990s and strongly contributed to an atmosphere of fear on the part of the rural peasants and a culture of impunity among extremist elements of the Government, the Army and certain political parties. Throughout the early 1990s, the Civil war provided the motivating catalyst for virtually every political decision by the Government, the Army and the orchestrations by opposition parties. The destruction of the economy caused by the war forced the Government to participate in the Arusha Peace Accords which served to aggravate moderate opposition parties who suspected that they would be excluded from the new government being formed by the decisions made at the peace table in Tanzania. More importantly, however, extremists' elements of the

Government, the Army and opposition parties did not want the RPF to succeed, either militarily or through negotiation, and strove to do everything in their power to undermine both processes. Their tactics included an escalation of massacres, politically motivated killings and a systematic and wide spread public propaganda campaign to inflame Hutu pride among the peasants, to demonise the Tutsi and to create an atmosphere of terror and fear. The RPF's ongoing military successes and pressure from the international community compelled the Government to precede with the peace negotiations which culminated in the signing of several protocols and accords known by the singular form – the Arusha Peace Agreement (Prunier, 1995:192). These accords provided the framework for the integration of the armed forces, for power sharing and a number of other issues relevant to the setting up of a Transitional Government. However, in the face of extreme opposition and dissatisfaction among the hard-liners in Rwanda, President Habyarimana did not comply with the Agreement. The President's reluctance had two outcomes: an increase in officially-sanctioned violence and an intensification of pressure from regional governments and international donors for Habyarimana to implement the terms and conditions of the agreement. Later, Habyarimana succumbed to the pressure of the international community and attended a meeting of regional leaders in Dar-es-Salaam where he was vehemently pressured to take action, whilst back in Rwanda, fear and concern that the President would capitulate reached a fever pitch. That same evening President Habyarimana returned to Kigali accompanied by President Ntaryamira of Burundi. In its approach to the airport the aeroplane was shut down by two missiles killing all aboard the plane. This proved to be the catalyst that set off a three month orgy of killings. By July 19 1994, the killing spree had run its course. Somewhere from 500,000 to 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu had been killed. Another 1,200,000 people fled Rwanda into Congo Democratic Republic and Tanzania and the RFP had taken control of the country. The new Government was faced with the task of rebuilding a shattered and deeply traumatised country. Rwanda like most African countries, was faced with non-production of technology or resources and as such, suffered economic problem which became worsened, owing partly to the collapse of world coffee prices which affected Rwanda badly. There was also famine in parts of Southern Rwanda in 1990. This gingered the Tutsi and the refugees who had been in Uganda for a long time without forgetting their homeland, all numbering About 2,000 to take up arms and invade Rwanda at Kakitumba. They used sophisticated weapons such as armoured cars, taking two days to reach Kigali. The Ugandan Government condemned the act of the refugees. The refugees claimed that they were mainly Tutsi fighting for democracy for all Rwandans. The Rwandan government whose President was an Hutu refuted the statement saying that: "The rebels were fighting to restore Tutsi rule to bring back forced labour and feudal servitude", (Prunier, 1995:193). The history of Habyarimana rule was one of increasing concentration of power in the hands of the Head of State. The RPF accused Habyarimana's government of being undemocratic and corrupt and being based on a particular group among the Bahutu. They also said that Rwandans had learned to live harmoniously together but the government practiced "divisive politics". It is believed that RPF was the rebel

