

## Nature of War

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Why does Africa have more conflict and war than any other region? What do these wars look like? How and why are they different, or not, from the wars we are used to studying? What explains the presence of vast conflict zones in the overlapping peripheries of Africa's weak states?

To answer these questions we must look at the "permissive conditions" and the "underlying political logics" that determine the frequency and define the pattern of war in Africa. This leads us to a focus on the Africa state system as distinct from the Westphalian state system; both in the nature of the parts (its states) and how they interact to create regional conflict zones.

But, most explanations of war in Africa utilize traditional concepts of war that follow from the predicate of a Westphalia state system. Particularly unhelpful is the assumption that conflict around the globe occurs only between or within states in an anarchical international system, "the permissive condition" for what we can call "classical wars." A political explanation of Africa's wars, as well, is missing. When Africa's conflicts do not fit the classical mold, they are treated as anomalous -- something other than war, irrational and lacking any political logic. Assuming there is a political logic to its wars, what is that logic and what explains it?

The staging, players and ultimately the script of Africa's wars are different than "classical war." The unique nature of Africa's wars is better understood in the context of the continent's 'arrested Westphalia' state system. African states are weak; their sovereignty is stressed and they are still defined by patrimonial politics. The consequences are most pronounced on the peripheries of Africa's weak states, where governments cannot project their authority and have lost their monopoly over the use of force; but where patrimonial politics endure.

This study will answer the above questions and explain the distinct nature of war in Africa using four case studies: the conflict centered on the eastern DRC, the conflict centered on Darfur, the Ethiopian – Eritrean War, and the conflict in the Niger Delta.