

An Overview of Crime in Sub-saharan Africa in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of Crime in the 21st century south of the Sahara originates from poverty, mental madness, the search for an easy way of life, acculturation, power hunger and globalization. It takes several forms. There is a change in habits due to globalisation through television and internet. Crime has become undulating and varied; ritual crimes, assassinations, murders. Also, this phenomenon is growing and is perfected through underground rebellions, terrorism, urban guerrilla, robberies, abductions and sexual slavery, thus becoming a cross-border issue. There is an increase in crime in many countries in black Africa. The devaluation of the CFA franc, and the coming of democracy has encouraged alternation at the top of the State. Backward mentalities, multiple post-election crises in sub-Saharan Africa have contributed to the high increase in crime wave. This is the case of Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, the RCA, with its multiple rebellions movements. Similarly, we are witnessing the rise of terrorism with the incursions of groups such as Boko Haram that persecutes Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Populations suffer and implore the aid of the deity. These men without faith nor law, plunder, kill, vow to disregard the rules introduced in their countries and violate human rights and dignity. They have a single leitmotif their happiness and their justice; forging their own world, hence the need for peoples to come together and combat this phenomenon.

Keywords: Criminality, insecurity, terrorism, violence, poverty, bad governance,

INTRODUCTION

Black Africa has known civilization in less than a century, with the arrival of independence in the 1960s. Although crime is considered an innate tare or hereditary degeneration by LOMBROSO, it was a taboo and rare phenomenon in black Africa where solidarity reigned. It was difficult to see an inert body. Crime was inherent, but the proportions were not very high as in our days. According to Emile Durkheim crime occurs in all human societies, of all types¹. To him, crime is understood as aggression, which "*consists in an act that offends some others feelings, gifted an energy and a special sharpness*"². After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the de-crystallisation of East-West tension, the end of the cold war, the destruction of the twin towers of the Wall Street center on September 11, 2001, witnessed the resurgence of crime, which is a new form such as mercenaries. This violence was democratised, commercialised and internationalised by the actions of the European leaders themselves³. It is used all over the world and a gradual change of the nature of conflict appears. This state of affairs is seen in Africa where there is a proliferation of intra-State conflicts, new fields of expression of crime which has mutated over the years in "guerrilla" and "terrorism".

Today, this phenomenon has gained momentum in our modern societies where we see the bandits burned publicly and deposited on the outskirts, babies deposited in garbage cans, men, women and children abducted and slain by other persons on behalf of their political, religious and even personal beliefs. Furthermore, UNODC⁴ makes the link between crime, poverty and the unequal distribution of

¹Émile Durkheim, 1999, the rules of sociological method, paris, PUF, collection "quadrige; 10th edition, p.65

² Idem, p.67

³Elodie Rigaud and Janice E Thompson: "Mercenaries as socio-historical form of private coercion", cultures and conflicts, n° 52, been 2004. Http / www. Conflits.org

⁴the United Nations Office for drugs and crime based in 1997 and renamed in 2002 and whose headquarters is Vienna, Austria: fact sheet N° 1.

wealth and affects weakest human development and more intensive VINI⁵. It is in these countries that there are high rates of murder, which is more than 20% of its inhabitants, which is two times more than in African countries with an average human development⁶. There is also political violence and this calls to conscience policy makers. It is therefore imperative to re-examine the roots of this pandemic and propose durable solutions to eradicate this phenomenon which is becoming more and more a cross-border issue.

The question is what are the causes of the rise in crime in the sub-Saharan Africa. Is this a mimicry or innate behavior in the Saharan societies? These different questions we can say that development in sub-Saharan Africa has brought with it an increase of crime certainly but underdevelopment in this part of the continent has equally contributed.

The unequal distribution of income within the States, rapid urbanization and youth unemployment could be outlined as the main causes of crime in Southern Saharan Africa. Indeed, there is a widespread of urban crime and crime white-collar.

Poverty and Unemployment as a cause of Crime.

It due to the high rate of unemployment and poverty many crimes are committed. For Pérouse De Mont, "*it equates poverty, dirt and disease: violence, race, and the masculine gender*"⁷ according to the Office of the United Nations for Drugs and Crime, "*less than 44% of the population of sub-Saharan young people are without jobs and they are less than 15 years*"⁸. Many young people leave the villages where life is difficult to pick up work in town to feed their families. Most villages in these countries for the most parts are not developed. Strong demographic pressures in the cities lead the number of young people young girls to engaging in prostitution and for the boys to banditry and the more serious smaller trades, to survive. This is known as rural exodus. In a study made public in 2006, the FAO⁹ estimated that 800 million people have abandoned the countryside for the cities, during the last 50 years. As they arrived the cities, these young people are crammed into slums; get into gangs, snatch bags of honest citizens, others go as far as raping women and girls. This situation of impoverishment penalizes many African cities.

