The Nature of War in Africa

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION - THE NATURE OF WAR IN AFRICA

Africa has had serious conflicts in the past twenty-five years, with casualties between 3,800,000 and 6,899,000. The 2005 *Peace and Conflict* ledger identified 31 out 161 countries as being in danger of a serious conflict; 17 of them were African.[1] There are more U.N. peace keeping troops in Africa than on any other continent, as of 2006 seventy five percent of all UN peace keepers were in Africa;[2] the U.N. has conducted nineteen "complex peace operations" since the end of the Cold War, ten of them in Africa.[3] During the last decade, more than half of Africa's states have been in warfare.[4]   It is home to most of the world's conflicts.[5]   The fact that Africa leads the international system in conflict begs for an explanation why that is the case. The simple answer has been that its states are conflict prone for a host of reasons: they are undemocratic or undergoing difficult transitions to democracy; they are economically underdeveloped; they are artificial states (the progeny of colonial rule); and they are ethnically heterogeneous – all true from one degree to another and from place to place. But, its conflicts are also often distinct, as this begs for an explanation, as well.

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[1]Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2005* (College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Development, 2005), 2.

[2]Andy Knight, "DDR and Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Africa" *African Security* 1, 1 (2008).

[3]Pierre Englebert and Denis M. Tull, "Postconflict Reconstruction in Africa: Flawed Ideas about Failed States" *International Security* 32, 4 (2008), 106.

[4]Karin Dokken, *African Security Politics Redefined* (New York: Palgrave, 2008).

[4]*SPIRA Yearbook 2006*, *Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 109.

There is an extensive body of literature on war in Africa. Most of it focuses on the causes of war; as captured in the greed versus grievance debate. This body of work has done much to explain specific wars and conflicts in Africa. But its focus is too narrow to paint a complete picture of war in Africa. The focus on what causes specific wars, from those in the Mano River Basin that spread across the region at the end of the Cold war; to Africa's "first world war," with its epicenter in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, to the conflict in Darfur, that includes Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic, to finally the classical war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, leaves unanswered, it even asked, what are the condition and nature of war in Sub-Sahara Africa. We need to open the aperture for a broader view of war and conflict in Sub-Sahara Africa. We need to ask: why does Africa have more conflict and war than any other region; what do these wars look like; how and why are they different then wars we are used to studying; what explains the presence of vast conflict zones in the overlapping peripheries of Africa's week states where these wars take place? In Patrick Chapal's words, "Are we, in other words, confronted with a situation in Africa that differs substantially in systemic terms from that experience elsewhere in the world?"[6]

To answer these questions and to open the aperture for a broader view of conflict in Africa, this book argues that we need to understand the systemic nature of Africa's wars. The specific triggers of post-Cold War Africa's many wars are well covered and debated elsewhere. This is not to reject the extensive theory of war in Africa that explains individual wars, but to extend the debate into relatively unchartered waters. A systemic explanation is a necessary complement for understanding war in Sub-Sahara Africa. As Kenneth Waltz argued, it is the

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[6]Patrick Chabal, "Violence, Power and Rationality: A Political Analysis of Conflict in Contemporary Africa," in *Is Violence Inevitable in Africa? Theories of Conflict and Approaches to Conflict Prevention*in Chabal, Ulf Engel, Anna-Maria Gentili, eds. (Boston: Brill, 2005), 1.

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"deep structure" that creates opportunities and constrains behavior.[7] In particular, it explains the propensity for war in the international system. Given Sub-Sahara Africa's propensity for war we should ask, what is it about the African state system that permits so much conflict? What is its deep structure and how did it take shape? In addressing this question we are then confronted with another, is there something different about war and conflict in Africa? The answer, this book argues is yes.

Conditions of War

When Waltz talked about the "deep structure" of the international system that explains the propensity for war among states he was speaking of the anarchy of the Westphalia state system. The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia marking the end of the Thirty Years' War pitting Protestants against Catholics across Europe, also established a particular kind of international anarchy. In this system, each state was responsible for its own survival. The Church had been defeated; and the international system, or at least the one centered on Europe, was left with no formal hierarchy. States prepared for wars, and fought wars precisely because their survival depended on it. In the process, states that survived became stronger. They became stronger in the Weberian sense of having a monopoly over the legitimate use of force. The Westphalian state system and the Weberian state were mutually constituted and war between and among states was an important part of this process. In Wrights words:

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[7]Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979).

