The Causes & Costs of War in Africa From Liberation Struggles to the 'War on Terror

1 author:

Paul Zeleza
United States International University

31 PUBLICATIONS 301 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

All content following this page was uploaded by Paul Zeleza on 11 January 2017.

The user has requested enhancement of the downloaded file.
Violent conflicts of one type or another have afflicted Africa and exacted a heavy toll on the continent’s societies, polities and economies, robbing them of their developmental potential and democratic possibilities. The causes of the conflicts are as complex as the challenges of resolving them are difficult. But their costs cannot be in doubt, nor the need, indeed the urgency, to resolve them, if the continent is to navigate the twenty-first century more successfully than it did the twentieth, a century that was marked by the depredations of colonialism and its debilitating legacies and destructive post-colonial disruptions. The magnitude and impact of these conflicts are often lost between hysteria and apathy – the panic expressed among Africa’s friends and the indifference exhibited by its foes – for a continent mired in, and supposedly dying from, an endless spiral of self-destruction.

The distortions that mar discussions and depictions of African conflicts are rooted in the long-standing tendency to treat African social phenomena as peculiar and pathological, beyond the pale of humanity, let alone rational explanation. Yet, from a historical and global perspective, Africa has been no more prone to violent conflicts than other regions. Indeed, Africa’s share of the more than 180 million people who died from conflicts and atrocities during the twentieth century is relatively modest: in the sheer scale of casualties there is no equivalent in African history to Europe’s First and Second World Wars, or even the civil wars and atrocities in revolutionary Russia and China. The worst bloodletting in twentieth-century Africa occurred during the colonial period in King Leopold’s Congo Free State (White 2003).

This is not to underestimate the immense impact of violent conflicts on Africa. It is merely to emphasize the need for more balanced debate and commentary, to put African conflicts in both global and historical perspectives. Not only are African conflicts inseparable from the conflicts of the twentieth century – the most violent century in world history; many postcolonial conflicts are rooted in colonial conflicts. There is hardly any zone of conflict in contemporary Africa that cannot trace its sordid violence to colonial history and even the late nineteenth century. ‘For instance’, to quote Niels Kastfelt (2005:2), ‘the region from the southern Sudan through northern Uganda to Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo – now the scene of brutal civil
wars and genocide – has a long history of colonial violence in the form of slave trading, slave labor, plantation labor, plantation terror and a violent gun culture which all have to be taken into account when explaining the contemporary situation. Thus, it cannot be overemphasized that African conflicts are remarkably unexceptional: they have complex histories; they exhibit multiple and multidimensional causes, courses and consequences.

The papers in this two-volume collection seek to advance our understanding of African conflicts by going beyond the conventional and fashionable analyses of Africanist scholarship, often inflected with, if not infected by, Afropessimism, or the simplistic stereotypes conveyed in the Western media that are infused with Afrophobia. The first volume examines the causes and costs of violent conflicts in Africa, and the second focuses on the challenges of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Combining sophisticated theoretical insights and rich empirical details, the authors, collectively, illuminate the forces and factors that generate violent conflicts and the effects that these conflicts have on socioeconomic development, political stability, democratic freedoms, human rights, cultural progress, and even environmental sustainability. There can be no singular explanation for or solution to Africa’s conflicts. At best, one can only say that these conflicts are rooted in the complex constructions and conjunctures of Africa’s political economies, social identities, and cultural ecologies as configured out of specific local, national, and regional historical experiences and patterns of insertion into, and engagement with, an ever-changing world system. In so far as the causes of the conflicts are multiple in their dynamics – internal and external, local and transnational, economic and political, social and cultural, historical and contemporary, objective and subjective, material and ideological, concrete and emotive, real and rhetorical – the strategies for managing and resolving them can only be multidimensional. This collection of essays is as strong in unraveling the sources of violent conflict in postcolonial Africa as it is in unveiling the various conflict resolution mechanisms that have been tried across the continent, and in showcasing the successes and failures of several post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Its strength lies in the sobriety and seriousness of its analysis and the solutions proffered that transcend the facile observations often encountered in the academic literature and popular media.

This Introduction is divided into three parts. First, I provide a broad historiographical survey of the typologies of wars in Africa in which I distinguish between five types, namely, what I call imperial wars, anti-colonial wars, intra-state wars, inter-state wars, and international wars. Second, I look at the current US ‘war on terror’, its causes, its connections with Africa’s other wars, and its unfolding consequences for the continent. Third, I examine the political economy and cultural ecology of war, singling out the political and structural dynamics of African wars, their economic and social dimensions, gender inflections and implications, their transnational and imperial contexts, and their costs and consequences, subjects on which the chapters in this volume concentrate. In the conclusion, I briefly explore other critical aspects of African wars, especially the generational, religious and diasporic dimensions of these wars.
Typologies of War in Twentieth-Century Africa

During the twentieth century Africa was ravaged by wars of one type or another. Some of them, especially the liberation wars, were part of the momentous mission to remake African societies, to regain Africa’s historical agency so cruelly seized by Europe through colonialism. At the dawn of the twenty-first century Africa, is faced with a new form of war even as it desperately seeks to quench the wars of the last century. This is the US-led ‘war on terror’, a crusade that knows no spatial or temporal bounds, spares no expense, leaves a trail of wanton destruction, and wrecks havoc on the infrastructures of global order, development and democracy. To date, two governments have been toppled, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, by savage wars of conquest reminiscent of the wars of colonization of a bygone era.

Africa’s wars since the late nineteenth century can be differentiated in terms of their causal factors and dynamics, spatial scales and locations, temporal scope and duration, composition of perpetrators and combatants, military equipment and engagements deployed, impacts on military and civilian populations, and consequences on politics, the economy, society, the environment, and even on cultural structures and mental states as mediated and filtered, as all social processes and practices are, through the enduring and hierarchical inscriptions of gender, class, age, ethnicity, and sometimes race and religion. Each of these dimensions could be singled out for analytical and classificatory purposes. In this essay, I distinguish between five types of wars, basing the distinction primarily on their political thrust and ideological tendencies: imperial wars, anti-colonial wars, intra-state wars, inter-state wars, and international wars. It cannot be over-emphasized, however, that in reality there are close and complex interconnections between these wars. Nevertheless, the classification does have heuristic value. According to this schema, the ‘war on terror’ is not new; it exhibits various characteristics of four of the five typologies, especially imperial and international wars.

For each of these typologies further subdivisions can be made. Three main forms of imperial wars can be identified in twentieth-century African history. The first two, the First and Second World Wars, were fought when much of Africa was still under colonial rule. African involvement in the two wars consisted, first, of providing troops, second, of serving as a theatre of war, and third, of the mobilization of production for the war effort. Hundreds of thousands of people from the colonies were conscripted into colonial armies or incorporated into metropolitan armies to fight on behalf of their imperial power against the other European powers, and, in the case of the Second World War, against imperial Japan as well. During the First World War parts of East and West Africa served as important theaters of war, while North Africa was a crucial combat zone during both wars. Colonial production, extraverted and coercive as it already was, was ruthlessly reorganized to produce record amounts of primary agricultural and mineral commodities for the imperial armies and economies. All in all, Africa made
massive contributions to the two world wars at the expense of its own development, although the wars created the conditions and contradictions that galvanized anti-colonial nationalism (Page 1987, 2000; Miller 1974; Osuntokun 1979; Kerslake 1997; Killingray and Rathbone 1986; UNESCO 1985; Sainsbury 1979; Oberst 1991; Akurang-Parry 2002a, 2002b).

The Cold War constituted the third imperial war of the twentieth century in which Africa was implicated directly and indirectly, ideologically and militarily, politically and economically. It started when most African countries were still under colonial rule, but heated up during decolonization and after independence. This may have been a Cold War for the superpowers and their key allies in NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but it generated hot proxy-wars in many parts of the global South, especially in a postcolonial Africa desperately trying to forge nation-states out of the cartographic contraptions of colonialism and to rid itself of the last vestiges of colonialism in the settler laagers of Southern Africa. From the Congo to the Horn of Africa to Southern Africa, the Cold War fomented or facilitated destructive wars and conflicts (Kalb 1982; Issa-Salwe 2000; Percox 2004; Noer 1985; Borstelmann 1993; Harbeson and Rothchild 1995; Munene et al. 1995; Akinrinade and Sesay 1999; Oyebade and Alao 1998; Gordon et al. 1998).

In fact, Mahmood Mamdani (2004) claims, it was in Africa that the US strategy of proxy-war to ‘roll back’, not simply ‘contain’, radical states, was first concocted with the formation of what he calls Africa’s first terrorist organization, RENAMO in Mozambique, which was bankrolled by racist Rhodesia and later apartheid South Africa and received American political support. Soon, the RENAMO model was exported to Nicaragua where the Contras were set up. It all culminated in the attempted ‘rollback’ of the Soviet empire itself in Afghanistan. It was then that the process began of ideologizing war as religious and privatizing it through the creation of a global network of Islamic fighters who would later come to haunt the US. Thus, while the Cold War may have created auspicious conditions for, and even accelerated, decolonization and enabled African states to gain international influence by manipulating superpower rivalries, the developmental, democratic and humanitarian costs of the wars it engendered or aggravated were extremely high, and persisted even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Indeed, it could be argued that the current US ‘war on terror’ is a direct outcome of the late Cold War.

