

CLIMATE CHANGE, RESOURCE STRUGGLES, AND WARFARE IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

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Abstract

Africa is a continent that is changing quickly. Many people still consider it to be an odd area that is encrusted with tales and legends, though. This paper aims to educate the reader about Africa, with an emphasis on the security challenges facing the continent in the twenty-first century. Since there are 54 countries in Africa, making broad generalisations is challenging and potentially harmful. Africa includes South Africa, a certified member of the BRICS, as well as fragile and developing governments. However, all 54 nations are members of the African Union (AU). The majority are the offspring of the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference, and nearly all were colonised by European countries. In actuality, the political landscape of Africa is nearly identical to that of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the majority of its nations gained their independence. The nations on the continent have faced numerous similar difficulties since the conclusion of the Cold War. The start of the twenty-first century was not good. According to the 2005 Peace and Conflict ledger, 31 of 161 countries—17 of which were in Africa—were at risk of a major conflict. Africa is home to more U.N. peacekeeping forces than any other continent. Seven of the world's fourteen main conflicts around the start of the century occurred in Africa. Since 1960, at least 32 African nations have seen at least one instance of non-separatist civil war. The majority of the world's conflicts take place there. This paper investigates the different connections between African security and insecurity challenges and the environment. The conceptual change around security and human security will be quickly summarised, followed by a discussion of the looming environmental problems that some people believe Africa is experiencing. The focus of this paper then shifts to the various ways that observers have asserted and denied links between conflict and the African environment. It goes on to discuss why African combat has changed so drastically in such a short amount of time. This paper examines the unique aspects of modern African warfare. This analysis of the social and political factors that influence the nature of these conflicts illuminates the connections between the politics of conflict areas and the methods used by armed group leaders to establish their objectives, find allies, and organise and maintain their combatants. This paper's most important finding is the increasing prominence of patronage politics as a key element of the explanation for change, both in the armed groups that challenge the state's authorities and in the elite coalitions that control it. This argument serves as the foundation for the subsequent section, which looks more closely at recent and ongoing conflicts to show how patronage politics truly influence warfare in Africa, despite the involvement of many other goals and motivations at the individual, armed group, and community levels. The future of conflict in Africa is examined in the last part. That part examines whether current trends can be sustained and looks for innovative approaches to combat that could portend broader change.

Keywords: Africa, Environment, Security, Conflict, War, Patronage Politics

Introduction

This paper aims to educate the reader about Africa, with an emphasis on the security challenges facing the continent in the twenty-first century. Since there are 54 countries in Africa, making broad generalisations is challenging and potentially harmful. After all, the 5,242-mile distance between Cape Town, South Africa, and Khartoum, Sudan, is approximately equal to the 5,291-mile journey between London and Beijing. Africa includes South Africa, a certified member of the BRICS, as well as fragile and developing governments. However, all 54 nations are members of the African Union (AU). The majority are the offspring of the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference, and nearly all were colonised by European countries. Under Article II, paragraph III of its Charter, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the forerunner of the AU, certified the Berlin rules. According to OAU resolution 16, it "solemnly declares that all member states pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence." In actuality, the political landscape of Africa is nearly identical to that of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the majority of its nations gained their independence. Eritrea, which separated from Ethiopia in 1993, and Southern Sudan, which separated from Sudan in July 2011, are the exceptions to the rule. The nations of the continent have faced numerous similar difficulties since the conclusion of the Cold War. The start of the twenty-first century was not good: according to the 2005 Peace and Conflict ledger, 31 out of 161 countries were in danger of a serious conflict, with 17 of those countries being African (Marshall & Gurr, 2015, p. 2). As of 2022, seventy-five percent of all U.N. peacekeeping troops were in Africa (Knight, 2024, p. 1); the U.N. has carried out nineteen complex peace operations since the end of the Cold War, ten of which were in Africa (Englebert & Tull, 2021, p. 106); seven of the fourteen major conflicts around the world at the beginning of the century occurred in Africa (Glantz, MacLean & Shawney, 2021, p. 124). Since 1960, at least 32 African nations have had at least one instance of non-separatist civil war (Englebert, 2022). The majority of the world's conflicts take place there (Spivak, 2016, p. 109).