Modern international law took form in the sixteenth century while princes were

claiming and in some cases maintaining a monopoly of violence in territories

larger than feudal domains and smaller than Christendom.[8]

For Sub-Sahara Africa, the "deep structure" is anarchical as well, but not the anarchy that

Waltz and structural realism employ to explain behavior.[9] The African state system is different.

The Westphalia project has been arrested in much of Africa. Africa does not consist of

Weberian states. The foundational assumption should be that Africa largely consists of states

with limited internal authority – they lack *de facto* sovereignty. Most importantly for how the

African system relates to war, this is most clearly manifested in the inability of many African

states to project authority into their peripheries. The African state system, therefore, is defined

by a different kind of anarchy than that which defines the Westphalia state system and that

concomitantly shaped classical wars. It is a weak state system rather than a strong state

system.[10]   Its wars reflect this difference.

The juxtaposition of the two anarchies, that of the Westphalia state system and that of the

African state system, is revealing. The American scholar, Fareed Zakaria, stated in 2008: "War

and organized violence has declined dramatically over the last two decades."[11] Drawing on

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[8]Quincy Wright, *A study of War*, 2nd edition. Abridged by Louise Leonard Wright. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 188.

[9]See Robert Kelly's discussion of the literature on *Weak States and the Internal Security Dilemma*. Robert Kelly, "Security Theory in the 'New Regionalism" *International Studies Review* 9 (2007), 216-217.

[10]Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and the System* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publications, 1995), 13.

[11]Fareed Zakaria, *The Post American World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 9.

accepted data he goes on: "The data reveal a broad trend away from wars among major countries, the kind of conflict that produces massive casualties."[12] Africa, of course, seems to be the exception. According to the Armed Conflict Dataset, Africa went from having eleven armed conflicts at the end to the Cold War (1989) to sixteen in 1998.[13] In general, however, over two million battle deaths have occurred worldwide in almost every decade since the end of World War II.[14]

Although Africa witnessed its share of war during the Cold War, after the Cold War conflict accelerated in Africa just as its seems to have decelerated in Zakaria's world. Zakaria, as representative of many like-minded scholars, is working within a distinct world view. The kind of great power conflict permitted or engendered by the historical form of anarchy defining the Westphalia state system has apparently waned. Here we are talking about what can be labeled classical wars. The Weberian state is at the center of these wars.

Similarly, Douglas Lemke's rigorous work on war led to the counter-intuitive conclusion of an "Africa Peace."[15] He concluded that African dyads are less war prone than non-African dyads.[16] As he qualifies, this refers only to *inter*state relations, as defined by COW.[17] This is

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[12]Ibid., 9.

[13]Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP and International Peace Research Institute (2007). http://www.per.uu.se/publications/UCDP_pub/Main_Confict_Table_1946-2006.xls

[14]Meredith Reid Sarkees, Frank Whelon Wayman, J. David Singer, "Inter-state, Intra-state, and Extra-Sate Wars: A Comprehensive Look at Their Distribution Over Time," *International Studies* Quarterly 74, No. 1 (2003), 64 .
[15]Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 161 .

[16]Ibid., 180.

[17]Ibid., 162.

puzzling, of course, because as Lemke goes great lengths to explain: "[U]nfortunately for Africans, the conditions associated with war are almost uniformly present…"[18]   But what he really means by "the conditions associated with war" is the causes of war. [19] To explain what seems like an anomaly, he looks at the affects of domestic instability on the ability of Africa states to wage war. He concludes that instability (measured by the level of economic underdevelopment and number of coups) does help explain the African anomaly. But Africa is not peaceful, as Lemke suspects, because weak states cannot project power into neighboring countries, but rather is conflict prone precisely because they cannot police their peripheries.[20]

Finally, Lemke also questions the data, but concludes that COW is right. But again, because Africa's systemic wars do not fit the Westphalia model, in fact while the reporting is correct; in the African context the data obscures more than it reveals. As   Vasquez states "… we must not assume that the absence of interstate war means that there is no ongoing war as the system is at peace, a common mistake in data (as well as historical) analysis."[21] Lemke understands this: "If the legal entities defined as states in our datasets are not the empirical

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[18]Ibid., 167.