Anti-colonial wars can be subdivided into two groups. To begin with, there were wars waged against the colonial conquest itself, that were later followed by wars of liberation from colonial rule. The first set of wars involved both conventional and guerrilla wars against invading imperial armies that often contained African troops from other territories or communities within the territory already brought to colonial heel. On the whole, strong centralized states tended to wage conventional wars and after their defeat embark on guerrilla war, while smaller and weaker states or acephalous societies resorted to guerrilla warfare from the beginning. Examples of this abound across the continent and are well illustrated in the case of West Africa and Southern Africa where colonial conquest lasted for decades (Crowder 1978; Ranger 1967; Isaacman 1976; Boahen 1990). As is well known, only Ethiopia managed to win decisively against the
European invaders to retain its independence, although in 1935 Mussolini’s fascist Italy returned to avenge the defeat of 1896 and redeem its lost imperial glory, and brutally occupied the country for six years (Dilebo 1996; Milkias 2005). The wars of conquest – pacification they were called in the self-serving and sanitized rhetoric of empire – exacted a heavy demographic price, which, when combined with the predations of primitive colonial accumulation, most graphically and grimly illustrated in King Leopold’s genocidal ‘red rubber’ tyranny in the Congo that slaughtered 10 million people (Hochschild 1998), led to the deaths of many millions of people and spawned such vast dislocations that some medical historians have called the years between 1890 and 1930 ‘the unhealthiest period in all African history’ (Patterson and Hartwig 1978: 4).

The wars of liberation, often triggered by the obduracy of settler minority regimes supported by the Western powers in defence of global wealth and whiteness, against appeals of common sense and decades of peaceful protests by the colonized, also exacted horrendous costs. The brutal story and statistics from Algeria are well known – more than a million dead (Horne 1978; Talbott 1980; Shepard 2006; Alexander et al. 2002; Maran 1989). Angola and Mozambique have their own tragic tales to tell of horrendous liberation wars and atrocities perpetrated by fascist Portugal aided by NATO (Marcum 1969–78; Harsch and Thomas 1976; Davidson 1972; Birmingham 1992; Cann 1997). So do Zimbabwe where a protracted guerrilla war was fought under the delusionary obstinacy of Ian Smith’s regime (Ranger 1985; Lan 1985; Kriger 1992; Bhebe and Ranger 1995, 1996), and Namibia under the illegal usurpation of apartheid South Africa (Herbstein and Evenson 1989; Leys and Saul 1995; Namhila 1997; Emmett 1999). And that beloved country itself, South Africa, trapped longer than any in murderous racial fantasies, was rendered increasingly ungovernable by civil unrest and guerrilla attacks that led to the demise of apartheid in 1994. Even Kenya’s war of national liberation – dubbed Mau Mau by the colonialists – that was once seen as less ferocious than the liberation wars of Southern Africa, now appears to have been waged with a staggering level of imperial viciousness; some 1.5 million people were detained, a far cry from the official figure of 80,000 (Elkins 2005).

The anti-colonial wars were protracted and brutal; in some cases hardly a generation passed before wars against colonization turned into wars from colonialism. These were defensive, unavoidable wars, waged at enormous cost in African lives and livelihoods, driven by the desire to maintain or regain political autonomy, the precondition for establishing the social contract of democracy, the political culture of human rights, and the economic possibilities of development. While these struggles liberated African societies from colonialism, in many cases they left a lasting legacy of conflict that, sooner or later, festered and erupted into vicious post-colonial conflicts, as happened in Algeria in the 1990s (Martínez 2000; Volpi 2003) and in postcolonial Angola and Mozambique where UNITA and RENAMO served as ‘apartheid’s contras’, as William Minter (1994) calls them (also see Ciment 1997; Ekwe-Ekwe 1990; Dinerman 2006). Indeed, the unfinished business of liberation is at the heart of the current crisis and conflict in Zimbabwe (Hammar et al. 2003; Carmody 2001; Campbell...
not to mention other countries in the region, including South Africa where high levels of violence persist and struggles are raging for the future of the country and the soul of the ruling ANC (Melber 2003; Gumede 2005; Gordon 2006). It is also important to remember that Africa’s anti-colonial wars, which helped to bring to an end the ‘age of empire’ transformed European and world history. For example, the crisis engendered by the Algerian war ushered in the Fifth Republic in France and decolonization in Mozambique and Angola liberated Portugal itself from four decades of fascism. Thus, by dismantling the colonial empires and undermining the architecture of imperial racism, Africa’s liberation wars encouraged Europe to ‘re-humanize itself’, in Ali Mazrui’s (2003: 21) memorable phrase.

Unfortunately, independence brought little respite from the ravages of war for people in many countries. The instabilities and insecurities of postcolonial Africa are rooted in the political and cultural economies of both colonialism and the post-independence order itself that are latched on to the shifting configurations and conjunctures of the international division of labor, especially the legacies and challenges of state-making and nation-building, on the one hand, and the struggles over underdevelopment, dependency, and sustainable development, on the other; how to establish modern societies that are politically, economically and technologically viable in a highly competitive, unequal and exploitative world. The diversities of Africa’s nation-states, the fact that they are almost invariably multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural in the midst of relatively high levels of material poverty and uneven spatial and social development, and have until recently been dominated by authoritarian and corrupt governments, created a combustible mix that periodically erupted into open conflict and warfare. At the heart of all these conflicts and wars are struggles over power and resources; power cohered around the state and its governance structures, developmental capacities, delegative practices and distributional propensities, and resources in terms of their availability, control and access. Resources may be abundant or scarce, and either condition can be a source of conflict, depending on the organization and patterns of control and access. Control can be articulated in binding legal or flexible customary terms, embodied in community, corporate or state entities, and it might imply exclusionary or open access. The mediations of access include the trinity of contemporary analytical discourse – class, gender, and ethnicity (race in the global white North) – to which we have to add, at least in the African context, the constructions and identities of religion, region and generation. The regimes of access are further characterized and affected by gradations or scales of limitation.

It is obviously not possible in an introduction to give an extended account of Africa’s postcolonial wars, except to point out that they have taken two major forms, intra-state and inter-state wars. Each in turn can be further subdivided. In terms of their objectives, we could distinguish six types of intra-state wars: secessionist wars, irredentist wars, wars of devolution, wars of regime change, wars of social banditry, and armed inter-communal insurrections. By secessionist wars I refer to wars fomented by groups or regions that seek to secede from the postcolonial polity and establish an independent nation-state. The most famous example is that of the secession of the Igbo-dominated provinces in south-eastern Nigeria that proclaimed
an independent republic of Biafra, which triggered the civil war that cost Nigeria dearly in terms of the numbers of people who died – up to a million – not to mention the destruction of material resources and the social and political capital of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations, national cohesion, and democratic governance (Harneit-Sievers et al. 1997; Okocha 1994; Oyeweso 1992).

Irredentist wars are generated when a group in one country seeks to be united or reunited with the country to which it is ethnically or historically related. Struggles by Somalis in Kenya and Ethiopia wishing for unification with Somalia constitute the best known cases of irredentist conflicts and wars (Carment 2006; Laitin and Samatar 1987; Schraeder 2006; Mburu 2005). The Somali government often supported Somali rebels in the neighboring countries, thereby turning irredentist claims and conflicts into inter-state wars, as was the case during the Somali-Ethiopian wars over the Somali-populated Ogaden region of Ethiopia in 1964-67 and 1977-78 (Dougherty 1982; Gorman 1981; Selassie 1980).

Wars of devolution are spawned by attempts by marginalized ethnic, religious and regional groups to renegotiate the terms of incorporation into the state and the national political space and their objective is decentralization rather than outright secession (Veney 2006). The long-running civil war in the Sudan, rooted in the history of colonial divisions, uneven development, exploitation and marginalization between the North and the South, was reignited in 1983 following the introduction of Sharia – Islamic law – by the Numeiri regime and disputes over sharing oil riches, and it persisted until the signing of a peace agreement in early January 2005 by which time more than 4 million people had been displaced and many more killed (Iyob and Khadiagala 2006; Johnson 2003; Khalid 2003; Kebbede 1999). But in the meantime, another regional conflict, also based on the effects of marginalization and resource disputes, had erupted in the Dar Fur region (Ardenne-van der Hoeven et al. 2006; Flint and de Waal 2005; Totten and Markusen 2006).

Wars of regime change are those often engineered by self-described revolutionary movements that seek to overthrow the existing government and establish a new socio-economic dispensation, including conditions and content of citizenship. An important example is the National Resistance Movement-Army (NRM-A) of Yoweri Museveni, which captured power in Uganda in 1986, the second guerrilla organization in an African country – after Chad – to succeed in doing so (Amaza 1998; Kasozi 1994; Mamdani 1995; Kabwegyere 2000). Since then, wars of regime change have been waged in various countries from Liberia to Sierra Leone to Ivory Coast (Adebajo 2002; Moran 2006; Marshall-Fratani 2006), and from Somalia to Ethiopia to the two Congos, often with disastrous results that have often led, not to state reconstruction as in Uganda and Ethiopia, but rather to state retrenchment or even collapse, as in Somalia (Kusow 2004; Lyons and Samatar 1995). Some of the movements waging these wars are best considered, like RENAMO, as ‘terrorist’ in their unwillingness to distinguish between military and civilian targets; indeed, they thrive on perpetrating systematic violence against civilians to demonstrate the incapacity of the state to protect them.
By wars of social banditry I mean widespread acts of violence that are socially organized against the state and other social institutions, with the objective not of capturing state power as such but of creating chaotic conditions that are conducive to predatory accumulation. There is a rich historical literature that distinguishes between criminal banditry and constructive banditry that is redressive, redistributive and protective in nature (Isacman 1976; Crummey 1986). While mindful of such distinctions and of the role of social banditry in traditions of anti-colonial resistance and protest, in this context I use the notion less in its heroic conception and context and more in terms of its corrosive effects on state institutions, its propensity, indeed purpose, to destroy organized collective political life, to dissipate it in fiercely competitive and combative enclaves of power and accumulation led by warlords (Reno 1998; Thomas et al. 2005; Alao et al. 1999; Lezhne 2005). To be sure, warlords and ‘terrorists’ became interchangeable in some parts of Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), but the inability of some of these groups to capture and restructure state power might be an indication of their very banditry, of their lack of interest in exercising state power. Post-Siad Barre Somalia presents the quintessential manifestation of social banditry in postcolonial Africa.