Consider taking a trip back in time. The current conflicts in Africa paint a picture of a confusing assortment of rebel and militia groups battling faction-ridden government troops in a kind of gang war in countries like sections of Sudan and the Congo. Conflicts over the management of drug trafficking and its profits are reflected in Guinea-Bissau's factional turmoil. In Chad, political instability and violent outbursts are caused by family and clan politics. Armed groups from the region range over the terrain provided by the Central African Republic. The observer then travels to Africa at the beginning of the 1970s. Portuguese colonial forces are driven out of Guinea-Bissau by disciplined insurgent offensives, and the rebels now control the majority of the country's countryside. By 1973, a large number of international nations acknowledged the rebels as the country's legitimate administration. Following battles between armies that more closely mirrored Second World War combat tactics than the actions of the numerous militias that subsequently surface on this land, Nigeria's separatist Biafra insurrection was put down. In Rhodesia, rebellion against minority rule drew significant foreign help, and rebels utilised their liberated areas to showcase their ideas for future politics. Apartheid is a topic that inspires activists worldwide, and many foreign governments and international organisations supported South Africans in their fight against it.

This paper investigates the different connections between African security and insecurity challenges and the environment. Security has seen a conceptual change in recent years, moving away from state-centric assumptions and the exclusive concerns of state leaders towards broader conceptions of human security. At the same time, once the Cold War ended, worries about resource scarcity, climate change, and environmental damage increased. Conflict over limited resources, like oil and precious minerals, as well as resources made scarce by environmental degradation, such clean drinking water and arable land, are becoming more common in Africa, according to some experts, and will only get worse in the years to come. In addition to providing a range of interpretations and potential remedies, observers aimed to determine whether there were any links between the environment and conflict in Africa and other places. After providing a brief overview of the conceptual change between security and human security, this paper will explore the upcoming environmental catastrophes that some people believe Africa is experiencing. The focus of this paper then shifts to the various ways that observers have asserted and denied links between conflict and the African environment. It also clarifies why there has been such a rapid and significant transformation in African warfare. This paper examines the unique aspects of modern African warfare. This analysis of the social and political factors that influence the nature of these conflicts illuminates the connections between the politics of conflict areas and the methods used by armed group leaders to establish their objectives, find allies, and organise and maintain their combatants. This paper's most important finding is the increasing prominence of patronage politics as a key element of the explanation for change, both in the armed groups that challenge the state's authorities and in the elite coalitions that control it. This argument informs the subsequent section, which shows how patronage politics actually shape war in Africa, despite the involvement of many other agendas and motives at the individual, armed group, and community levels. The analysis of recent and ongoing conflicts illustrates this point. Future African wars are examined in the last section. The sustainability of current patterns is examined in that part, along with potential new approaches to combat that could signal broader change.

Why Africa Matters

13 percent of the world's population lives in Africa, the second largest of the earth's seven continents, which makes up 23 percent of the planet's land area. Africa is mostly a tropical continent that straddles the equator. The Atlantic Ocean borders it on the west, the Mediterranean Sea borders it on the north, and the Indian and Red Seas border it on the east. The Sinai Peninsula, which connects Africa and Asia, is located in the northeastern region of the continent.

Africa is a continent that is rapidly changing. But for many, it remains a mystery place shrouded in myths and misconceptions. According to several discoveries in the Great Rift Valley region, Africa is where humanity first emerged. Its origins can be traced back to ancient times. Tradition and two significant invasions are part of African history. A diverse array of ideas has been brought to Africa by the overlay of Arab-Islamic and European Christian cultures. Ancient customs were either replaced or challenged by new

institutions brought about by Christian and Islamic influences, which also altered the pattern of African behaviour. The slave trade and colonial authority have been associated with Africa's history of underdevelopment and poor internal integration. Arabs and Europeans began stealing slaves from West, Central, and Southeast Africa in the late fifteenth century. Dutch exploration and colonisation of the continent started in the seventeenth century. Britain, the world's largest slave-running nation, rose to prominence as the lord of the seas. The continental power of Europe remained uncontested from 1492 to 1885. When millions of Africans were transported to the Americas and the Caribbean, Europeans who owned plantations and other industries there became wealthy and influential (Chizea, 2023).