[19]Suspected correlates of war where Africa scores high include, a high number of borders; ethnic differences; incentive to use external conflict to divert attention from domestic problems; the process of development, and a relative lack of democracies. Ibid., 164-165.

[20]Both economic underdevelopment and coups contribute to state weakness in Africa and to the creation of conflict zones. The former relates to the lack of physical infrastructure connecting the capital, the seat of power, to the periphery of weak states. The latter both perpetuates patrimonial rule and contributes to the fracturing of political society. In the aftermath of a coup, not only does the new ruler often replace country's military with his own, but the old guard can form the rump of a new militia can hide in the hinterland until a new opportunity arrives.

[21]John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle Revisited,*(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)*,* 29.

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interacting entities [states] our theories describe, then our research designs will be indeterminate …"[22]

Of course, Africa is made up of legal entities we call states. The Berlin Conference of 1884/85, created the modern collection of Africa states. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) certified the Berlin rules under Article II paragraph III of its Charter; resolution 16 of the OAU states that it: "solemnly declares that all member states pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence."[23] Jackson and Rosberg famously labeled Africa's post-colonial states *juridical states*.[24] Sub-Saharan African states hide behind *de jure* sovereignty while experiencing very limited *de facto* sovereignty.   Because their *de facto* statehood is more challenged the father you get from the center of the state, their peripheries are prone to conflict. But that conflict is not typically between bordering states, but among heterogeneous actors that are spread across states.

To understand the relationship with the Africa state system and war in Africa we need to start with an understanding of the African State. In Fredrick Cooper's words the modern African state reveals:

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[22]Lemke. *Regions of War*, 188.

[23]http://.chr.up.za/hr_docs/african/docs/ahsg/ashg4doc

[24]Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics* 35, 1 (1982).

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… the weakness of bonds between the state and the people within its territory and

the reliance of state rulers on the very idea of the state, on resources deriving

solely from its position within a global structure of sovereignties.[25]

This position was obtained almost exclusively as a result of colonial rule. And as Basil

Davidson states: "They [the African post-colonial state] accepted the colonial legacy-whether of

frontiers or of bureaucratic dictatorship-on the rash assumption that they could master it."[26]   As

will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, the weakness of the Africa state (its lack of

de facto sovereignty) is most pronounced in its periphery. This explains its most violent wars.

The weakness of the African state and the fact that it is manifested in unstable peripheries leads

to unstable regions in the overlapping penumbras of these states. Christopher Clapham

summarizes:

As the administrative reach of African states declined, with the shrinking of their

revenue base and the spread of armed challenges to their power, so the number

and size of such zones increased, … in the process creating a new international

relations of statelessness.[27]

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[25]Frederick Cooper, "Networks, moral discourse and history," in Thomas Callaghy, Robert Latham, and Ronald Kassimir (eds.) *Interevention and Transnationalism in Africa*, edited by (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.), 43.
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[26]Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State* (New York: Time Books, 1992), 181.

[27]Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 222.

As Wallensteen and Sollenberg relate, nine out of ten wars in Africa are within conflict complexes.[28]

Combined with abraded sovereignty, most pronounced in the state's periphery, systemic pressures in Africa fostered regional systems, typically labeled "regional conflict zones." Marshall and Gurr describe Africa as a "'bad neighborhood' of similar crisis ridden states."[29] If we look at a map, these zones consist of states but the actors in the conflicts that define them include non-state actors, states, and hybrids.

