Factors that Influence Social Protests and their Effect on Peace and Stability in Africa

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Abstract: The emergence of democratic governance in Africa in the aftermath of the Cold War in the 1990s has been marred by the rise and spread of violent social protests. These protests mostly result from the lack of quality basic services to the people that then deprive them of their freedom from fear and wants. As a form of political expression, social protests influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the public, and are particularly aimed at policy-makers in political leadership and/or organisations. For example, Africa has seen a huge resurgence of public protests that manifest in public demonstrations, petitions, boycotts, lobbying, and various online activities. Social protests in Africa are influenced by the lack of inclusive political leadership and the existence of uneven political institutions that foster the gap between the haves and have-nots. As a result, the African problems and conflicts have become intractable, and affect the achievement of peace and security. In Africa, social protests have intensified conflicts and civil wars, while on other continents, they have led to political leaders' addressing the issues that led to human rights violations. This means that social protests can foster a culture of peace and stability. There is scant literature that explains the factors that have led to the recurrence of protests in Africa. This presents a unique gap in the current literature that has not yet received academic attention. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the factors influencing social protests and their effect on peace and security in Africa. The research question the paper seeks to answer is: What factors could lead to the recurrence of social protests, and what are possible ways to address the threats that these social protests pose to peace and security in society?

Keywords: Corruption, Africa, Peace, Protests, Security

1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is to provide an understanding of the factors influencing social protests and the effect of these protests on peace and security in Africa. In this post-Cold War period, social protests in Africa have led to intercommunal conflict in various countries on the continent. These protests mostly resulted from the lack of basic services and the failure of political leaders to understand that these basic services are a key fundamental right. As a form of political expression, social protests influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the public, and are particularly aimed at policymakers in political leadership and/or organisations. Africa has seen a huge resurgence of social protests that manifest in public demonstrations, petitions, boycotts, lobbying, and various online activities. These protests have led to civil unrest causing violence and conflicts in many parts of Africa. Social protests in Africa are influenced by the lack of inclusive political leadership and the existence of uneven political institutions that foster the gap between the haves and have-nots. As a result, the African problems and conflicts have become intractable, and affect the achievement of peace and security.

In Africa, social protests have intensified conflicts and civil wars, while on other continents; they have led to political leaders' addressing the issues that led to human rights violations. This means that social protests can foster a culture of peace and stability, leading to good governance. There is scant literature that explains the factors that have led to the recurrence of protests in Africa, and how social protests affect peace. This presents a unique gap in the current literature that has not yet been given academic attention. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the factors influencing social protests and their effect on peace and security in Africa. The research question the paper seeks to answer is: What factors could lead to the recurrence of social protests, and what are possible ways to address the threats that these social protests pose to peace and security in society? To achieve the aim and answer the research question and objective, this paper is structured into four main sections. The first section provides an overview of social protests to enable an understanding of the factors that have intensified the

occurrence of social protests in Africa. The second section explains the research methodology used by the study to collect and analyse data. The third section consists of discussions and presentations of the findings in the light of the objective, aim and the research question. The fourth section consists of concluding remarks and recommendations.

2. Overview of Social Protests

The past few decades have seen extensive theoretical and empirical research on the subject of social movements, social protests, and service delivery protests. Matebesi (2017) has explained the relationship between social movements and political instability and/or change in Africa (Matebesi, 2017). Matebesi further presented that there have also been many studies on social protests and their linkages to crime and security in South Africa (Matebesi, 2017). However, the issue that has not yet been addressed, and which remains controversial to policymakers, and peace and development practitioners, is to understand the factors that lead to social protests in Africa. A number of published academic works have focused on social protests, their ramifications and the consequences for national economic growth. It can be argued that the occurrences of social protests have become a norm in South Africa in the effort to bring about social and political change. Scholars have found that the ability of social protests to bring about political change at various levels depends on their ability to disrupt existing practices (Cloward & Piven, 1979; Fishman & Everson, 2016) and on using a variety of tactics (Morris, 1993), including violence. It is important to take note of the latest social protests that turned into violence, and that led to the destruction of a number of properties in South Africa, ostensibly in the name of freeing former President Jacob Zuma from jail.