For their part, armed inter-communal insurrections are often episodic eruptions of violence, sparked by specific incidents that stoke long simmering antagonisms, anxieties and aggressions. They can lead to great loss of life and if unchecked can mutate into prolonged warfare between ethnic and regional militias, which in turn can develop into guerrilla armies that threaten the viability of the nation-state. The periodic explosions of genocidal violence in Rwanda and Burundi, demonstrated most horrifically in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, show the potential destructiveness of inter-communal conflicts abetted by the state and reinforced by the devastations of economic stagnation, as well as the politicization and manipulation of ethnic differences by a cynical and bankrupt political class. Militant or militarized ethnicity is evident in many other countries currently undergoing democratization, as the tensions and twists arising from the competitive politics of democracy often find articulation in the entrenched identities, idioms and institutions of ethnic solidarity. In Nigeria, for example, democratization has led to the resurgence of ethnic identities and the proliferation of regional and local struggles over the entitlements of citizenship expressed in the language of ‘indigenes’ and ‘settlers’. These struggles have increasingly spilled into the formation of ethnic militias that have wrought havoc on Nigeria’s civil society, unleashing periodic convulsions of inter-communal violence (Vickers 2000; Aghu 2004; Osaghae 1996).

Postcolonial Africa has experienced inter-state wars, although on a far lesser scale than other regions and in comparison with the prevalence of intra-state conflicts. This is perhaps a lingering tribute to the inviolability of national borders in the collective African political imaginary that was sanctified by the charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union inaugurated in 2001. One can distinguish, in terms of the combatants involved, between bilateral wars and multilateral wars. Bilateral include the Somali-Ethiopian war of 1978–9,
the Tanzania-Uganda war of 1978–9, and the Eritrea-Ethiopian war of 1998-2000, and the multilateral wars are illustrated by the multinational war over the DRC that started in 1998 and was still going on by the end of 2004. The war between Tanzania and Uganda was prompted by Uganda’s invasion of northern Tanzania, and Tanzania was only too keen to rid the region of the detested Idi Amin regime (Avirgan and Honey 1982; Kiwanuka 1979). The rather senseless war between the two impoverished neighbors and erstwhile allies, Ethiopia and Eritrea, was provoked by border, currency and trade disputes and characterized by mass deportations and mobilization, and trench warfare reminiscent of the First World War (Negash and Tronvoll 2000; Fessehatzion 2002; Jacquin-Berdal and Plaut 2005). The DRC war, bred and superimposed on an already ferocious civil war, was fueled by a mad scramble for the country’s vast mineral, forestry and agricultural resources, and involved Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe on the side of the DRC government and Rwanda and Uganda on the side of the rebels (Khadiagala 2006; Nest 2006; Adelman and Rao 2004; Clark 2002). The destructiveness of these wars was incalculable in the loss of human life and damage to material infrastructure and environmental resources. By the end of 2004, according to several estimates, the war in the DRC alone had claimed a staggering 3 to 4 million lives (Institute for Peace and Justice 2005; Care News 2005; Fonseca 2004; Hawkins 2004).

International wars, fought either outside the continent’s borders in which African troops are involved or against foreign countries, constitute the fifth major form of wars in which postcolonial Africa has been involved. Here we can identify four major types of international wars: first, the use of African troops in international peace-keeping operations, mostly under the auspices of the United Nations; second, the Arab-Israeli war; third, the recruitment of African combatants or mercenaries in international theaters of war; and fourth, African participation in the American-led ‘war on terror’. Since the end of the Cold War the developed countries have become increasingly reluctant to deploy peace-keeping troops in conflicts in the global South, including those in Africa. While it is widely known that thousands of foreign troops, often under UN auspices, as well as African troops under regional organizations such as ECOWAS and the AU, are deployed in peace-keeping missions in regions and countries plagued by conflict across the continent, it is little appreciated that African peace-keeping troops are deployed in foreign conflicts (Bellamy and Williams 2005; Singer 2001; Rotberg et al. 2000; Adebajo and Sriram 2001; Francis 2005). For example, in 2003, 21 African countries reportedly contributed 10,191 troops – or 23 per cent – of 43,007 troops deployed worldwide, with contributions ranging from four from Côte d’Ivoire to 3,340 from Nigeria (Sura and Hagen 2005).

Several African countries, principally in North Africa led by Egypt, have been directly involved in four of the six Arab-Israeli wars: the first in 1948–9 following the establishment of the Israeli state; the second in October-November 1956, after Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal, in which Israel was supported by Britain and France; the third in June 1967 in which Israel captured more Arab lands and Egypt’s Sinai peninsula; the fourth in October 1973 in which Egypt and its allies scored some early
victories and after which the OAU called for African states to break diplomatic relations with Israel and all but three did; the fifth in 1982–4 involving the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, by which time Egypt had signed a peace treaty with Israel; and the sixth in July–August 2006 when Israel invaded Lebanon again, this time to fight the Lebanese movement, Hezbollah (Gawrych 2000; Laskier 2004; Kokole 1993; Peters 1992; Ojo 1988; Oded 1987).

The conflicts in Western Asia – the Middle East of imperial cartography – became a magnet for recruits from several African countries. In the 1980s Afghanistan became the epicenter of the last gasps of the Cold War. The US was determined to turn the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan into the Soviet Vietnam, and it was only too happy to recruit, train and support the mujahadeen (Mamdani 2004). Among the militant Muslims who flocked to Afghanistan were thousands from Algeria, Egypt, the Sudan and other African countries who would later return and form the backbone of radical Islamist movements – what the Western media call Islamic fundamentalism – that launched campaigns of terror against discredited secular states and institutions and individuals associated with Western modernity. Algeria found itself caught in this bloody maelstrom following the aborted elections of 1992 in which the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win. In the ensuing civil war multitudes were killed, up to an estimated 150,000 by 2000. The case of the Algerian civil war brings into sharp relief the intricate connections in some of Africa’s contemporary wars between domestic and international factors, reformist and reactionary motivations, secular and religious movements. This war and many others represent the clash of modernisms – modern political Islam and the modernizing neocolonial state (Volpi 2003; Bonora-Waisman 2003).

Africa & the Current ‘War on Terror’

The US-led ‘war on terror’ that Africa and other parts of the world are increasingly being expected to fight is clearly not new. It has elements of the imperial wars, inter-state wars, intra-state wars and international wars described above. Fundamentally lacking in many of these wars and the ‘war on terror’ is the liberatory logic of anti-colonial wars. The ‘war on terror’ is an imperial war in so far as it seeks to advance the agenda of the world’s pre-eminent imperial power, the United States. It obviously involves intense conflicts between and within states, and is international in its scope. While wars against terror are not new, the current US-led war is occurring in new contexts characterized by four key developments in the world system. The first is globalization, both as a historical process and as an ideological project. Interconnectedness among the world’s continents, countries and cultures, in temporal and spatial terms, has intensified through new communication and transport technologies that have accelerated the flows of capital and commodities, ideas and individuals, and values and viruses, and facilitated the growth of transnational movements and reflexivities. At the same time, the world political economy is becoming more regionalized as blocs emerge or are consolidated to fulfill long-
standing dreams of pan-territorial or racial solidarities and to mediate the corrosive and competitive pressures of contemporary globalization.

It is also a conjuncture characterized by democratization as marked by an increase in the number of states following and abiding by features of democratic governance, minimally characterized by elections and multi-party politics, the pluralization of associational life and the expansion of political space thanks to the unrelenting struggles of social movements, and the emergence of a global rhetoric of democracy – the so-called ‘third wave’. Most of these developments coincided, or became more visible, with the end of the Cold War. The US emerged as the single superpower, which in its triumphalism sought to impose a new order on a world that was less amenable to superpower management and manipulation because it was becoming more globalized, regionalized and democratized. This is at the heart of the conundrum of US global policy and standing, a hyperpower whose hysterical unilateralism finds few adherents even among its European allies. Faced with diminishing global economic power and little political and moral capital, the US increasingly relies on naked military force to enforce its will, now in the name of an amorphous ‘terrorism’. And the rest of the world is expected to embrace the ‘war on terror’ as its own.