However a significant number of them can read and write, with a secondary level or University, this situation makes some cities overcrowded¹⁰. Without jobs, these young people get motorcycles or taxis with which they operate in daytime than at night, sometimes killing the owners of these devices in the event of resistance, under the powerless eyes of the people. But when the latter takes the opportunity to grab it, it is popular justice and the people's verdict, no need for uniform men, they are violently lynched and burned alive¹¹. There is crime anywhere in the world, but it often said that the most dangerous capitals of the continent, are the countries sub-Saharan Africa behind Asia and Latin America with rates particularly high in Eastern, Southern Africa Central, 30,5 /100.000 habitants, West against 5.9/100,000 inhabitants for the North Africa to a global average of 6.9 murder/100.000 inhabitants. In South Africa, according to the Institute of studies of security (ISS) in Pretoria, crime is rising steadily since 2012¹². Analyst Gaeth Newham Institute says that the burglaries and murders are rising because of poverty. Criminals are increasingly organized and take advantage of the flaws of the financial strategy put in place by the Government. Crime is at rise.

⁵ Coefficient that calculates the differences in income

⁶ The United Nations Office for drugs and crime based in 1997 and renamed in 2002 and whose headquarters is Vienna, Austria: fact sheet N° 1.

⁷ Marc Antoine Pérouse De Montclos, violence et criminalité en Afrique subsaharienne : état des lieux, p.1

⁸ Op.cit

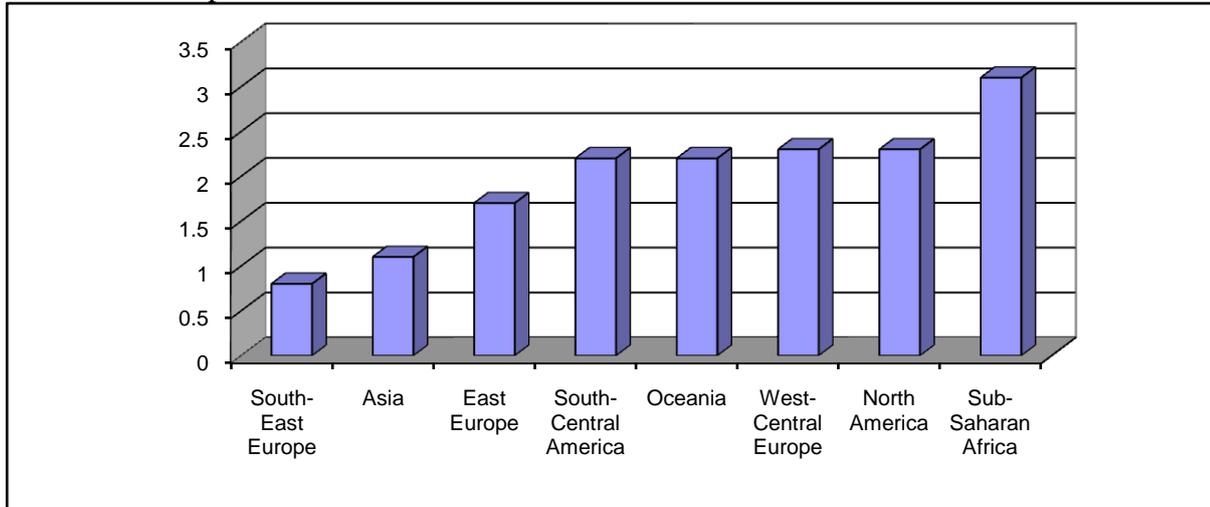
⁹ Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation

¹⁰ www.momagri.org/.../l-exode-rural-un-défi-posé-aux-pays-en-développement

¹¹ C'est le cas dans les grandes villes camerounaises, notamment Douala où les bandits sont brûlés publiquement après être bastonnés.