According to Ngcamu (2019:4), South Africa has been described as the protest capital of the world, with a diverse range of triggers for protests, including factors such as residents being unhappy with the re-demarcation of wards or municipalities to other areas without proper consultation by government, and which has led to the burning of public institutions such as schools. For example, Bond (2010) attributes the ubiquitous social protests in South Africa to the inability of the African National Congress (ANC) government's neoliberal economic policies to lead to economic growth for all, and which have instead, amplified poverty and inequality. Alexander (2010) maintains that the social protests emanate from shack settlements and townships, rather than the better-resourced suburbs. For their part, Mitlin and Mogaladi (2013:8) have argued that "areas of collective consumption, such as urban land, housing and basic services, have triggered social protests in South Africa".

A number of scholars have associated social protests with inadequate service delivery and lack of accountability by local councillors (Alexander, 2010). Similarly, Ngwane (2010) and Booysen (2007) have argued that social protests occur because of the failure to deliver services to the people on time. It has been argued that social protests occur because of the failure to distinguish between service delivery and public service (Friedman, 2009). Moreover, Booysen (2007:24) has pointed out that protests are about service delivery. However, Allan and Heese (2008:1) argued that it is inaccurate to link protests to only service delivery issues. They maintained that the occurrence of social protests describes what is happening at a local level, and which is fuelled by lack of service delivery (Allan & Heese, 2008:1). Nemeroff (2005:2) stated that the occurrence of social protests is about public service, and is a reflection of the big gap that exists between the public and authorities. Alexander (2010:25) argued that social protests are about "citizenship, understood as the material benefits of full inclusion… as well as the right to be taken seriously when thinking and speaking through public organisations". Ludwig and Nagel (2012:1) argued that social protests occur due to a lack of political will from politicians, and politicians not engaging with the public directly.

Friedman (2009:1) further argued that protests about public service can be seen as a form of public participation in governance. Kotzé and Taylor (2010:198) argued that "while to protest is a democratic right, enshrined in the Constitution (RSA, 1996), democracy is about allowing the public to take part in decision-making and action, taken collectively, particularly on issues affecting the lives of the beneficiaries". Friedman (2009:1) also argued that "empowering public participation provides the public with the scope to influence, direct, control and even own decision-making and development intervention". Alexander (2010:26) described the various common methods of protest in South Africa which include "mass meetings, drafting of memoranda, petitions, toyi-toying, processions, stay-away,

election boycotts, blockading of roads, construction of barricades, burning of tyres, looting, destruction of buildings, chasing unpopular individuals out of townships, confrontations with police and forced resignation of elected officials".

According to Kotzé and Taylor (2010:198), communities resort to violent riots, destroying schools, libraries, and the houses of underperforming local government councillors. Mananga (2012) posited that social protests are more severe in the informal settlements where poverty and unemployment are high, and also where technical and management skills are lacking in municipalities. Furthermore, Steyn and Van Heerden (2011:167) argued that social protests are intensified by political leaders' lack of accountability. Alexander (2010:37) summarised that corruption, poor financial management and cadre deployment fuel social protests.

3. Methodological Approach

The word research consists of two words = Re+Search (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). In the literal sense, it means to search again. Hence, the term 'research' implies a systematic investigation or activity to gain new knowledge related to the already existing facts. The current study adopted a qualitative research methodology with a content analysis approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:64). Cavanagh (1997) regards content analysis as a flexible method for analysing textual data. According to Rosengren (1981), content analysis describes a family of analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, and interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses. Despite this flexibility, content analysis was most suitable for the current study, as the goal of content analysis is "to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992:314). Content analysis also aims to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon, and the outcome of the analysis is the concepts or categories describing the phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Research using qualitative content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Lindkvist, 1981; McTavish & Pirro, 1990). Text data might be in verbal, print, or electronic form and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations,

or print media such as articles, books, or manuals (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). Moreover, the qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words, to intensely examining language to classify large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings (Weber, 1990). As Auriacombe (Auriacombe, 2017:51) argues, this study does not have clear or demarcated boundaries.