In discussing the ‘war on terror’, we need to pay attention to the analytical problems it poses, namely, its conceptions, causes, constructions, consequences and challenges, that is, how it is defined, generated, waged, and the effects it leaves behind and the political and policy issues it presents. Needless to say, there is considerable controversy on how the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘war’ are defined. Africans remember only too well how their liberation movements and leaders used to be called ‘terrorists’ by the imperialists. There is also the problem of the identity of ‘terrorists’ as state and non-state actors. The tendency is to depict ‘terrorists’ as non-state actors and to talk of states in terms of ‘state-sponsors of terrorism’ when in fact historically states have perpetrated some of the worst acts of terrorism. After years of much deliberation and disagreement, the United Nations finally in December 2004 issued a report that recognized that the perpetrators of terrorism can be both state and non-state actors and placed emphasis on attacks on civilians and non-combatants, noting that terrorism flourishes in conditions of poverty, inequality, oppression, humiliation, conflict and occupation (United Nations 2004).

No less problematic is the description of the ‘war on terror’ as ‘war’. What sort of war is it? Who are the combatants and enemies in this war? What are its spatial and temporal boundaries? If it is a ‘war’, then surely it must be subject to international conventions of war, yet the US treats the prisoners of its ‘war on terror’ outside any acceptable legal standards at the ‘legal black hole’ of Guantánamo Bay in Cuba where abducted suspects from around the world, including children, have been subjected to incommunicado interrogations and indefinite detentions without trial. The scandal of Abu Ghraib in Baghdad, with its pornographic images of torture, primal degradation and gratuitous humiliation of Iraq prisoners, which unleashed a wave of worldwide dismay, contempt and anger against the United States, shows that the US believes that this ‘war’ can be waged without civilized constraints (Hoffman 2004).
The causes of the ‘war on terror’ are no less difficult to decipher. Some find an explanation in official US rhetoric about the historic effects of September 11, or doctrinal shifts in foreign policy to pre-emptive strikes and spreading democracy as the new overriding goal. Others find greater explanatory power in the structural forces of the needs of a permanent war economy and efforts to manage the opportunities and problems of globalization that reinforce US tendencies toward exceptionalism and unilateralism, or they stress the imperatives of US Western Asia policy anchored in the political economy of oil and the uncompromising defense of Israel, all of which entail and buttress what I call the republicanization of America (Zeleza 2004b).6

It could be argued that terrorism has become for the US a convenient substitute for communism, a new enemy essential for a permanent war economy and necessary to produce nationalism and promote patriotism in this new era of ‘globalization’. For a country that spends nearly half of the world’s military expenditures – there have been huge increases in US military spending since 2002 – enemies are essential, and the more ubiquitous they are the better. Terrorism fits the bill. The prefix ‘Islamic’ as in ‘Islamic terrorism’ allows for the substitution of the political language of policies and interests by the cultural language of religion and civilization. In short, it makes it possible for the US to wrap itself in self-righteousness and to demonize others for their wickedness. Nationalists and other militants in the Muslim world have inherited the appellation of ‘evil’ once used to describe the Soviet Union and to mobilize support against it, most importantly, and somewhat ironically, among militant Muslims themselves, and as a civilization Islam can be tarred with the atavisms of premodernity. Both discourses are based on, and seek to ignite, deep-seated anti-Islamic memories in Western culture. Religion and civilization make a potent mix in the clash of US imperialism and political Islam that the US itself turned from an ideological tendency into a political organization during the anti-Soviet crusade in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

All this serves to particularize and primordialize global terrorism, depicting it as an upsurge of religious fanaticism and civilizational envy in the Muslim world that has nothing to do with the policies of successive US governments, including those of the current Bush administration. The litany of the policy abominations as seen from the region is a long one indeed.7 The wide and wild application of the term ‘terrorists’, and occasionally ‘insurgents’, to apply to all opponents of US imperial policies seeks to delegitimize what is, at heart, nationalist resistance against imperialism. It is a familiar story in the annals of empire – spreading democracy and freedom as an alibi for a country – the US – that has difficulty running its own elections and has historically not respected the democratic rights and civil liberties of its own minorities.

It could be argued that the ‘war on terror’ represents an attempt by the US to recenter global hegemony around military prowess in which US power remains uncontested, although the quagmire in Iraq has dented it. It is a weapon of global domination, a declaration and demonstration of US global supremacy. The unilateralism of the ‘war on terror’ – waged illegally against all wise counsel from the United Nations and other international
organizations as well as most of the US’s European allies – reflects not only imperial hubris, the arrogance of hyperpower, but also a sense of exceptionalism, a mystical belief in the country’s manifest destiny that is so deeply rooted in its national imagination. Also, the economic prosperity enjoyed by the United States during the Second World War, which ended the Great Depression, left a deep impression regarding the positive effects of high military expenditures that has not been questioned by any administration since then.

The costs of the ‘war on terror’ have been high. As far as the US itself is concerned, the war is being fought on two fronts. First, there are the hot wars abroad, beginning with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and followed by Iraq in 2003, and there are thinly veiled threats against other ‘rogue states’, principally Iran and North Korea. Second, there is the cold war at home enacted through the imposition of a stringent homeland security regime, which threatens the civil liberties of US citizens and the rights of immigrants in which Muslims and their institutions and people of ‘Middle Eastern’ appearance have been targeted for racist attacks. By mid-November 2006, the war had directly cost a staggering $345 billion and was still rising.8

For people in the ‘war zone’ within Afghanistan and Iraq and for the surrounding countries, the war is as real as it is vicious: rampant deaths and destruction accompanied by social dislocation reflected in skyrocketing crime, rape and kidnapping, as well as economic devastation manifested in rising unemployment, destruction of the oil infrastructure, and corporate war profiteering, not to mention the social, environmental and political damage done to these countries’ health, education, environments and sovereignty. According to an article in the British medical journal, The Lancet, the Iraq war led to the deaths of an estimated 654,965 between March 2003 and July 2006 (Burnham et al. 2006).9 The figure included those who died from gunfire and direct combat as well as from increased lawlessness and the indiscriminate destruction of the country’s infrastructure that left behind shortages of medical facilities, clean drinking water, and adequate incomes and jobs. In the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 an estimated 25,000 perished. And we are only in the early days of the war.

For the rest of the world the US-led ‘war on terror’ undermines international law, the United Nations, and global security and disarmament by galvanizing terrorist groups, diverts much-needed resources for development, and promotes human rights abuses by providing governments throughout the world with a new licence for torture and mistreatment of prisoners and opponents.10 Many people around the world now regard the US, to use the words of the Council on Foreign Relations (2002), as ‘arrogant, hypocritical, self-absorbed, self-indulgent, and contemptuous of others’. In a recent report, Human Rights Watch (2005: 500) singled out the US as a major factor in eroding the global human rights system.

Africa’s geopolitical stock for Euro-America has risen in the post-2001 world, bolstered by US concerns about militant Islam, the alleged vulnerability of fragile states as sanctuaries of global terrorist networks, and the need for ‘safe’ energy resources outside the volatile Middle East.11 For Africa itself, this renewed attention has not brought any tangible benefits, whether
in increased investment or in support for its fundamental interests of development and democratization. On the contrary, the war threatens human rights in Africa and reinforces old conflicts and foments new ones. As several human rights organizations including Amnesty International (2001a: 5) have warned, draconian actions and the subversion of international humanitarian law undermine the counter-terrorism measures by invoking the very instrumentalities of terrorism in their disregard for human rights, in ostensibly pursuing security at the expense of respect for human dignity. The backlash against human rights in the US-led ‘war on terror’ has bred widespread resentment and even hatred that have swelled the ranks of the ‘insurgents’ fighting against the US in Afghanistan and Iraq and terrorists bent on attacking American interests elsewhere, and fuelled divisions between the US and many of its allies in Europe and across the world. It has also provided alibis for governments, including many in Africa, as well as international agencies, to violate or vitiate their human rights commitments and to tighten asylum laws and policies. In the meantime, military transfers to countries with poor human rights records have increased which portends ill for human rights.

Many African governments have rushed to pass broadly, badly or cynically worded anti-terrorism laws and other draconian procedural measures, and to set up special courts or allow special rules of evidence that violate fair trial rights, which they use to limit civil rights and freedoms, and to harass, intimidate, and imprison and crackdown on political opponents. This is helping to strengthen or restore a culture of impunity among the security services in many countries. Amnesty International (2003, 2004) has issued reports critical of new draft anti-terrorism laws in a number of countries from Kenya to Tunisia that threaten to undermine international human rights standards. African friends and foes of the United States have been basking in the new climate of intolerance and impudence. For example, Morocco, an archaic Western-friendly monarchy, used anti-terrorism laws to detain 5,000 people following the May 2003 bombings in the country. In Zimbabwe, a self-declared anti-imperialist enclave of tattered radical credentials, there was a sharp escalation of state-sponsored intimidation, torture, arbitrary arrests and political killings, and orchestrated attacks on the independence of the media and the judiciary (Amnesty International 2001b: 28–34).

In addition to the restrictions on political and civil rights and the subordination of human rights concerns to anti-terrorism priorities, the ‘war on terror’ is inflicting other collateral damage on Africa. As a report by Human Rights Watch (2003: 3) noted

pre-existing political tensions between Muslim and Christian populations in a number of African countries threatened to become inflamed, and increasingly violent. Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania all faced the possibility of worsening communal tensions. Bloody riots between Muslims and Christians in Kano, northern Nigeria, following demonstrations against the US bombing of Afghanistan, had already left a high death toll. A pro-Taliban demonstration was also reported in Kenya’s predominantly Muslim coastal city, Mombasa.