¹² Rfi Afrique, 24 05.2015, Getty Images/ Richard l'ANSON

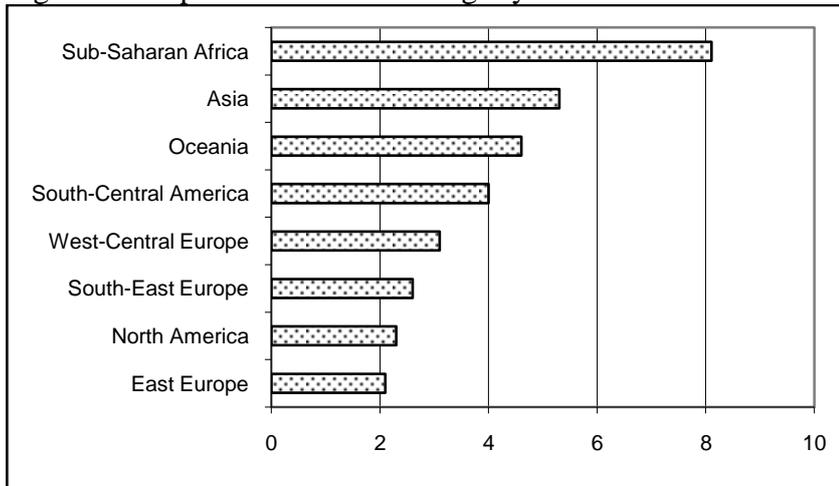
Official figures indicate 16,259 murders for 2012/2013, April to March, 45 murders per day with 16.363 attempted murders. An increase of more than 10% in one year¹³



Source: EICV 2000

The inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa have suffered severe physical assaults in 2000. A recent barometer of crime shows from a survey carried in 15 countries, Nigeria, the Kenya and Uganda where the interviewees were mostly city dwellers most that they were at risk of assault. The burglary rate in Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria, and Tanzania was seen very high. At the continental level, Africa stands at the forefront of the regions ahead of Asia and Oceania.

Figure 2: Respondents of home burglary



Source: EICV 2000

According to the international victimization survey data, Africans feel more insecure in their neighborhood at night. Africa respondents who reported being least safe represent nearly 55% of the sample. The continent is coming in second place after America (almost 52%). It is followed by Europe (41%). Oceania and Asia have the latest rates, respectively 38 and 35%. Fear to move at night resulted from the conjunction of three factors; the criminal justice system is convinced that the creation or promotion of programs and crime prevention projects represent an effective strategy to fight against crime. The quality of life of the people is also based on the level of crime in society. Banditry is accentuated by the poor management of Governments through the white-collar crime¹⁴

Poor management of human and financial resources/economic crime

One of the exponential causes of crime in the sub-Saharan Africans, poor management of human and financial resources. Indeed, the Governments are mostly nepotistic, i.e. working with the family and

¹³Voir les archives des infos.com avant octobre 2013

¹⁴MEUTCHEME NGOMSI Claude Albert, chercheur en sécurité urbaine, doctorant en Géographie université de Yaoundé I, «sécurité et bonne gouvernance, binôme d'un management inclusif et productif de la ville de demain », p4-5.

ethnicity devoid of other populations. Increase unemployment, the depravity of morals, and crime. For Jean François Bayart, "*black Africa seems on the slope of a worrying criminalisation of the State through fraud and trafficking of a large, wild exploitation of resources, economies in looting, privatisation of institutions, multiplication of armed militias, and extensions of the war*"¹⁵

Leaders surround themselves with white-collar criminals to organized the looting of natural resources, from the State for the benefit of their families. Some States have become the real smugglers States or fraudster. This is the case of the Gambia, Togo and Equatorial Guinea¹⁶. Indeed, the public domain is abandoned in favour of the private and selfish interests under the combined effects of the economic crisis, the programmes of structural adjustment and the de-legitimizing of political institutions. Furthermore, we note that there is the net increase in population in these country, and the jobs are not created; existing Governments multiply the embezzlement of public funds for the benefit of their interests. This is the case of Cameroon where most of the former ministers were arrested and sent to prison for reasons of public embezzlement to the tune of millions and billions since 2006¹⁷. The son of former Senegal president Abdoulaye Wade was imprisoned for embezzlement of public funds. It is a new form of crime experienced by African countries with the lack of alternation at the top of most African States. In South Africa, there is a sharp increase of crime.