The current study is mainly qualitative in nature and is based on a literature and documentary review of secondary sources. Secondary sources led to the secondary data that was collected from the official statutory, regulatory and policy documents; scientific journal articles and books of an academic nature; previous annual, quarterly, and monthly reports; and relevant reading material and manuals from the unit. Qualitative research focuses on the nature and quality of things. More often, it is reflective of subjective views expressed in the words of research participants (Mouton, 2001:130). For this purpose, unobtrusive research techniques were used. The concept "qualitative research usually means any kind of research that produces findings that are not based on statistical procedures, or other means of quantification" (Auriacombe, 2007:89). "Qualitative research is an inquiry of understanding that is based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore social or human problems (Auriacombe, 2007:89). In addition, the paper built a "complex, holistic picture that analysed words or concepts that led to getting detailed views of informants" (Auriacombe, 2007:98). As De Vos (2001:240) stated, qualitative research provides comprehensive descriptions of the social settings under investigation.

According to the principles of qualitative research design, the data was analysed in an ongoing process. The data was also analysed inductively in order to answer the identified research question, and to meet the objective and aim of the paper. As Nieuwenhuis (2007:99-100) said, "Qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined, and not necessarily a successive process". Furthermore, Gibbs (2002:1) added that "qualitative data analysis is a process of transformation of collecting qualitative data, done employing analytic procedures, into a clear, understandable, insightful, trustworthy and even original analysis". Similarly, Marshall and

Rossman (1999:150) argued that qualitative data analysis is a "search for general statements about relationships among categories of data". This means that the data was analysed in an ongoing process with the aim of searching for statements that helped answer the research question, objective and aim of this paper.

4. Results and Discussion

In answering the research question, the study identified a number of factors that have led to social protests in Africa. These findings are explained below.

4.1 Prevalence of Unemployment

The paper found that the prevalence of unemployment is one the main factors that trigger and cause social protests in Africa. For example, "the Statistics of South Africa presented that the official unemployment rate increased by 1,8 percentage points from 32,6% in the first quarter of 2021 to 34,4% in the second quarter of 2021 –the highest since the start of the QLFS in 2008" (Stats SA, 2021:1). It has been found that unemployment relates to the lack of jobs that enable an individual to have a tangible source of income with which to sustain their livelihoods (Baah-Boateng, 2015:651). Unemployment remains a major economic, political, and social problem and issue in Africa. It has been argued that unemployment only occurs when the individual voluntarily decides to reject the market clearing wage offer and continues to search (Baah-Boateng, 2015:653). Unemployment in Africa can be either structural or involuntary. Structural unemployment resulting from a mismatch between the demand for labour and the skills and location of jobseekers is a type of voluntary unemployment, and occurs when the flow of demand and supply in the labour market are imbalanced (Baah-Boateng, 2015:654). It can be argued that this type of unemployment typically results from the lack of modern technologically advanced skills that define the jobs in the marketplace.

According to Shackleton (1985), involuntary unemployment exists when individuals are unable to obtain work, even if they are prepared to accept lower real wages or poorer conditions than similar qualified workers who are currently in employment. Other scholars have echoed that involuntary unemployment can be understood through the insider-outsider model (Lindbeck & Snower, 1988). This is where a sharp distinction is drawn between the bargaining status of individuals who are currently working (insiders) and jobseekers (outsiders) (Lindbeck & Snower, 1988). Scholars continue to argue that this type of unemployment exists in situations that take into account only the interests of those employed (insiders), forgetting the interests of those seeking to be employed, referred to as the outsiders (Bentolila, Juan & Jimeno, 2011).

At the macro level, unemployment largely arises from deficiencies in aggregate demand over certain periods in the business cycle, to the degree that the jobs being created are not enough to meet the needs of everyone wanting to work (Keynes, 1936). This type of unemployment is cyclical and involuntary because the unemployed is constrained by limited job availability (Baah-Boateng, 2015:4). Bowles (2008) described another kind of unemployment he called seasonal unemployment. He said that this kind of unemployment arises when there is predictable seasonal variation in demand associated with climatic seasons (Bowles, 2008).