MAP OF CONFLICT ZONES
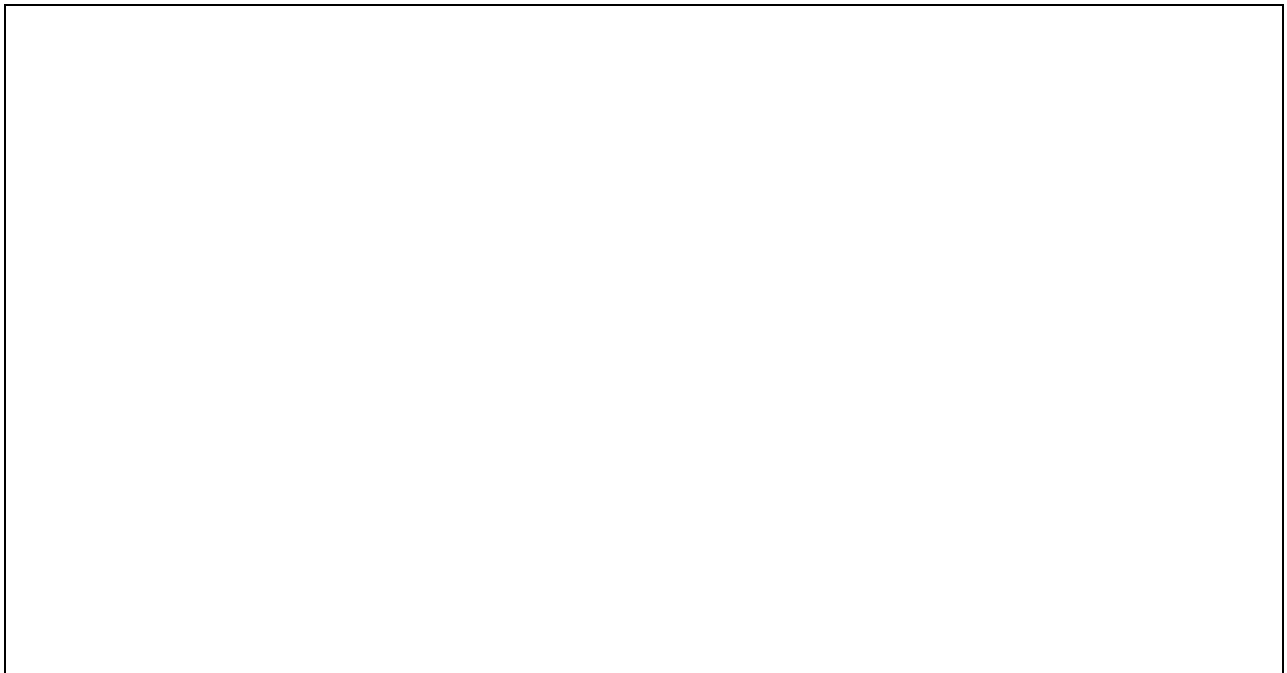
The wars that burn across Africa's conflict zones do not typically follow the familiar pattern of what can be labeled called classical war. They have no "center of gravity" in the

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[28]Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg, "Armed Conflict and Regional Conflict Complexes, 1989-97" *Journal of Peace Research* 35, 5 (1998), 625.

[29]Marshall and Gurr, *Peace and Conflict*, 5.

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classical sense. As Mary Kaldor points out, the new wars, which prominently feature Africa, seemingly reverse the processes through which the modern state evolved.[30] Europe witnessed the state coming to dominate non-state actors in the provision of security.[31] Africa went in a different direction: "Excluded from the battlefields of the early 20th Century, the non-sate actor has become a fixture of the conflict zones of the late 20th and early 20th Century."[32] But neither does this make them something other than war; something without, as is sometimes proffered, a political logic; or, to return to Zakaria, mean that the violence in Africa is not organized.

Nonetheless, Africa's wars are explained typically within the context of the Westphalia state system that is as classical wars - either international or civil wars. In both cases, the centrality of the state is assumed premise. For both kinds of wars, it is about the survival of the state. Either the state expands through victory or a new state is born through defeat (either via an inter or intra state war).   This is not how the African state system has taken shape. Subsequently, as Jeffrey Herbst has convincingly argued, while the system that Waltz describes generates conflict among states, the independent state system has not been hostile to post-colonial Africa;[33] it has not generated much war.

Although Africa is prone to conflict, Sub-Sahara Africa almost never has the type war that created and shaped the modern Westphalia nation state and which concomitantly provided a

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[30]Mary Kaldor, *New and Old War: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5.

[31]J.E. Thompson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Ealry Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[32]Dylan Craig, "Developing a Comparative Perspective on the use of Non-State s in War," *African Security* (Forthcoming).

[33]Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton University Press, 2000),3.

context for understanding modern war.[34] International war is rare, as will be explained in the following chapters. Africa has suffered its share of civil wars, but many of the conflicts that are labeled civil wars, or intrastate wars, are better understood as distinct kind of war.