Western anti-travel advisories undermined the economies of countries
dependent on tourism, while increased security and defense expenditures threatened to reduce humanitarian and development assistance. In the Horn of Africa, the war on terror provides a new stimulus for age-old rivalries and conflicts and cover for discredited authoritarian regimes, as evident in attempts by the Ethiopian government to insinuate itself with the US and bolster its dented international reputation following the botched elections of 2005 by threatening to attack the movement – the Union of Islamic Courts – that seized control of much of Somalia from the warlords and the nominal government; the Islamists were accused of having links with al-Qaeda (BBC 2006; Clayton 2006).

The Political Economy & Cultural Ecology of War

Given the range and diversity of Africa’s wars, it stands to reason that their causes are as varied and complex as their courses and consequences. Some attribute these wars to the lingering legacies of colonialism, but for many, especially in the Western popular and academic media, singular ahistorical and internalist explanations tend to be offered, assigning the wars to either Africa’s primordial afflictions of ‘tribalism’, or the depredations of the continent’s proverbial poverty and inequalities, or authoritarianism and poor governance. The ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ thesis is sometimes overlaid by the ‘new barbarism’ thesis that depicts African wars as irrational and pathological. To be sure, these wars are often provoked and sustained by ethnic rivalries and polarizations, economic underdevelopment and inequalities, poor governance and elite political instability and manipulations, but these factors, individually or collectively, have a history rooted in the political economy of colonialism, postcolonialism, and neo-liberal globalization; they are as much internal in their causation and scale as they are regional and transnational, involving national, regional and international actors and networks that are simultaneously economic, political, military and social.

Much of the current literature focuses on Africa’s intra-state wars and conflicts, and especially the so-called ‘new wars’ of the post-Cold War era. It cannot be overemphasized that there is little that is new about the wars of the 1990s and early 2000s. As several critics of the so-called ‘new wars’ paradigm have pointed out, these wars are an amalgam of ‘old wars’ – the age-old inter-state, extra-state, and intra-state wars. Moreover, the ‘new wars’ can be explained using available analytical models and typologies, and there is no evidence that warfare has changed fundamentally in terms of types of participants, and patterns in the prosecution of wars, and their purposes (Henderson and Singer 2002). Analytical dichotomies tend to be drawn between the ‘new’ and ‘old’ wars in terms of their causes and motivations, levels of support, and violence. The ‘new wars’ are said to be driven by private greed rather than collective grievances like the ‘old wars’, and are depicted as criminal, depoliticized and predatory; they allegedly lack popular support, unlike the ‘old wars’ that enjoyed broad popular support; and they are executed through uncontrolled violence. These dichotomies are untenable on historical and empirical grounds: the
characteristics of both old and new civil wars are indistinguishable.¹⁷

It stands to reason that Africa’s wars and conflicts, including civil wars, are products of multiple causes and contexts, as would be evident from any study of a specific war informed by what I would call the political economy and cultural ecology of war, an approach that emphasizes and examines how political, economic, social and cultural factors cause and sustain war and conflict within and between states and societies. We need to incorporate in our analyses the interplay of historical and contemporary processes, the intersections of politics, economy and culture, the connections between local, regional and global systems, the role played by national and transnational formations, by the state, capital and civil society, and how material forces and popular discourses, institutional conditions and symbolic constructs structure and reproduce conflicts.

While this book largely focuses on intra-state or civil wars and conflicts, it examines many aspects of these wars including their political and structural dynamics, economic and social dimensions, gender inflections and implications, transnational and imperial contexts, and their costs and consequences. The collection opens with Ali Mazrui’s wide-ranging paper, which offers intriguing paradoxes that characterize conflicts in Africa. He posits, controversially, that postcolonial wars have been more ruthless than anti-colonial wars; conflicts within borders more common and ferocious than across borders; ethnic conflicts tend to be preponderant in sub-Saharan Africa and religious conflicts in Arab North Africa; conflicts between blacks and whites have been more about the distribution of economic resources, while among blacks they have largely centered on the demarcation of cultural identities; conflicts have become more prevalent as African armies have become less disciplined but better equipped; and dual societies have been more prone to conflict than plural societies. The second part of Mazrui’s paper discusses conflict resolution and anticipates many of the issues taken up in Volume II of this collection. He urges the need to cultivate toleration and foster constructive pluralization by promoting the development of multi-party systems, capitalism, federalism and more women’s political representation, improving civil-military relations, and strengthening regional integration and building innovative Pan-African institutions and mechanisms of conflict prevention, intervention and resolution.

African civil wars are often characterized or dismissed simply as ‘ethnic conflicts’. In a vigorous rebuttal of this view, Errol Henderson seeks to provide a systematic analysis of the extent to which civil wars in Africa are engendered by political, economic and cultural factors. He constructs several testable propositions related to a state’s regime type, its level of economic development, and its cultural composition. With regard to the political factors, he examines the relative propensities of autocracies, democracies and semi-democracies in generating civil wars; for the economic factors, the relative contributions of levels of economic development and military expenditures to lowering or increasing the likelihood of civil war are assessed; and for the cultural factors, the presence of ‘politicized ethnic groups’ or ‘ethno-political groups’ is analyzed. Using regression analyses, the data reveal that there is little evidence that semi-democracies, which are often associated with the likelihood of civil war
because they lack the institutional channels of dispute resolution available in democracies or the repressive capacities of autocracies, have been more prone to civil war in Africa than other regimes. Also insignificant are cultural factors, specifically the role of ethnic polarization. The economic factors are more salient: increased development is associated with a decreased likelihood of civil war, while increased military spending leads to increased likelihood of civil war. The most critical predictor of the likelihood of civil war lies in the destructive political legacies of colonialism, which left Africa with very weak and underdeveloped states, and the failure of Africa’s leaders to effectively handle the dual challenges of state-building and nation-building.

The rest of the papers elaborate on more specific causes of violent conflicts in Africa. It is common to attribute civil conflicts to structural conditions, in which the social, economic and political organization of society, specifically the existence of structural inequalities and victimization among groups, is seen as the cause of conflicts. While objective realities or interests do indeed generate conflict, some writers contend that material conditions and inequalities are not sufficient by themselves to explain the intensity, ferocity and duration of conflicts; they often provide ‘proximate causes’, and psychocultural dispositions, or subjective factors, especially the psychology of victimhood and persecution, constitute the indispensable fuel. Conflicts erupt or persist when the memories of humiliation, oppression and marginalization, both real and mythologized, are triggered through new threats (Azar and Moon 1986; Deutsch 1991; Ross 1993; Brown 1993; Namwambah 2004). Clearly, wars and conflicts arise out of the combustible interplay of objective and subjective factors, the incendiary combination of material and sociocultural conditions and political and psychological dispositions.

The role of structural and subjective factors and history and mythology in generating protracted conflict can be seen in all its devastating manifestation in the Sudan. Analyses of the Sudanese conflict have tended to reproduce dichotomies, variously presenting it as a conflict between the North and the South, Muslims and Christians, Arabs and Africans, and oppressors and oppressed. Abdel Ghaffar Ahmed notes that, while there may be elements of all of these dichotomies, none of them explains the conflict. Often ignored are the rural-urban divide, and more importantly, the role of the country’s opportunistic elite in fomenting ethnic and regional divisions that are at the root of the Sudanese conundrum. Ahmed insists on the multiple complexities of the Sudanese conflict, emphasizing the historical legacies of colonialism, which left behind underdevelopment and acute socio-economic and political marginalization for groups in peripheral regions who have been fighting for inclusion since independence. He places primary responsibility on the elite, tracing the development of this class from the colonial period and the role it has played during various phases of violent conflict in postcolonial Sudan.

If the elites are critical in safeguarding a political community, citizenship is the bond that holds that community together. Rupturing the social contract of common citizenship is a certain recipe for conflict. The question of citizenship – who belongs and does not belong to the polity – remains at the heart of many conflicts in postcolonial Africa. The Ivory Coast is a
particularly tragic example of this phenomenon. This is the subject of John Akokpari’s illuminating paper. He argues that at the heart of the conflict in that country is the citizen-stranger dichotomy and its manipulation by the political elite. Thus it is not so much the artificiality of the African state, derived as it is from a colonial construct that embraced within its cartographic enclosures diverse ethnic groups, that causes conflicts per se; rather, conflicts erupt when the state fails to manage this diversity and to fulfill its social contract with citizens – to provide social services, security and equal opportunities. The denial of the badge of citizenship to certain groups, on whatever basis, almost invariably generates conflict as the aggrieved and excluded group or groups seek the redress of political inclusion or territorial secession.

This is what happened in the Ivory Coast as the once relatively peaceful and prosperous country was rocked by economic and political crises in the 1990s in the post-Houphouet Boigny era. Akokpari contends that under Boigny’s reign ethnic diversity was managed and harmony maintained because on citizenship rights the individual was prioritized over the group, while his successors failed to do so. In fact, they sought to entrench their power in an economy reeling from the effects of economic recession and structural adjustment programs by manipulating ethnic divisions and attempting to exclude from the rights and privileges of citizenship migrant communities, some of whom had been in the country since long before independence and had helped fuel the export-led boom of earlier years, by using the divisive concept of Ivoirite – true Ivoriness. The irony is that exclusionary notions of citizenship were being advanced in countries like the Ivory Coast at the same time as globalization and liberalization were eroding the state’s hegemony over citizenship.