The study found that in many cases, protests in Africa are associated with lack of employment, particularly among young graduates. Unemployment leads to economic hardship and erodes and depreciates human capital, thus preventing human development and growth. It has been presented that "unemployment affects individuals, families, and communities in direct ways, their skills may erode through lack of use" (Nichols, Mitchell & Lindner, 2013:4). That means that the erosion of human capital leads to harsh economic conditions that deepen economic loss. Nichols *et al.* (2013:8) argued that unemployment affects the individual's family income due to the lack of earnings, which in the end, affects the household. It can be argued that the loss of income can reduce the quantity and quality of goods and services the worker's family can purchase. This leads to frustration, and therefore, people decide to take the route of social protests to demand their rights from the authorities. It can be said that Africa experiences more social protests due to the high levels of unemployment.

The paper agrees with the finding of CIVICUS (2011:55) that the root causes of social protests can be found in unemployment and the resulting economic crises. These economic crises have, moreover, exacerbated unemployment rates

and inequality due to the fact that politicians and development practitioners have implemented development interventions unequally (CIVICUS, 2011:55). Similarly, Allan (2010:20) found that social protests have resulted from high unemployment levels. This has been the case in South Africa and Kenya. High rates of unemployment in these countries have led to social protests.

Similarly, in the early 2010s, social protests in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia resulted in the Arab Spring that swept the entire North Africa area. The bottom-line was that unemployment and the loss of sustainable incomes had led to hardship and the inability to support people's livelihoods, and that had sparked the protests (Winckler, 2013). This unfortunate situation creates a kind of uncertainty in people as they do not know what will happen tomorrow due to lack of sustainable livelihoods. It, therefore, affects peace and security of the country and it breeds crime in society, thus causing insecurity. It has been argued that high rates of unemployment and inequality, combined with low levels of education and development, can soften the ground for recruitment and provide motives for violence (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008). This means that during social protests, if the government in place fails to address the issues of unemployment, chances are that conflict will become the second option that protesters might embark on. This happened in North Africa where social protests intensified into the Arab Spring that led to bloodshed and the removal of political leaders.

4.2 Poverty

The second factor that was found to impact social protests was poverty. The study found that poverty drives young people, especially young graduates, to develop chronic mental health issues and other health-related complications. It can be argued that the word 'society' implies a life full of dignity, free from poverty and hunger. Halsey (1985:xxiii), however, argued that society means a shared life in which people are not. Meth (2006) saw poverty as a political factor, as it relates to the allocation or distribution of resources, and reflects the impact of past and present policy choices. It can be argued that from Meth's perspective, poverty can be understood to mean the lack of resources necessary for survival (2006). Extreme poverty leads to deprivation. Deprivation takes into account how being poor limits what a person "can and cannot do" both in terms of immediate and future actions

(Alcock, 2006). Alcock also argued that deprivation can help understand poverty in the sense that it distinguishes between those have their income and those who do not have any income (Alcock, 2006).

Chambers (2006) saw poverty as income poverty, material lack or want, such as inadequate access to services, lack of human capabilities, such as skills and physical abilities, and also self-respect in society. The United Nations (UN) explained that:

> poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. (United Nations, 1995:12-13).

The OECD report showed that "poverty encompasses different dimensions of deprivation that relate to human capabilities including consumption and food security, health, education, rights, voice, security, dignity and decent work" (OECD, 2001:6). The study found that poverty remains the predominant factor that triggers social protests in many areas in Africa. It has been argued that many of the protests are fuelled by relative deprivation measured against neighbours in wealthy municipalities (Van Donk, 2012:21). For example, in South Africa, it has been argued that the high rates of poverty in rural areas, coupled with the high levels of inequality, have informed the rise of social protests (Allan, 2010:21).

Poverty remains a constant trigger for social protests and social violence, as it hinders people from achieving their fundamental needs, which are rights of the people. Any government must be able to provide for the citizens enabling them to at least achieve their basic needs. The paper understands needs as defined by Streeten, Burki, Ul-Haq, Hicks and Stewart (1981:22) to be the "minimum quantities of such things as food, clothing, shelter, water and sanitation, access to basic education and health services and security to prevent ill health, undernourishment, or unemployment". Poverty prevents the achievement of the above and leads to anger, depression and frustrations, as well. It prevents

people from achieving well-being, including preventing them from accessing different goods and services and related achievements (Shaffer, 2008). The study agrees with CIVICUS (2011:55) that poverty triggers social protests because it deprives people of their income and ability to sustain their lives. It is clear see that there is a close link between poverty and social protests. This affects peace and security, in that if not dealt with, poverty can lead to conflict. Social protests lower resilience to conflict because they weaken governmental institutions, stripping the government of the capacity to provide public goods. They also limit the projection of power and authority, whether soft or coercive, which if not addressed, will make the country vulnerable to insurgency and lawlessness.