Africa's wars are rarely about redefining territorial borders (international war) or about who rules within a clearly defined territorial state (civil war). Thus, Anthony Clayton notes that: "Clearly any rigid specific definition of warfare of the type used in international law or in conventions would leave anomalies in a study of conflict in late twentieth-century Africa."[35] In George Ayittey's words:

> There is not a significant movement in Africa today that wants secession or a
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> change in borders. No ethnic group divided by a frontier is demanding
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> reunification; on the contrary, most such groups have learnt to exploit their
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> situation commercially and politically.[36]

This was written in 1999, and since then Eritrea has seceded from Ethiopia, and Southern Sudan from Sudan; there is some irredentism elsewhere on the continent, such as with Somalia. Nonetheless, while there were some early attempts at changing state borders after colonial rule,

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[34]See Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime", in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Theda Skopal (eds) *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1985), p. 169. Historically, in much of pre-colonial Africa, groups escaped authority by moving farther away from what was perceived as oppressive authority. The control of people and resources was typically more important than the control over territory. Jeffrey Herbst, "War and State in Africa", International *Security* 14, 4 (1990).

[35]Anthony Clayton, *Frontiersmen: Warfare in Africa since 1950* (London: ULL Press, 1999), 7. He goes on to claim that only the Nigerian civil war, the Uganda-Tanzania war and South Africa's warfare in Angola resemble the wars of Europe, 205.

[36]George Ayittey, *Africa in Chaos* (New York: St. Martin's' Griffin, 1999), 43.

mostly via secession as in Biafra (Nigeria) and the two Katanga crises in Zaire (DRC), the map

of Sub-Sahara Africa looked essentially the same at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

While Africa's wars are neither international nor civil wars; they have elements of both.[37]

This is why Eberwein and Chojnacki argue that in many post Cold War conflicts the

"theoretically postulated difference between domestic and international politics no longer

applies."[38] What separates many of Africa's wars from classical wars are its distinctive actors,

staging, and ultimately their script. In a classical war, either civil war or an international war, the

state is the central actor. This is revealing, because, between 2002 and 2006 while Africa had

forty-two percent of the world's fatalities from organized violence, it had eighty-three percent of

non-state fatalities.[39] The state is responsible for a relatively small percentage of the deaths.

This is even true with what are usually catalogued as Africa's civil wars.

As will be chronicled below, one of the most distinctive characteristics of Africa's wars

in the proliferation of insurgent groups. As Ann Hironaka notes, in many post-Cold War

conflicts, insurgent groups do not even venture into government held areas but, rather, are

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[37]According to Vasquez, if they were merely civil wars, we would expect them to be dyadic and base on rivalry, but in fact they also have elements of inequality, as relatively strong states prey on weak neighbors through proxis. They are, in his nomenclature, complex wars. John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle Revisited* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 76.

[38]Wolf-Dieter Eberwein and Sven Chojnacki, "Scientific Necessity and Political Utility: A Comparison of Data on Viloent Conflicts," September 2001.

[39]Ralph Sundberg, "Collective Violence 2002-2007: Global and Regional Trends," in Lotta Harborn and Ralph Sunberd (eds), *States in Armed Conflict 2007* (Oslo, UCDP: 2008).

ensconced in their peripheral strongholds.[40] The growing interaction of sub-state actors becomes

increasingly important.[41] This is certainly true in the African context.

The staging of Africa's war defines them as well. Unlike international war, rarely are

they between states. Nonetheless, there is typically an international dimension to Africa's

conflicts. Liberia's first civil war lasted from December 1989 until November 1991 and its

second civil war from October 1992 until November 1996. Sierra Leone had two civil wars,

March 1991 to November 1996 and May 1997 until July 1999.[42] But in 1991 Charles Taylor

expanded the conflict in Liberia into Sierra Leone to gain that country's diamond fields.[43] The

first Sierra Leone conflict funded the second Liberian conflict. In fact, Herbst noted that Sierra

Leone, although in his "favorable" category, failed because it could not contain the civil war that

spread from Liberia.[44] These typically labeled separate conflicts are better understood as one

regional conflict. The states were not directly fighting each other, but elements within each

fought with or against elements within the other.