In current discussions of conflicts the role of economic factors features prominently. This was not always so, and owes much to the work of the economist Paul Collier and his associates (Collier 1999, 2000; Collier and Hoefller 1998, 1999), who advanced the influential and controversial typology of ‘resource wars’ according to which ‘economic agendas’ are at the heart of violent conflicts in Africa. The argument is that the bulk of Africa’s major conflicts since the mid-1960s have been driven by economic greed rather than political grievances, whether those related to economic inequalities, ethnic and religious cleavages, or political repression. While previously emphasis was placed on economic scarcity and inequality as a cause of war, this approach stresses the role played by resource abundance, the rise of self-financing rebel movements, and the emergence of civil war economies that are parasitic, illicit, and predatory, and dependent on external criminal financial and commodity networks. Its proponents seek to analyze not only the economic conditions, opportunities for, and rationality of organized violence; some try to construct quantitative models to predict the processes that lead to civil war, its severity, duration, and the remedial actions that can be taken. Often solution is sought in sanctions against the trafficking of products from conflict zones – the infamous ‘conflict diamonds’; and vague appeals tend to be made for economic growth and diversification and political democratization (Seck 2004).

While few would dispute the fact that economic problems, struggles and
inequalities constitute ‘root causes’ of many violent conflicts across the continent, economist explanations such as those proposed by Collier and his colleagues have been vigorously contested on methodological, theoretical and policy grounds. Some have questioned their very definitions of ‘civil war’ and the quality of their data, the dichotomized notions of grievance and greed and the validity of the proxies used for them, the exclusive focus on rebels, and the occlusion of structural adjustment and neo-liberalism as the context that creates conditions for both conflict and predation through increased poverty and inequality and by weakening state capacity and strengthening regional and global markets and networks that rebel movements can access (Nafziger and Auvinen 2002; Pugh and Cooper 2004). Others have questioned the applicability of the thesis to many of Africa’s wars and conflicts. Norman Mlambo (2004) mentions the wars of liberation primarily motivated by the desire for emancipation rather than the looting of resources, and land struggles in Southern Africa that seek the redistribution of scarce resources rooted in the inequities of settler colonialism. He is adamant that there is more to African conflicts than simple economic greed and that the sharp contrast drawn between economic and political motivations is unproductive analytically and in terms of devising effective conflict resolution policies.19

Many scholars sympathetic to the economic analysis of war have pointed out that even the ‘economic agendas’ of the recent wars in Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the proverbial ‘resource wars’, can be questioned; these wars have been driven more by the struggle for political power than for the control of resources as such, or, to use the title of Arnson and Zartman’s (2005) book, there is an intersection of ‘need, creed, and greed’. Contributors to the study by Ballentine and Sherman (2003) find the greed or grievance dichotomy too limiting and stress the inseparability of political and economic factors, the complexity, diversity, and variability of the economic conditions and opportunity structures of war, the economic behaviors of the various actors from the rebels themselves to states and transnational organizations, and the contextual specificities and fluidities of conflict, and the role played by the processes of regionalization, privatization and globalization.20 Michael Pugh and Neil Cooper (2004) are particularly critical of the tendency to ignore the negative impact of globalization and neo-liberal models of development sanctioned by the international financial institutions that have bankrolled many of the ‘resource wars’ studies,21 and their misguided policy prescriptions on proscribing ‘conflict goods’ and imposing what they call simplistic ‘liberal peace strategies’ of post-conflict reconstruction.22 They also question the ‘national’ focus of many of these studies and emphasize the regional dimensions of war economies – regional conflict complexes – noting the crucial mediations of regional economic, military, political and social networks in the global-local nexus in the geography of many so-called civil wars.23

In this volume, Thandika Mkandawire offers a compelling critique not only of Collier’s thesis, but of much of the Africanist conflict literature. No perspective escapes his censure, not the apocalyptic view that depicts African conflicts as senseless madness, the culturalist view according to
which conflicts are culturally encoded, or the neopatrimonial perspective that attributes conflicts to the self-destructive logic of prebendalism. He reserves his most scathing attack for the rational choice paradigm of economists, many of them affiliated with the World Bank or working for donor agencies, including Collier’s ‘looting model of rebellion’, and their faulty methodological, theoretical and empirical premises and findings. He accuses these scholars of conflating political rebels with common criminals, enabling with causal factors, and individual with collective rationality. In the rest of his paper Mkandawire offers an illuminating alternative explanation of civil wars and rebel movements, arguing that these movements, which are composed largely of roving rather than stationary rebels, are urban in their origins and agendas and are produced by Africa’s urban crisis, which has been exacerbated by structural adjustment programs. It is the urban roots of the rebel movements that account for their problematic and predatory relationship with the rural peasantry. He also suggests that rentier states have been more prone to rebellion than merchant states because of the higher levels of relative deprivation among the former.

Most conventional studies of war, including those mentioned above, tend to ignore one fundamental aspect of war: the fact that wars are gendered in their causes, courses and consequences. As Joshua Goldstein (2001:1) puts it so poignantly, ‘gender shapes war and war shapes gender.’ The connections between gender and war are, of course, exceedingly complex and show enormous variations across time and space – between historical periods and among different cultures and societies – but there can be little doubt that war and gender reproduce each other in so far as they embody, exhibit and engender masculinity and femininity. Until quite recently the gender dynamics of war were largely ignored by male researchers, and when gender was brought in, usually by female scholars, much of the focus was on women and war. The latter is obviously a subject that deserves serious study in its own right, but it is also important to emphasize that the relationship between men and war is also a gendered one. Wars and militaries are critical mechanisms for the production and performance of masculinities. The varied involvements and impacts of wars for men and women are products of socially and culturally constructed gender roles. To feminist scholars the gendered nature of war is self-evident, even if they might explain the relations between the two quite differently. For example, the differentiated gendering of war for men and women is explained by liberal feminists largely in terms of sexist discrimination; radical feminists emphasize patriarchy, racism and imperialism; and postmodern feminists tend to focus on the contingency and fluidity of gender roles in war and the gendered discourses and representations of war (Reardon 1985; Ruddick 1989; Lorentzen and Turpin 1998; Peterson and Runyan 1999; De Pauw 1998; Turshen 1998; Mazurana et al. 2005; Dudink et al. 2004; Afsah and Eade 2004; Skjelsbæk and Smith 2001). In short, gender analyses of war examining the intersections between war and the constructions and reconstructions of both masculinity and femininity have enriched our understanding of both war and gender immensely.

The engagements and effects of contemporary wars on women are
complex and contradictory. Women are both victims and agents, although their explicit involvement in waging war and influencing war outcomes remains relatively marginal compared to men. As the venues, actors and mechanisms of war have become more diffuse with the proliferation of intra-state wars, informal fighting forces, small arms, and terror tactics, the costs of war for women have risen. Although the number of combat deaths among men still outstrips that of women, women’s direct war mortality rates have been rising worldwide – up to a quarter in 2000 (UNRISD 2005: 214). Many more women have died from the indirect consequences of war including injuries, hunger, exhaustion, diseases, and the disruptions of flight, relocation and economic devastation. Widowhood and the growth of female-headed households impose severe strains, although they might also be empowering for some women. The physical and psychological devastation for women generated by pervasive and widely reported sexual violence including rape, sexual slavery, and forced marriages that often leave behind markedly increased rates of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, not to mention unwanted pregnancies, is truly horrific. Women fall victim not only to different combatants but sometimes to peace-keeping forces as well, and wartime conditions generate increased demand for sexual services which leads to growth in prostitution and the trafficking of women. But women have also been active agents in wars as combatants, active supporters and provocateurs. The experiences and transformations wrought by war can also lead to changes in gender relations and sometimes be empowering for women, especially in contexts where women’s groups emerge to assist those victimized by war and to fight for gendered peace and post-conflict reconstruction.

Aaronette White critically interrogates the question of the transformative impact of war, specifically Africa’s revolutionary wars of national liberation. She examines and reassesses Frantz Fanon’s theory that the revolutionary violence of liberation wars was therapeutic and emancipatory for the colonized including women, that it was a humanizing force for both the colonized and the colonizer. White notes that women have been active participants in these wars, both as victims and agents, and it is possible to identify their empowering and disempowering effects. While national liberation and women’s liberation movements are related, Fanon overstated the symbiosis between the two because he underestimated the resilience of the gendered, patriarchal underpinnings of African nationalisms, which were rooted in what White calls ‘the androcentrization of inferiority’, as contrasted with Fanon’s ‘epidermilization of inferiority’. For men, national liberation represented struggles over their own masculine identities. Thus armed struggles reinforced the masculinist propensities of nationalist movements and consciousness in so far as military forces as social institutions and military values valorize courage, virility, superiority and ideal masculinity. The intersections and interactions between militarism and masculinity that give rise to militarized patriarchal ideologies and practices are evident in the execution of the wars themselves, in the sexual division of labor between men and women in which women play largely subordinate roles often reminiscent of their domestic roles, not to mention their vulnerabilities to sexual violence and harassment, as well as in post-
war realities in which women combatants and women’s issues are often silenced and marginalized. For women, then, the psychological effects are more degenerative than regenerative. As for the empowerment effects, which are considerable, White notes that women combatants do not attribute them to the actual violence of war.