4.3 Lack of Public Participation in Decision-Making

Lack of public participation in the decision-making at all levels of leadership has been found as a factor that can lead to social protests. The World Bank (1994:1) defined participation as "...a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them." The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) (1994:18) defined public participation as "empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors, rather than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives." Brett (2003:1-29) understood participation as:

> *an educational and empowering process in which people, in partnership with each other and those able to assist them, identify problems and needs, mobilise resources and assume responsibility themselves to plan, manage, control and assess the individual and collective actions that they themselves decide upon.*

According to Arnstein (1969:216-224), participation is about the "redistribution of power in which the have-nots of our society who are presently excluded from the political and economic processes are given power to have control and influence over matters that affect their lives". It argued further that participation is about "the have-nots taking part in how information is shared, how goals and policies are arrived at, as well as determining how benefits are shared in various development projects and

programmes" (Arnstein, 1969:216-224). In other words, this means that public participation is people's power and ability.

The lack of participation leads to social protests, in that it disconnects people or citizens from the development processes in their country. Lack of participation leads to exclusion from the decision-making processes that affect their lives. The study found that lack of public participation creates poverty and economic uncertainty. This is because it brings about social discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation, factors that limit people's capacity to achieve their basic needs. Jaitli and Brown (1999) further argued that participation leads to empowerment, and empowerment enhances economic opportunities for the people. The study concurs with Chambers (1994:1253-1268) that participation empowers the weak and disadvantaged people and creates in them a sense of ownership (Chambers, 1994:1253-1268).

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) (2002) argued that participation enables individuals in both the private and public sectors to echo their voices when decisions are being made. A lack of this type of participation and involvement in decision-making creates room for incitement that can lead to social protests. This is because participation "gives voice to the voiceless and agency to attend to the needs of the marginalised people" (Govender, Reddy & Pillay, 2011:186). Creighton (2005:7) argued that public participation refers to "the process by which public concerns, needs and values are incorporated into governmental decision-making". Creighton (2005:7) also argued that "public participation is a two-way communication and interaction with the overall goal of better decision-making, supported by the public". The study found that lack of participation means that there is lack of communication between the political leaders and the people. Social protests arise when there is such a lack of communication. The paper agrees with scholars who have argued that lack of or poor communication does not only cause conflict but also decreases productivity in the society (Pandey, Pandey & Kothari, 2016; Yusoff & Khan, 2013). For example, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) (2010:4) and Booysen (2007:23) have presented that in South Africa, social protests result from the lack of participation of both the national, provincial, and municipal governments. Therefore, people take the route to protest as they want to be heard and taken seriously, and demand

to be provided the means to achieve their rights to survival and a better life.

The paper agrees with CIVICUS (2011:12) that people protest to strive for dignity, and to question the current rules of engagement. This means that whenever there is a blockage in terms of public participation, the relations between the public and authorities are cut off, leading to social protests. This means that the public feel alienated from the decision-making processes, and protests are designed to remind the authorities that the public's right to be heard is sacrosanct (IDASA, 2010:4).

Participation in decision-making process promotes sustainable decisions and communicates the needs and interests of all (Meyer, 2007:3). Meyer (2007:3) further argued that the lack of participation creates a discrepancy that makes the public feel disconnected from the government. Oldfield (2008:493) and Buccus and Hicks (2008:528) have argued that people resort to protests when they become frustrated with a system of leadership that segregates them from the decision-making processes. It has been argued that lack of participation signifies a lack of the type of good governance that allows transparency and is consensus-oriented in its dealing with the people. The paper agrees with Theron (2009:119) who argued that "when the public feel that they are being asked to approve and accept decisions that have already been made and they subsequently feel that they will not be able to get what they want; they resort to protests".