If the actors and staging of many of Africa's wars distinguish them from classical wars,

we would expect the script to be different as well. In particular, Clausewitz's notion of a "center

of gravity" - the focal points of the enemy that once defeated ends the war, are different.

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[40]Ann Hironaka, *Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States, and the Perpetuation of Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 42.

[41]Sarkees et al., "Inter-state," 57.

[42]Ibid.

[43]In 1991, Foday Sankoh started a war Sierra Leone with the backing of Charles Taylor along the Liberian border as the leader of the RUF. The relationship between Sankoh and Taylor had begun in the 1980s when both men were in Libya. Sankoh traded diamonds to Taylor for guns.

[44]Herbst, *States and Power,*159.

Because the state does not have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, its coercive agents are not necessarily the "center of gravity." Defeating the state is not necessarily the goal. The 2007 Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP) report noted the difficulty of controlling conflict across "regional conflict complexes" in Africa blamed in part by the fragmentation among rebel groups and the interference of Sudan and Chad in each others conflict.[45]

The modern Weberian state and the Westphalia state system were mutually constituted and war played a central role in the process. Sovereign practices were oriented toward producing distinct territorial spaces, which led to the "hardening" of territorial boundaries over the centuries.[46] But unlike the European experience, in Africa: states do not make wars and wars do not make states. Sub-Sahara Africa's wars are what Marshall and Gurr call a "nested problem;"[47] and the one thing that most clearly distinguishes Africa form the other regions in their study is the newness of its state system.[48] Elbadawi and Sambanis, as well, attribute the high incidence of civil war in Africa to the failure of state building.[49]

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[45]*States in Armed Conflict 2007*, eds. Lotta Harbom and Ralph Sundberg (Uppsala: Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, 2005), 8.

[46]Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of It" *International Organization* 46, 2 (1992), 412. Africa did uphold the sovereignty norm under the Organization of African States (OAS) Charter, but this only strengthened its juridical statehood and may have actually weakened its functional statehood.

[47]Monty Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, *Peace and Conflict, 2005* (College Park: CIDCM, 2005), 14.

[48]Ibid, 39.

[49]Elbadawi and Sambanis, "Why Are There So Many Civil Wars in Africa," 264.

In war after war in Africa, the state-building project is set back. In Niklas Hultin's words, "… swaths of Africa exist outside the formal geography of Africa." [50] This has led some scholars to label them apolitical, a return to the "heart of darkness" - a Hobbesian world of all against all. As Séverine Autesserre observes:

> International peacebuilders viewed decentralized conflicts [in the DRC] as an
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> Hobbesian challenge; they were private and criminal, and they resulted from a
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> lack of state authority in the eastern provinces.[51]

But their script is written following a particular political logic. Africa's states are weak; their sovereignty frayed, and they are defined by patrimonial politics. That logic has both institutional and structural dimensions, and they are mutually reinforcing. Most importantly for the argument presented here, the institutional and structural legacy of African state development makes it difficult for them to project authority into their hinterland. The African state system, therefore, is largely defined by the weakness of its states, which is most clearly manifested in the states' peripheries. Rather than a hardening of territorial borders over time, Africa has witnessed a softening of its interstate borders over time. It has witnessed the blurring of the lines between the international and the domestic.[52] In many cases, much of Africa has lost its monopoly over the legitimate use of force within its recognized territorial borders, leading in extreme cases to

[50]Niklas Hultin, "Repositioning the Front Lines? Reflection on the Ethnogrtaphy of African Securityscapes" *African Security* 3, 2 (2010), 112.

[51]Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and nthe Failure of International Peacebuilding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 42.

[52]Unlike much of the literature on weak states and the international system, which focuses on the "internal security dilemma" and intrastate rather than interstate conflict, *wars across states* describes a type of conflict at the interstices of intra and interstate war. See Brian Job, "Matters of Multilateralism," in, David Lake and Patrick Morgan (eds), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 180.

state collapse.[53] As Zartman states, "… the political space-the territory where politics is played-of the collapsing state is broader than its borders."[54] Rotberg notes that failed states often cannot extend authority beyond their capital city.[55] Reno makes a similar point noting that because a weak state is not only reflected in a weak bureaucracy, but is the existence of informal parallel networks[56]; ones that are more likely to flourish the further they are away for the seat of power. In fact, he adds, that control over commerce is more important than control over territory. The Purdue project on state failure includes threatening security of surrounding states and region in its explanation of state failure,[57]