A full account of any of Africa’s wars and conflicts would show the complex interplay of national and transnational forces, and that internal and external forces are deeply implicated with each other. As dependency theory has taught us, ever since the emergence of the modern world system the external is always already implicated in the local, although many dependency writers were wont to overemphasize external forces and underestimate local agency, and to depict the structural forces largely in materialist and economistic terms at the expense of their ideational, political and cultural dimensions. This underscores the difficulties of disaggregating the global-local nexus, and capturing the exact nature of external-internal connections and how they relate to each other. Ron Kassimir (2006) puts forward the concept of transboundary formations as an analytical device to transcend the external-internal divide and capture the dynamics created by the intersection of forces emanating from various spatial, social, structural and sectoral levels. It is a framework, he argues, that can yield useful hypotheses and provide insights in analyzing concrete events and processes in which different institutions operate and intersect, where networks of people form, and through which ideas and commodities are trafficked. For example, he shows that the case of conflict diamonds bears testimony to the critical role played by the global demand and markets for commodities, cross-border smuggling of commodities and arms, and recruitment of mercenary forces in engendering and sustaining many a civil war and regional conflict in Africa (also see Callaghy et al. 2001).

There can be little doubt that external contexts and actors have had a major impact in instigating, facilitating, aggravating or prolonging conflicts in Africa from the time of the Atlantic slave trade, through the colonial period, to the postcolonial era. Sandra J. MacLean’s perceptive paper explores the intersections of local, national, regional and international factors in the political economy of conflicts. The transnational linkages and complexes that spawn, sustain or shape African conflicts are obviously multi-dimensional. Patterns of a country’s or region’s integration into the global capitalist system help structure its levels of underdevelopment, inequalities and the development of patrimonial relationships, all of which often contribute to the prevalence of civil strife and the outbreaks of violent conflict. It is certainly the case that many of Africa’s dictatorial regimes, whose very existence was a source of conflict in so far as the closure of political space tended to channel opposition into armed revolts and rebel movements, were sponsored and supported by foreign powers and interests, especially during the Cold War. Both states and non-state actors, including the notorious warlords, often use or turn transnational formations into networks of plunder that nourish civil wars. In as much as the venal global networks of corruption, crime and violence are involved in generating conflicts, conflict resolution needs the mobilization of the more progressive global networks – from knowledge and policy networks to transnational
advocacy coalitions – that can facilitate sustainable development, reconciliation and empowerment.

Since the end of the Cold War and the onset of the twenty-first century new forms of imperialism, often cloaked in the giddy rhetoric of globalization, are engendering new contexts and excuses for imperialist adventures that are stoking local and regional conflicts across the world. As noted above, the current US-led ‘war on terror’ is leaving a trail of wanton destruction, and wreaking havoc on the infrastructures of global order, development and democracy. Africa is being asked to participate in this new form of war, unleashed in the name of fighting ‘terrorism’ by an imperial power frantically seeking to maintain its eroding global hegemony, even as the continent desperately seeks to quench its old wars that continue to smolder and devastate large parts of the continent. The ‘war on terror’ has serious implications for democratization and human rights, as processes and projects, globally and for Africa. Clearly, many African countries are using the war and the language of anti-terrorism to roll back new and hard-won human rights and democratic freedoms (Mazrui 2006).

The legislative responses to terrorism are examined in considerable detail by Cephas Lumina who chronicles the anti-terrorism measures adopted post-September 11 in four selected African countries: Mauritius, Morocco, South Africa and Uganda. The paper places these measures in the context of the international legal framework on terrorism that includes the twelve universal conventions on specific aspects of terrorism and the regional conventions adopted by various organizations, and demonstrates, quite compellingly, that many of the new anti-terrorism laws undermine international human rights law, threaten the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, permit detention and torture, and curtail rights to a fair trial, freedom of association, expression and assembly, and privacy. The war on terror has given a new lease to racial discrimination and religious intolerance and even poses a threat to the rights of the child. The need to arrest and reverse this trend is incontrovertible if the continent is fully to achieve the historic and humanistic tasks of African nationalism – self-determination, development and democratization – and realize the age-old dreams of Pan-Africanism – regional integration and turning itself from a global pawn to a global player.

The costs and consequences of violent conflicts are immense. Except perhaps for the wars of liberation, violent conflicts have little redeeming value. They exact a heavy toll on society, the economy, and the environment, both directly and indirectly through deaths and injuries, sexual crimes and intimidation, population dislocations within and across national borders, and the damage and distortions they cause to societal networks and the fragile social capital of trust and interpersonal associations and intergroup interactions. Not to mention the devastation of the ecosystem, agricultural lands and wildlife, the destruction of society’s material and mechanical infrastructures, the outflow of resources including ‘capital flight’ and ‘brain drain’, the proliferation of pathological and self-destructive behaviors, and the deterioration in the aesthetic quality of life.

The chapter by Fondo Sikod underscores the devastating implications of conflict for poverty and food security. His contention is that conflict is a
cause of food insecurity and exacerbates poverty in Africa because it destroys or damages the human and physical capital that undermines production, leads to economic disruption and distortion of state expenditures, and encourages capital flight and diversion. More specifically, food security – the availability, access to and affordability of food – is severely affected in so far as violent conflict affects all key aspects of food production, distribution and consumption: rural labor supplies are disrupted as peasants are conscripted into armies, farms and agriculture-related infrastructure are destroyed, land is mined, and social cohesion is weakened as families and communities not only lose members but are also turned against one another. In some cases the destruction of physical capital and the resultant food shortages or even famines are not merely unfortunate byproducts of war, but are deliberately deployed as instruments of war. Food aid provided in times of conflict often contributes to conflict when it is used as a weapon by the warring factions, and threatens local production in the long term, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of poverty.

Violent conflict tends to reinforce both the underdevelopment of, and uneven development within, a country. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of Uganda, which is examined by Timothy Shaw and Pamela Mbabazi. Uganda’s postcolonial turmoil has prevented the country from achieving the rate of development and social progress that was widely expected at independence. The protracted war in northern Uganda during the past two decades between government forces and the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army has worsened the marginalization of the north, which fostered the war in the first place. In effect, Uganda has become two distinct nations, one in the relatively buoyant south that has, since the early 1990s, enjoyed economic recovery and reconstruction, peace and rapid economic growth, and the other in the stagnant north that continues to suffer from the devastating effects of warfare including an estimated 1.2 million internally displaced people. It is quite evident from Shaw and Mbabazi’s paper that local, national, regional, continental and global forces are imbricated in complex and contradictory ways in Uganda’s conundrum. Of particular concern are the implications of capitalist globalization and the regime of structural adjustment in fashioning new trajectories of developmentalism based on liberalization and privatization that foreclose the possibilities of constructing a truly democratic developmental state capable of pursuing policy options that might close the widening north-south gap and resolve the insurgency in the north.

Conclusion

This volume, and the collection as a whole, provides critical glimpses into the nature and dynamics of violent conflicts in Africa. Of course it is not, nor did it seek to be, comprehensive, in covering either Africa as a whole or all aspects of conflicts that have afflicted the continent since independence, let alone since time immemorial. In spatial terms, much of the focus is on eastern and southern Africa. A comprehensive and comparative study of conflicts across the continent, covering all five regions, would yield
important lessons and is long overdue. In temporal terms, the collection concentrates on recent conflicts; analyses over a much longer period, including the colonial era and perhaps even slices of the precolonial era, would deepen our understanding of the history of conflicts in Africa. Thematically, one could point to a range of topics that have not been given the emphasis they deserve, such as the generational, religious and diasporic dimensions of violent conflicts. Also, these conflicts are differentiated in the way they involve and impact on different generations, from the young to the elderly (Kurimoto and Simonse 1998; Abbink and van Kessel 2005). The question of child soldiers, on which much has been written, is only one aspect of the generational dynamics of African conflicts that require more systematic study. Estimates indicated that the conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s involved ‘more than 120,000 children... For example, more than 10 percent of the fighters in the Liberian conflict are children; in Mozambique, the RENAMO rebel group had an estimated 8,000-10,000 children fighting in its force against the government; ... and in Uganda, it is estimated that around 90 percent of the soldiers in the LRA rebel force are abducted children’ (Fosu and Collier 2005: 234; also see Fleischman 1994; Rone 1995; Honwana 2006).

The role of religion as a source of conflict, in objective and subjective terms, institutionally and ideologically, and at local and transnational levels and the many points in between, cannot be overemphasized (Panitch and Leys 2002). Throughout history religion has provided a powerful vehicle for instigating war, giving meaning and legitimation to war, and in facilitating postwar reconciliation and reconstruction. Wars, in turn, transform religion, bringing innovations in ideas, rituals, and institutional practices. We need to know more not only about the role of each of Africa’s major religions – Christianity, Islam, and the ‘traditional’ religions – but also in comparative perspective. As Niels Kastfelt (2005: 1) argues forcefully and convincingly, ‘many African civil wars have religious dimensions which are sufficiently important to deserve to be studied in their own right without, of course, thereby ignoring their social, economic and political context’. Examples abound. In colonial Africa there were the religiously inspired rebellions, such as the Mahdist war in the Sudan in the 1890s, the Shona-Ndebele uprising in Zimbabwe in 1896–97, the Maji Maji revolt in Tanganyika in 1905–7, and the Mau Mau liberation struggle in Kenya in the 1950s. In the postcolonial era one can point to Uganda’s civil strife in which Alice Lakwena’s Holy Spirit Movement and Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army have played a key role, not to mention the conflicts fomented among and between Christians and Muslims that are increasingly amplified by the so-called ‘war on terror’.