political organization which was founded in Uganda to succeed the earlier Rwanda Alliance (RANU). The relations between the Rwandans and others in Uganda had been complex and at times difficult, but there had not been fresh problems between the Tutsi in Rwanda and those in Uganda for them to try to fight their way back. The Rwanda government had for long refused to allow the refugees who numbered up to 2 million to return to Rwanda because of the pressure it will cause to its already over-populated country. The Rwanda Tutsi seemed likely to remain in permanent exile. As the Rwandan government forces gathered to fight against the rebels, troops were sent in from DRC, Belgium and France, but the foreign forces left after a few weeks. Burundi promised that its territory could not be used for anything that is “against peace” or against the security of Rwanda. Ugandan government also promised that it will not allow any refugee to cross its border to join the RPF force in Rwandan. This notwithstanding, new refugees now entered Uganda and Burundi all complaining of killings by the army. At a summit meeting at Mwanza in Tanzania, O. A. U. (now African Union) held talks over the Rwandan crisis with Uganda, Tanzania and Belgium and the Rwandan government agreed on a cease fire and called for an intervention force. The Prime Minister of Belgium appealed to President Museveni of Uganda, Presidents of Kenya, DRC and Burundi to mediate on a cease fire. The RPF after being urged by the Ugandan President had agreed on a cease fire which lasted for only a “few hours before the RPF started to attack government positions in Mutara” (Prunier, 1995:198). Others accused the government of breaking the accord while fighting continued. O.A.U. Summit talks were held at Gbadolite in Zaire on October 24-26, 1990 and agreed on talks and a cease-fire for checked by observers. Many talks continued to be held, with DRC playing a prominent role. Peace talks involving DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda began in November 22, 1990 at Goma in DRC. On 6th April, 1994 Juvenal Habyarimana, President of the Rwandan Republic, Cyprien Ntanyira, President of the Republic of Burundi together with an accompanying ministers and other persons, lost their lives in a suspicious aeroplane crash in the Rwandan capital, Kigali. Within hours of this event, pre-planned programme of gross human right violation in what Rene Lemarchand (1997:33) calls an “unprecedented orgy of violence and murder, and the Vatican Radio characterized as “the most terrible and systematic genocide since the genocide of the Jews by Hitler” (Prunier, 1995:200). Between 6th April to July, over 1,000.000 Rwandan civilians were killed, according to Lemarchand R. (1990). Many more Tutsi became refugees. The Central Organ of the OAU mandated the Minister of External Relations of the Cameroons, the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, representing the then outgoing Chairman and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe, representing the incoming Chairman) in cooperation with the Secretary-General of the OAU, to monitor the implementation of the outcome of the session, with particular reference to the issue of “immediate end to these odious crimes” which they termed “crime against humanity”, and demanded a halt to hostilities (OAU, 1997(b):1-2) . United Nations expressed the readiness of African Nations to provide troops. The United Nations’ peacekeeping mission in Rwanda had appealed to the international community to supply financial and logistic assistance to speed up the deployment of additional U.N forces (OAU,

1997(c) 1-4). After visiting Rwanda on 11th May, 1994, the U.N High Commissioner “urged that a special” reporter on Rwanda be appointed to investigate and monitor the human rights situation”. As has happened in other African countries caught up in armed conflict, Rwandan children were recruited for the civil war in the summer of 1994. “The genocide in Rwanda brought the children face to face with tragedy”. According to Grace Machel, widow of the former Mozambican President, Samora, and the former United Nation Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghalis special researcher on children and war, “some 300,000 children were killed and 80 to 90 percent of those who survived suffered severe trauma.” (Prunier, 1995:203). As was reported “the hospital treats old and ore recent war wounds, caused by Bullets, burns or panda cuts which wreaked fearful damage, nobody is spared.” Teams of experts from Spain, Switzerland. The U.S., Netherlands and Norway had undertaken special, investigations into acts of genocide including forensic examination of massacre and mass grave sites. The refugee crisis brought about by the massive violations made a strengthening the U.N. Human Rights action in Rwanda imperative. Rwanda issue was brought to the top of O.A.U. summit due to open in June 1994, causing a widening split between the French and the English-speaking countries over who should represent the war torn country. Two rival delegations were in Tunis each claiming to represent Rwanda. One was from the beleaguered interim Government made up of mainly ethnic Hutus and the others from Tutsi dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebel movement which was close to capturing the capital, Kigali. The O. A. U (now A.U) Director of Information, Ibrahim Daggash, said at a press conference the following day that the interim Government delegation led by Foreign Minister Jerome Bicam-umpaka presently occupied the seat reserved for Rwanda. He also said that the ministerial council had not yet decided on which of the two

would represent Rwanda. The RPF Uganda was lobbying for support from the English speaking countries of East Africa. “A split emerged on the side lines of the O.A.U. meeting between the Anglophone countries and French speaking Africa” (OAU, 1997:1). Following this, the Interim government fled to the provincial town of Citarama, forty Kilometres South West of the capital, calling on the O.A.U. to condemn Uganda which it accuses of backing the RPF. The interim administration had recommended election to the organization which they believed that they would win due to their numerical strength. This was supported by a large fraction of the French-speaking Africa. Meanwhile, the RPF was striving to block any condemnation of Uganda and was backed by several East African States. Mr. Daggash tried to play down on the matter by saying: “the Ministers would not be addressing the issue of an African peacekeeping force” (Abdul-Enein 1994:41) He went further to stress that: “An African peacekeeping force will not be on the agenda of this Council” (1994, 42) Meanwhile, in New York a U. N. spokesman said: “Congo, Nigeria and Mali had pledged a total of 400 more troops to the Rwanda (UNAMIR) which was striving to find a total of 5, 500 men”. (Keller 1996:43) Belgian And French Involvement In The Rwandan Conflict French interest in Central African countries and particularly in Rwanda, has always been frowned and looked upon as part of France neo-colonialist policies which does not allow its former colonies free of its imperialist influence. According to Africa Today (1991:23), Rwanda is heavily dependent on foreign aid, principally from the OECD