Finally, the patrimonial nature of African politics means that many of Africa's conflicts are imbedded in what Pugh and Cooper see as regional economic, military, political, and social networks.[58] They occur, as Paul Richards has related, on the margins of weak and retreating states.[59] This book offers an explanation of the nature and conditions of war in Africa by tracing

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[53]Mehler calls the fracturing of authority in the security realm "oligopolies of violence." See Andreas Mehler, "Oligopolies of Violence in Africa South of the Sahara," Nord-Süd-Aktuell, 18, 3, (2004), 539-548.

[54]I. William Zartman, "Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse," in Zartman (ed.) *Collapsed* States: *The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Lynne Rienner: Boulder, 1995). 9.

[55]Robert Rotberg, "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention and Repair," in Robert Rotberg (ed.), *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2004), 8.

[56]William Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 2.

[57]Rotberg, "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States,". 43.

[58]Michael Pugh and Neil Cooper, *War Economies in a Regional Context: Challenges of Transition* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publications, 2004).

[59]Paul Richards, "New War: An Ethnographic Approach", in Richards (ed), *No Peace, No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflict* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 13.
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and explaining the effect of the Africa state system of modern war in Africa. It argues first, that Africa record of conflict since the end of the Cold War can be understood by systemic forces defining its weak state system. The ripe conditions for conflict in Africa also shape their nature. In many cases, they cannot be fit into the classical categories and the trajectories they typically take. Nonetheless, while they fall outside the Westphalia state system, they are no less political.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Chapter Two, "War in Africa: Past as Prologue," examines the relationship between political development in Africa and the nature of war. It connects pre-colonial and colonial war in Africa to the current conditions of war in Africa. It delineates post-colonial war in Africa, international, proxy war, insurgencies, and civil war. None capture the regional logic of Africa's wars.

Chapter Three, "New Wars," "Old Wars," and the Political Character of War in Africa, picks up with the concluding theme of Chapter Two. Africa's wars are different. But they are no less political than classical war, be it civil or international war. Africa's wars reflect the structural and institutional political logic of its state system, as distinct from the Westphalia national state system. Something, furthermore, only understood an appreciation of its historical trajectory explained in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three, "The Africa State System and the Nature of War," describes the nature of its states system as an arrested Westphalia system and links it to regional conflict zones. It lays out the nature of its wars by describing its actors, staging, and script.

Chapter Four, Five, Six, and Seven, are case studies. The first two, respectively on the conflict centered on the eastern DRC and that centered on Darfur, are case studies of Africa's

distinctive regional wars. Chapter Six contrasts the first two case studies with the classical

interstate war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Chapter Seven looks at the conflict in the Niger

Delta.

Chapter Eight is the "Conclusion."

CONCLUSION

Finally, words and concepts are invented so we can see what no one else had really seen

before.[60] The state-centric focus in the work on Africa's conflicts leads to either a dyadic or

national-level frame of analysis, with the natural concomitant of a focus on specific causes of

conflict or specific starts and ends to war. But as Quincly Wright convincingly argues: "' wars'

may occur with no evidence of beginning or end except for the first and last act of war.[61] This is

why we need to know about more than the immediate causes of specific wars. Or to paraphrase

Cicero, war is not merely an act, but a condition.[62]

The challenge to ending these wars, of managing their scripts, rests in understanding their

systemic nature, which calls for a regional focus. It means understanding the conditions for war.

As Quincy Wright states:

Thus the time-space continuum which in a legal sense is designated a war, has not

necessarily been accompanied by a unity or uniformity of intense military

activity. Although in international legal theory a state of war between two states

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[60]Vasquez, *The War Puzzle,* 15.

[61]Wright, A *Study of War*, 10.