Some of the papers in this volume discuss the global forces and transnational networks behind violent conflicts in Africa. The tendency has been to examine the imperial and neo-colonial agendas of the major powers. More attention ought to be paid to the activities of other transnational actors including business enterprises, advocacy organizations, and even academic establishments. In this context, the role of diaspora communities, both the regional and extra-regional diasporas, needs to be accorded specific attention, as diaspora networks have become increasingly critical in
fanning, facilitating and financing conflicts. For example, in the 1998 Ethiopian-Eritrean war, the diasporas of both countries played important roles in supporting their respective homelands. In the Nordic countries the Eritrean diaspora sought to raise diplomatic support for Eritrea, while in the United States elements of the more splintered Ethiopian diaspora demonstrated in Washington, DC in support of Ethiopia. The two diasporas also provided crucial financial support, which was particularly vital for Eritrea. Similarly, Somali diasporas have been critical to supporting different factions in the ongoing Somali civil war.28

Clearly, the research agenda on the ‘root causes’ of conflicts is large and complex. As with many other areas of social inquiry, conflict studies can only benefit from interdisciplinary approaches, from the collaboration of scholars from all the major disciplinary fields – the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences – for conflicts affect all aspects of human life and the natural environment. And, of course, scholars and researchers need to engage policy-makers, national and regional security councils, social movements and rebel movements if their work is to be meaningful empirically and translate into effective policies. The challenge is to ensure that African conflicts are analyzed in their own multifaceted contexts, while avoiding seeing them as manifestations of some unique African cultural compulsion, political pathology, social sickness or moral malady. In other words, these conflicts must be understood in comparative perspective, not in isolation. Violent conflict in Africa is indeed part of the human drama, but the tendency to impose universalist models of conflict driven by stylized Western experiences or faddish theorizing must be resisted if only because, as is shown in several chapters in this volume with reference to the ‘rationalist’ models of neo-classical economists, such paradigms lead to poor analysis and bad policy. Conflict is too serious a matter, and its costs too grave, for glib modeling or lazy journalistic speculation uninformed by the histories of, and unmindful of the concrete conditions in, the societies under scrutiny. And history tells us that postcolonial African societies and states are not primordial fixtures frozen in splendid isolation, but complex constellations constructed out of their multiple engagements with the world.

References

Introduction: The Causes & Costs of War in Africa

St Martin’s Press.


Gourevitch, Philip. 1999. We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda. New York: Picador.


Introduction: The Causes & Costs of War in Africa


Notes

2 A common classification is to distinguish between inter-state, intra-state and extra-state wars, see Henderson and Singer (2002).
3 There is a vast literature on struggles against apartheid, some of which is reviewed in Zeleza (2004a); also see Gregory Houston (1999), Eric Louw (2004), Lindsay Eades (1999), and the remarkable autobiography and biographies of Mandela and the Sisulus (Mandela 1994; Sampson 1999; Sisulu 2002).
4 The Rwanda genocide was the product of complex colonial and postcolonial histories, as well as internal, regional and international dynamics. Of the vast literature on the subject see some of the following: Mamdani (2001), Gourevitch (1999), Prunier (1998), Melvern (2000), Semujanga (2003), and Twagilimana (2003).
5 I discuss these developments in greater detail in Zeleza (2003, 2005).
6 All the key elements of Bush’s doctrine of pre-emption articulated in a report released in September 2002, The National Security Strategy of the United States (White House 2002), are presaged in a 2000 report from a neo-conservative organization, the New American Century (2000: ii), called Rebuilding America’s Defenses, which unequivocally calls for the US to rebuild, modernize and maintain its military and nuclear strategic superiority in order to sustain a Pax Americana. It has since transpired that plans for a premeditated attack on Iraq, to secure ‘regime change’, were in place even before Bush assumed office in January 2001 and therefore had nothing to do with the attacks of September 11, Iraq’s unproven connections with Al-Qaeda, the existence of weapons of mass destruction that were never found, or the need to export democracy (Anonymous 2004; Clarke 2004).
7 Anonymous (2004: 241) tabulates them as follows: ‘U.S support for Israel that keeps
Palestinians in the Israeli's thrall; US and other Western troops on the Arabian Peninsula; US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan; US support for Russia, India, and China against their Muslim militants; US pressure on Arab energy producers to keep oil prices low; and US support for apostate, corrupt, and tyrannical Muslim governments. That Osama bin Laden articulates and uses these grievances to mobilize his followers does not mean they are not real or shared by millions of people in the region. While some of those opposed to the US in the region are indeed terrorists, many more are ordinary nationalists fighting to liberate their countries from foreign occupation and domination.

This figure is from the National Priorities Project that monitors and tallies the costs of war on an ongoing basis; see its website at: http://nationalpriorities.org/index.php?option=com_wrapper&pageid=182

Accessed 1 November 2006.

This figure was widely disputed and predictably rejected by American and British leaders. Paul Silverstein (2005) suggests, in the case of North Africa, that the ‘war on terror’ rekindles in the Western imaginary memories not only of Islamic invasions but also of Barbary piracy and terrorism. The literature on Africa and the ‘war on terror’ is growing rapidly. For a sample, see Kadende-Kaiser and Kaiser (2005); Davis (2005); Runraj et al. (2005); Kraxberger (2005); Marrouchi (2003); Silverstein (2005); Carmody (2005); Barnes (2005); Mills (2004); El-Khawas (2003).

For example, Human Rights Watch (2004) has accused the UN’s Security Council of disregarding human rights in the work of its Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, established by resolutions passed after 11 September 2001, both of which have to date shown reluctance to address the human rights implications of the anti-terrorism laws and strategies of member states.

See, for example, the reports by Amnesty International (2002, 2003).

Also see Amnesty International’s (2002a) detailed critique of the convention adopted by the League of Arab States, which Amnesty believes presents a serious threat to human rights in Arab countries, many of which are, of course, in Africa.

For recent accounts and critiques of these analyses, see Kieh (2002) and Fosu and Collier (2005).

These wars are variously called ‘new wars’, ‘postmodern wars’, ‘wars of the third kind’, and ‘people’s wars’, see Henderson and Singer (2002: 166–71). Kalyvas (2001: 109) criticizes the Eurocentricism and culturalist thrust of the ‘new wars’ theorists and argues that ‘the end of the Cold War seems to have caused the demise of the conceptual categories used to interpret civil wars rather than a decline in the ideological motivations of civil wars at the mass level’.

A sizeable literature has grown using this paradigm. Examples include Berdal and Malone (2000); Cilliers and Dietrich (2000); and Lind and Sturman (2002).

He notes that these studies have influenced the UN Security Council and General Assembly to pass resolutions prohibiting the import of conflict diamonds, to impose sanctions on rebel movements such as UNITA, and to condemn the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Charles Cater (2003: 37) also comments on the economic predation paradigm in the UN sanctions regime, noting ‘prior to 1990, the UN had only authorized sanctions twice – for Rhodesia in 1966 and for South Africa in 1977. During the 1990s, the Security Council approved sanctions relating to conflicts in twelve different countries.’

Michael Ross (2003) offers an interesting analysis of the varied impact of resources on separatist and non-separatist conflicts, and the different impact of various resources depending on what he calls their lootability, obstructability and legality. After examining fifteen conflicts in Africa, Asia, and Latin America he concludes, ‘unlootable resources
[e.g., oil] are more likely to produce separatist conflicts, and lootable resources [e.g., diamonds] are more likely to produce nonseparatist conflicts’ (Ross 2003: 67).

See Collier and Sambanis (2005a, 2005b). They indicate that some of the criticisms have registered, and the Collier-Hoeffler Model, as they call it, has been revised, but only on the margins. The first volume deals with Africa, and the second with the rest of the world, a division based on, we are told, mere convenience. To quote Collier et al. (2005: 26): ‘There is no substantive rationale behind this organization of cases – we do not think African civil wars are different. This is simply a device to present the material effectively, given the considerable length of the book.’ The other influential studies have been sponsored by the International Peace Academy through its Economic Agendas in Civil Wars program with which Collier was once affiliated; they include Berdal and Malone (2000), Ballentine and Sherman (2003), and Pugh and Cooper (2004).

Structural adjustment, together with the economic marginalization of border areas and the absence of regional military security mechanisms, often creates the permissive conditions for the development and sustenance of conflicts and undermines post-conflict resolution and transformation (Pugh and Cooper 2004: 35–39).

Regional economic networks provide channels for trade in conflict goods, smuggling and tax avoidance, and the phenomenon of displacement; military networks provide arms and mercenaries, and can create displacement effects; formal and informal political networks often reflect and reinforce regional economic and military linkages and sustain the shadow economic activities of war economies; and social networks include occupational, ethnic and diaspora affiliations that serve to underpin regional conflict complexes (Pugh and Cooper 2004: 25–35).

The distinction is based on the primary sources of state revenue: rentier states derive theirs from mineral rents, while merchant states derive theirs from general taxation including that of marketed peasant produce. Merchant states have to negotiate with more producers than rentier states, and therefore tend to provide more services and enjoy higher levels of social development and to boast of better human development indicators than the rentier states.

The UNRISD report, for which I served as one of nine members of the Advisory Group, is an invaluable source of comparative global data on ‘gender, armed conflict and the search for peace’, which constitute section 4 of the report (pp.205–59). The report as a whole is based on more than five dozen reports from different regions and countries, including several on Africa.

This is primarily because the papers were originally presented at a conference convened by the Organization of Social Science Research in Eastern Africa whose mandate is eastern and southern Africa.

For example, in the epic struggle against apartheid in South Africa Christian ideas inspired not only the protagonists in the conflict, but also the formation and work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Personal communication with Tiyanjana Maluwa, Professor of Law, Pennsylvania State University and formerly Legal Counsel, the African Union (1998–2001), 25 and 26 November 2006.