4.4 Poor Governance and Corruption

Poor governance and corruption have been identified as factors that lead to the eruption of social protests in Africa. Fadel (2011:3-7) found that poor governance reduces investment, and consequently, it reduces the rate of economic growth and development. Studies have found that bad governance "increases public investment; because public investment projects lend themselves easily to manipulations by high level officials to get bribes; it also distorts the effects of industrial policy on investment" (Tanzi, 1997:131). This means that poor governance creates poverty and people are unable to earn an income to support their livelihoods. Tanzi (1997:131) argued that bad governance "reduces productivity of public investment and tax revenue. Corruption, on the other hand, reduces the ability of the government to carry out needed public

expenditures and foreign direct investments; affects tax collection and service delivery" (Tanzi, 1997:132). Corruption has an effect on foreign direct investment, thus deepening poverty (Tanzi, 1997:132).

The study found that corruption and poor governance cause economic growth and development in Africa to slow down. Weak governance and corruption can also reduce the quality of investment. Scholars (Mauro, 1995; Tanzi, 1997; Gupta, 2000; Gyimah-Brempong, 2001) have found that corruption:

- distorts incentives and market forces, leading to the misallocation of resources;

- diverts talent and resources, including human resources, towards lucrative rent-seeking activities, such as defence, rather than productive activities;

- acts as an inefficient tax on business, ultimately raising production costs, and reducing the profitability of investments;

- decreases the productivity of investments by reducing the quality of resources;

- undermines the quality and quantity of health and education services, and corruption decreases a country's human capital;

- creates inefficiencies, fuelling the waste of resources and undermining the efficiency of public expenditure.

Tanzi and Davoodi (1997) similarly contended that corruption affects economic growth because it lowers government revenues and expenditures on other categories of public spending, such as health and education, and lowers the quality of public infrastructure. In addition, there are compelling arguments that corruption is consistently correlated with lower growth rates, lower gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, lower economic equality, as well as lower levels of human development (Rothstein & Holberg, 2011). As argued by Lloyd and Mey (2005:1), corruption results in stagnation and institutional failure that can lead to poor service delivery. The failure of institutions may, in turn, lead to lower economic growth, a recipe for a malfunctioning government. The study found that corruption and poor governance trigger social

protests in Africa. The paper agrees with Johnston (2012:17) that social protests are an indication of people's discontent with corruption and bad governance. Olteanu and Beyerle (2017:818) found that corruption and bad governance lead to social protests because services are misallocated and the government's ability to build a socio-economic productive society is weakened.

In addition, corruption and poor governance fuel social protests because people with divergent political views, both politicians and ordinary citizens, feel alienated (Francis & James, 2003:325-330). It also pushes people to oppose the government in the face of increasing levels of poverty and inefficient services delivery (Francis & James, 2003:325-330). For example, in Tunisia and Egypt, social protests led to conflicts and insecurity because the leaders did respond to them positively. This is because corruption had become a driver of public anger, which made people wish to see their problems resolved, or the then political leadership removed from power. People felt anger and a growing sense of injustice at the actions carried out by the regime and security services (Ardic, 2012; Lesch, 2013; Winckler, 2013).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The objective of this paper was to achieve an understanding of the factors that influence the occurrence of social protests in Africa, and to understand their effect on the achievement of sustainable peace and security on the continent. The paper found that numerous factors, such as unemployment, poverty, lack of public participation in the decision-making processes both at national and local leadership levels, and poor governance that entrenches corruption, trigger the occurrence of social protests. These protests mostly result from the lack of basic services, and the failure of political leaders to understand that services are key fundamental rights that people are entitled to. The paper found that social protests, if not addressed properly, and when people's concerns are not achieved, have the potential to affect peace and security by leading to violent conflict. The paper found, for example, that during the social protests in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, in the early 2010s, the needs of the people were not heard, and what followed, led to regime changes that saw many people lose their lives and their property destroyed. This has affected stability and peace in North Africa, making Libya an ungovernable country, and causing problems with migrations in Africa and to Europe.

There is need for the establishment of a good governance system that is built on participation, transparency, rule of law, and that is consensus-oriented. This governance would address the issues of unemployment, lack of participation and corruption, which were found to be the triggers of social protests. However, as there is no society without social protests, there is a need for early warning mechanisms that would help to address issues of concern that might to social protests, and which could prevent them from escalating into violence.

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