[62]Cited in Ibid., 6.

begins and ends at definite moments of time, these moments have frequently been

difficult to establish in practice. [63]

 The work on Africa's civil wars reflects the fact that recent research has favored dyadic

and national framings over systemic explanations of war.[64] For example, the UCDP took Sudan

off the list of "major conflicts" in 2007. The reason given was that there "… was an overall

decline in organized violence, especially between rebels and government forces."[65] But this can

be explained by the proliferation of rebel groups and an increase in internecine fighting among

the rebel groups. There was more fighting, just not necessarily between the state and any one

rebel group. The conflict may have entered a more deadly phase; one more difficult,

furthermore, to resolve. Harbom and Wallensteen acknowledge this when they state that conflict

with multiple dyads may last longer and keep a country in chaos.[66] Africa's wars cannot be

understood using a dyadic structure. In fact, as rebel movements splinter, as they did in

Liberia/Sierra Leone, the eastern DRC, and Darfur, there is a proliferation of dyads (if you can

even make such matches), which prolongs the conflict.[67] As Vasquez argues, the "sheer number

of participants" can distinguish types of war.[68]

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[63]Wright, *A Study of War*, 11.

[64]James, "Structural Realism," 182.

[65]Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, "Patterns of Major Armed Conflicts, 1998-2007," in *States in Armed Conflict 2007*, 107.

[66]Harbon and Wallensteen, "Dyadic Dimension of Armed Conflict: 1947-2007," in *States in Armed Conflict 2007,* 21.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Vasquez, *The War Puzzle*, 62.

Africa not only has more conflict than any other region, but if we move away from the

dyadic straightjacket with its focus on states, and instead use the region (conflict zones), many

more of its conflicts reach the level of "war." For instance, The UCDP codes the conflict years

of 2006 and 2007 in Chad and Sudan as each having between 25 and 999 deaths, not quite

meeting the 1,000 threshold to be classified a war. But if you consider them part of a single

regional conflict, it meets the "war" threshold. It means Africa has much more war than

traditional analysis might reveal.

A more comprehensive approach to understanding conflict in Africa should explain both

international and civil war.[69] Marshall explains:

> The examination of other gross types of political violence, such as civil war and
>
> revolution, have been kept conceptually distinct under the assumption that
>
> domestic forms of violence are qualitatively different from inter-state varieties
>
> (meaning they are assumbed to have causes that are qualitatively distinguished
>
> from the causes of inter-state war); as are minor powers, and even major-minor
>
> power wars.[70]

In fact, international relations does international war and comparative politics does civil war.

And as Sarkees et al. state, "… the artificial divisions of scholarly attention have made it difficult

to focus on overall trends in warfare and interrelations among the types of war."[71] It has also

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[69]See K.J. Holsti, "International Theory and Domestic War in the Third World: The Limits of Relevance." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association meeting, Toronto, 1997, 5.

[70]Marshall 1999, 38.

[71]Sarkees et al., Inter-State," 68.

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made it difficult to create a common taxonomy of conflict.[72] Possibly more important, while

international relations has built conceptual bridges to comparative politics, it has largely ignored

the middle ground of regional studies. The structural conditions of permissive of war in Africa

hold across the two main types of classical war – inter-state and civil war – and explains *wars*

across states. This is because war change as they being fought so what might start out as a civil

war, for instance, and becomes a *war across states*, in evolved out of the same permissive

conditions.

Finally, focusing on the structural conditions of war in Africa allows us to explain

international war, civil war, and what we call *wars across states* in Africa. But as Lebow

cautions, structure creates the permissive conditions for war, but the occurrence of war is

relatively rare.[73]   In the case of Africa, civil war (and other forms of intra-state war) are

relatively common; inter-state war rare. Blainey states:

> And yet the causes of war and peace, logically, should dovetail into one another.
>
> A weak explanation of why Europe was at peace will lead to a weak explanation
>
> of why Europe was at war. A valid diagnosis of war will be reflected in a valid
>
> diagnosis of peace.[74]

In the case of Africa, opening up the theoretical aperture, will allow us to understand both why

Africa has been conflict prone, but not fought many inter-state wars. It will help explain why

many intra-state wars do not become civil war and why some become *wars across states*.

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[72]Jan Angstrom, "Towards a Typology of Internal Armed Conflict: Synthesising a Decade of Conceptual Turmoil," *Civil Wars 4, 3 (2001), 93.*
[73]Ned Lebow, "Contingency, Catalyusts, and International System Change," *Political Science Quarterly* 115, No. 4 (2000-2001), 592.

[74]Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 3.