countries led by Belgium, West Germany and France. Out of the 1982-86 RWfr 1255 bn 1.43 bn at 1986 average exchange rates development plan, was 62 percent funded by aid. In 1987 ordinary government expenditure amounted to an estimated \$297mn while official external capital in-flows were \$209mn. The government's liberal investment code and attitude to foreign private capital made Belgium and France to invest in Rwanda. Rwandan mineral resources are very restricted. Tin ore mining which is obtained in little quantity, is being transported to Belgium. Coffee which constituted the major export product of Rwanda forms about 79% of the export in 1987. This product yielded about RWfr 6.544 that is about \$81.9 in foreign exchange. Their former colonial masters import these raw materials, tagged them "made in Belgium or France" and fixed the prices of these raw materials. Among the few domestic industries existing in Rwanda; its technological know-how is being provided by Belgium, West Germany and France. The foreign technologists are usually paid exorbitantly for the services they provide. Rwandan economic dependence on their former colonial master has deprived them of their foreign exchange, which eventually caused poverty and the resultant underdevelopment. In order to survive, Rwanda had to import sugar in large quantity to cover its need, thereby accumulating more foreign debt. Although Belgium and France did not intervene physically in the Rwandan crisis, the two countries however played an underground role. They provide supportive banking role to the Hutu government even when Habyarimana was killed and an interim government was installed, Belgium and France did not deviate in their support to the Hutus. France has a large military base in Central Africa. Since Rwanda is heavily dependent on foreign aids and to maintain their ruling ambitions, these two countries maintain the master-servant relationship which hitherto aggravated the conflicts.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN THIS STUDY

The following comparative analysis could be drawn from both countries:

- (1) While the Nigerian Civil War started in 1967 and ended 1970, the Rwandan civil war was on two phases, the first started on 1st October 1990 and ended on 4th August 1993, while the second phase started on 6th April 1994 and ended on 18th July 1994.
- (2) While the wars in both countries took an ethnic dimension, that is, in Nigeria it was between the Northern and Yoruba ethnic groups against the Igbos, in Rwanda it was between the Hutu, Tutsi and Batwa.
- (3) Economic and political factors were responsible for the wars in both countries.
- (4) The wars in both countries were supported by their former colonial masters in favour of the dominated ethnic groups as against the other, that is in Nigeria, Britain being the former colonial master, supported the Northern-Yoruba ethnic dominated groups as against the Igbos, while in Rwanda, the war was supported by Belgium and France, being its former colonial masters, in favour of the dominated ethnic group.
- (5) In Nigeria, over 3,000,000 of the Igbos died during its war, while in Rwanda, over 1,000,000 persons died during the war.

- (6) The war in Nigeria ended on the note “No victor no vanquish”, and there was no form of further prosecution on those involved, while in the case of Rwanda, at the end of the war, the United Nations established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) that prosecuted and sentenced those that were involved in the war.

LEGAL EXAMINATION OF THE WARS IN BOTH COUNTRIES

The following legal examination of the wars in both countries can be deduced as follows:

- (1) The Nigerian civil war described the Igbos as “secessionist”, while the Rwandan civil war described them as an “uprising”.
- (2) Legally speaking, the Free Dictionary by Farlex, gave the meaning of secessionist as “the act of withdrawing from a group”. It further state thus: Secession occurs when persons in a country or state declare their independence from the ruling government. When a dissatisfied group secedes, it creates its own form of government in place of the former ruling government. Secessions are serious maneuvers that lead to, or arise from, military conflict. While the Free Dictionary by Farlex, gave the meaning of an “uprising” as “a popular revolt against a government or its policies; a rebellion”.
- (3) In law, under section 1(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), the word secession would give rise to prosecution against those secessionist, where they fail at the end of day, as it provide thus: *“The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the Government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution”*. While an “uprising” may not give rise to further prosecution, but to quell those engaged in the uprising.
- (4) It is a well known fact that under the Africa Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights and also under the United Nations Charter, there are laid down procedures for those who want to either secede or move away from their membership of any group or larger group in any state structure. Any group of persons that fails to abide by these laid down procedures to form an independence state; such state will not be recognized by the African Union or the U.N.

CONCLUSION

From this study, we have been able to make examinations on the legal, political and economic comparison of the causes of both Nigeria and Rwandan civil wars. We have come to understand that ethnic, political and economic dominations were responsible for the wars in both countries. Therefore, it is necessary that those who are in authority should eschew all forms of ethnic, political and economic dominations to their subjects and learn to be fair in apportioning their resources, in the interest of good governance and justice, so as to improve co-existence.

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