Crime and fight for the alternation:

Many countries of sub Saharan Africa experience an increase in crime due to the many conflicts of alternation which turns into cross-border crime. The longevity of some African heads of State have attracted much opposition in such a manner that elections results are considered as rigged. This creates considerable tension within the populations to the point that some people organize themselves into armed bands to enter into rebellion. There is a mass recruitment of young people in these armed gangs and become great bandits with no faith or law. This is the case of the electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010, where Northern militias rejected the result of the polls and took the voice of the polls, killing thousands of children and innocent men and women. The multiple killings in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Conakry have transformed these countries into producers of 'maquisards'. In Sudan the country split up. In South Africa the struggle between black and white for power spawned racial segregation before the 1990s, pushing the whites and blacks to commit racial crimes. Blacks in the townships were massacred by white and in turn organized themselves with the means that they have to organize crimes. Crime was grown in the reign of Jonas Savimbi in Angola. In RCA and DRC, the multiplication of state blows has transformed these major countries in a nest of insecurity and banditry. In order to create a State at their convenience, Islamist groups have stood since the 2000 in the sub-saharan Africa by organising a new form of crime known as terrorism. Attacks are launched every week by these Islamist groups in these countries. Somalia, the Kenya are dominated by the Shabaab, Mali by extremists. Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon by Boko Haram. These terrorist movements plunder, rape, kill and remove defenceless populations.

Furthermore the fraudulent exploitation of natural resources in the DRC allowed rebel groups to obtain the funding they needed to continue their fight. These militias engaged in plundering the populations and to dominate the areas with rich resources¹⁸. The Mai - Mai Sheka, corresponds, according to the Group of Experts of the United Nations, to "*the creation of a criminal network*" The national army, no doubt is a perfect example of armed group motivated by the sole concern to exploit mineral wealth. Sheka, the Mai - Mai leader, is not military in origin, but is long in various capacities, in mining

¹⁵ Jean François Bayart, la criminalisation de l'état en Afrique, Bruxelles, éditions complexe, 1997, 167 p. recueil d'articles de Jean François Bayart, Stephen Ellis et Béatrice Hibou.

¹⁶ Sandrine Trouvelot dans : Alternatives Economiques, n°150, juillet 1997.

¹⁷ C'est le cas de l'ancien directeur des impôts et des finances Mr Polycarpe ABAH ABAH, de Mr Olanuena Awono Urbain ex ministre de la santé publique, Mr Inoni Éphraïm ex premier ministre du Cameroun, Mr Atangana Mebara ex secrétaire général de la présidence, pour ne citer que ceux-là.

¹⁸ Les rapports du groupe d'experts des Nations unies sur la RDC établissent clairement que ces groupes sont impliqués dans la contrebande de minéraux et utilisent les revenus qu'ils en tirent pour se procurer les armes

activities, especially with a cooperative of miners at the mine of cassiterite from Bisie in Nord-Kivu¹⁹. This group has committed many abuses, including the rapes in Walikale, in order to obtain the recognition of the authorities and force them to negotiate with him. The increase in crime is linked to the transition in South Africa²⁰. The general concern over the growth of crime rates coincides with a period of intense need for transition. It exercised an influence on the opportunities for former detainees released by the prison administration with the fall of apartheid. Rural assassinations are a spectacular example of the erosion of apartheid²¹. The political battles that have metamorphosed into criminal conflicts because of violence perpetuated at the Kwa Zulu-natal is now seen as more criminal than the policy, although the fighters have not changed²². Of "self-defence units formed under apartheid among some particularly poor black populations have degenerate in gangs of economic control of the territory.

Crisis of alternation and birth of the cross-border crisis

Most military crisis in the sub-saharan Africa are fuel crimes to a point of involving different countries. It is the case a transnational organized crime in Guinea-Bissau in the mid 1990s²³. The existence of this system is a typical phenomenon of advanced modernity, amplified by globalization. Indeed, the particularity of these criminal groups is that they are very young and particularly dangerous. Some are equipped with weapons that the national security forces cannot to obtain. In the course of the investigation, we learn that these weapons came from a share of some officers who sold them on the black market or rented them to feed their families and that gangs are provided directly in Liberia and Sierra Leone, two countries that had emerged particularly from deadly civil wars.

From the system set up by President Lansana Conté (1934-2008), it is necessary to show a State capable, fair and strong. An objective which allowed the sacrifice of the young generation to build a State of criminogenic by the bankrupt and delinquent character of its institutions. We must remember that at this time, no action has been taken against officers who rented or sold their weapons in the black market. During the trial, Mathias Leno, the supposed leader of the gang, said that most people possess weapons: *If we have a weapon where it takes us, it will burn us*²⁴. According to Doura Cherif, in 1995 *"These young people had managed to take the city by storm, they objected to any authority, to establish the security and even the army; because nobody could think they can do it, that they could organize such things."*²⁵ This statement shows that the authorities in Conakry had difficulties in dealing with this type of crime, also the political will of those authorities to make these young people *"the enemy public"*. Note that the wars of Liberia and Sierra Leone, two countries bordering Guinea have increased insecurity in the subregion with rebels in Guinea's borders, and an influx of refugees. Doura Cherif thinks in a broader social problem, worldwide phenomenon, for him, there's an interpenetration of the world, "what is American morning may be Guinean in the evening". But what Doura Cherif did not say, are the reasons for the increase of crime in Guinea²⁶. There is a marked instability and security problems in the Central African Republic, and the presence of criminal activities of armed groups in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