Direct colonisation followed by colonial conquest started about 1870. Africa was split by the European powers in 1878 during the Congress of Berlin, which was hosted by Otto von Bismarck, Germany's first chancellor. Straight geographic lines of latitude and longitude were cut out like a cake according to the "effective occupation" principle (Chizea, 2023). Germany, Italy, Portugal, France, and Britain were the five competing countries that ate up Africa, "un Magnifique gâteau African," with Spain stealing some of it (Chizea, 2023). In the guise of invasion, Christianity, trade, and "civilisation," the continent was exploited and ruled. Under Belgian King Leopold II, the Belgian Congo was exploited to the greatest extent. The process of colonising and annexing African territory between 1881 and 1914, known as the Scramble for Africa, was the result of European countries' presence in Africa. Africa's development has been significantly impacted by each of these occurrences. Between 1807, when Britain outlawed the slave trade, and 1957, when the Gold Coast gained independence and was renamed Ghana, Africa and Europe fought a bloody continental war for 150 years. Upon its conclusion, Africa had achieved political autonomy from the colonising powers, but it continued to struggle under the psychological and physical control of its former colonisers (Chizea, 2023, p. 216).

But modern Africa did arise. After independence and the subsequent half-century of wars in various regions of the continent, decolonisation occurred. All of the nations that had previously been under the dominion of Germany, England, Italy, and France achieved freedom from their colonisers, with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, who were never colonised. African states that received aid were not forced to adopt democracy or free market reforms by Western powers during the Cold War, which lasted from 1945 to 1980 and involved the United States and the Soviet Union. They favoured "friendly" anti-communist leaders like Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, who was overthrown in a coup aided by the US Central Intelligence Agency and Belgium. Following the Cold War, political and economic circumstances dictated by Western donors and financial institutions became the standard starting in the 1980s. The IMF and World Bank introduced structural adjustment programs that urged poor nations to open up their economies in return for financing. Access to these monies was contingent upon meeting these requirements. Afterwards, governments were pressured to embrace multiparty democracy in the 1990s. Multiparty democracy has been gaining traction throughout the continent since 1994, when South Africa abolished the widely denounced apartheid government through democratic elections. The 2015 elections in politically divided nations including

Guinea, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ivory Coast ended rather amicably. Whereas in Mauritius, Cape Verde, Botswana, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Somalia, all were broken by conflict.

Africa is the second-largest continent in the world, with 54 distinct nations and a fast expanding population of about one billion people. Despite possessing about 20% of the world's land area and 14% of its population, these nations only made up 2.2% of global trade by value in 2022, compared to 38.5% from Europe and 40.7% from Asia (Chizea, 2023). In many respects, Africa remains a marginalised continent. Nonetheless, there is no denying that things are changing and will likely continue to alter dramatically in the near future. Economic growth in China and India has dominated the first few years of the twenty-first century, which has helped Asia's middle class grow significantly. There are indications that this may be occurring in some African countries, despite frequently suspect statistical evidence, and Africa will unquestionably be the continent to watch over the next 20 years and beyond. Economic growth rates in various African nations are currently among the greatest in the world, despite sometimes beginning from a low foundation. From 2010 to 2020, 13 African nations experienced average annual GDP growth rates of over 6% (Chibundu & Chabal, 2022).

Regretfully, despite significant advancements in a number of nations in the fields of democratic governance, healthcare, education, and security, Africa continues to be the world's poorest and least developed continent. Afghanistan is the only non-African nation to be listed among the "worst 20" in the United Nations' 2018 Human Development Report. Only 48.9 years is the world's lowest life expectancy at birth, far less than the 83+ years of countries like Japan, Singapore, and Switzerland (Chizea, 2023). Swaziland is a small country in southern Africa with a high rate of HIV/AIDS. In 2020, Angola had the highest rate globally, at 156.9 per 1,000 infants, compared to Norway's average of 2.6 per 1,000 babies dying before turning five.