¹⁹Rapport final du Groupe d'experts sur la République démocratique du Congo (publication des Nations Unies, 29 novembre 2010, S/2010/596

²⁰IBID, paragraphe

²¹Show M, « policing the transformation Institute for security studies », Monograph, n°12 (1997)

²²Le Weekly mail Guardian du 11 septembre 1998 relate et détail l'opinion d'un fermier indien persuadé que la situation des ouvriers s'est améliorée quand les ouvriers agricoles pensent le contraire. in las annales de la recherche, pp 83-84

²³Archives de la Radio guinéenne sur le procès des gangs de décembre 1994 et janvier 1995.

²⁴RTG, 1995. Il faut rappeler que certains voleurs dans leur fuite et cernés par les populations cherchaient désespérément un poste de police pour s'y réfugier. Ainsi, plusieurs gamins ont trouvé la mort pour le vol d'un sac de riz, d'une petite somme d'argent ou même d'un paquet de cigarette. Voir à ce sujet, Amnesty International, 1991. Voir également Amnesty International, 1994; Amnesty International

²⁵Déclaration du premier Président de la Cour d'appel de Conakry

²⁶Témoignage de Boubacar Sow. Voir le film documentaire *Mathias, le procès des gangs* (Fofana, 1997).

Inter-communal violence is very disturbing²⁷. The phenomenon of the roadblockers magnitude spread into the borders of Cameroon, the RCA, and Chad with armed gangs. Weapons came from the conflicts in the sub region and this promoted banditry. There exist the trafficking in persons through trafficking in human organs, women and children in the sub region. Moreover, the fall of apartheid in Africa South, has led to loosening of controls at the borders which has opened new avenues to organized crime. We witness development of transnational criminal activities, including drug and diamond business²⁸. The normalization of international relations helped crime to grow. Away from hard drugs, South Africa has become a transit centre and a market of first importance. In Central Africa, Cameroon Central African Republic and Chad borders experienced several phenomena of crime. First the phenomenon whose actors are called «Zarguina»²⁹, example taken from a village called Touboro 425 km from the regional capital of Cameroon where these road blockers operated from April to June 2002³⁰. Thirteen villages in the area suffered. These criminals used two techniques to achieve their end: the headquarters of the village and the ambush on the roads. They operated with weapons developed and especially teams whose sizes vary between 15 and 20 members. Real gangs organized with a leader at their head, they loot, kill, rape and kidnap for their purposes. Also was the seleka of RCA who settled on the borders of Cameroon attacking villages and abducting farmers and their livestock and finally the Boko Haram sect in the extreme north of Cameroon which terrorised populations, pill kills, rape in villages and use suicide bombers to kill the populations.

CONCLUSION

The widespread of crime in the sub-Saharan Africa is caused by population growth in the cities. Many people leave their village for the city because they want to improve their living conditions. As the economy is weaker from the devaluation of the CFA, the various crises of alternation, positioning wars is making these populations in the continent to live below the poverty line margin, despite of many riches of the subsoil. Poor governance, globalization and the globalization of media via internet, corruption and longevity in power, poverty, youth unemployment are factors that promote the expansion of crime.

To curb up crime, governments should therefore consider how to fight against this constantly growing plagues. It is an over border issue, from New-York, passing through France, the leitmotif is the same. If physical borders are closed, the borders of communication are open and do a lot of victims, through internet and telephone. Crimes are organized around the world through these communication networks. The authorities have shown their limits to control the expansion of crime. It requires a change in mentality, education of the population. Indeed, populations are awaiting solutions from the State while some attempt to organize themselves with or without the help of the State through committees of vigilance and self-defense in the districts.

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²⁷ 20 novembre 2013, 7065^{ème} séances du conseil de sécurité

²⁸ Gastrow P., « organised crime in south Africa », ISS Monograph n°28, 1998

²⁹ Expression locale qui signifie coupeurs de route

³⁰ Claude ABE, la violence endémique en Afrique, pratique et productivité de la criminalité transfrontalière en Afrique Centrale, bulletin de l'APAD, p.10

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