However, we should be worried about more than just advancement and economic prosperity. The cultural heritage of Africa is still rich and varied. Humanity's beginnings, the remarkable heritage of ancient civilisations, ancient cities, and a rich tapestry of literature, music, and art. However, many people are unaware of these attributes. The sensationalised stories in the international media, which usually demonstrate a lack of knowledge about African countries and people and concentrate on 'newsworthy' topics like natural and man-made disasters like drought, desertification, civil war, terrorism, and famine, are largely to blame for the general public's limited understanding of Africa.

Of course, one could wonder why it is important to research and comprehend Africa's security issues. The Great Powers have historically placed it on the geopolitical back burner. Additionally, there has been a perception that Africa is unique and perhaps abnormal (Baaz & Stern, 2020). One obvious response is that, if it didn't important, why has it drawn so much attention from around the world, especially since the end of the Cold War? The United States elected AFRICOM, its newest Central Command, in October 2009 (Nigro & Lovelace, 2022). Up to that point, EUROCOM, CENTCOM, and PACOM shared accountability for Africa. Due in part to its colonial past, Europe has historically been more interested in Africa than the Americas or Asia, and it continues to be engaged in the continent (Gebrewold, 2022; N'Diaye, 2023). The most active

external power might be China, the relatively recent suitor (Taylor, 2022). The relationship between Africa and the Arab world is crucial (Solomon, 2021). But Africa's significance extends far beyond its growing geopolitical significance. "Africa Rising" was featured on the cover of *The Economist* on December 3, 2011. The security of the rest of the globe does not appear to be threatened by Sub-Saharan Africa and its 48 nations. Only three distinct cases of interstate conflict have occurred since African nations gained their independence: Tanzania's invasion of Uganda in 1978 to depose Idi Amin, the 1977–1978 conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in Ogden territory, and the Eritrean–Ethiopian conflict in 2000.

Ethiopia versus Somalia in the 1970s, Rwanda versus Uganda in 2002, Libya versus Chad in the 1980s, and even South Africa's destabilisation campaign in the 1980s are other conflicts that could be included in this group (Knight, 2024).

Conflict within a state is a different matter. According to Elbadawi and Sambanis, civil wars have erupted in over twenty-eight Sub-Saharan African nations in the past forty years (2022, p. 234). More significantly, though, a large number of post-Cold War hostilities in Africa do not meet the criteria for either an interstate conflict or a civil war. According to the widely cited Correlates of War Project, a civil war is defined as sustained military combat resulting in at least 1,000 deaths per year, pitting central government's forces against an insurgent force capable of effective resistance, determined by the latter's ability to inflict upon the government forces at least 5% of the fatalities that the insurgents sustain (Henderson & Singer, 2022, p. 179).

Yet Africa's conflicts often slip outside the formal definition of a civil war. That leaves us with something different. According to Kaldor (2019) and Munkler (2021), a large number of conflicts or wars in Africa have been known as "new wars." The majority of the emerging conflicts share the recognition that they do not fall within the traditional definition of civil or interstate conflict due to the state's declining involvement. Since politics under the Westphalia nation-state system revolves around the state, these disputes are perceived as taking place outside of politics because the state is no longer the primary issue in them, in the sense that it is being fought over. The categorisation of "new wars" is a little vague, even ambiguous. The phrase "new wars" is not even used by all of the researchers that fall within this category. However, there are similar motifs that enable a body of writing to be categorised as a distinct entity. They tend to concur that: a number of post-Cold War conflicts are fundamentally different from "old wars," and that they are primarily internal conflicts; the main reason for these differences is the systemic effects of globalisation; and these conflicts are not Clausewitzian, in that they lack a clear political logic. Lastly, international relations theory has failed to explain them for all of these reasons.

The concept of new wars does lead us in the correct direction, despite the fact that it is frequently a very ambiguous and problematic category. Pliny the Elder once said, "There is always something new out of Africa" (*Semper aliquid novi Africane*). We can learn just as much from Africa as Africa can teach us, as we have stated earlier (Henze, 2022). This theme runs across the entire paper. Therefore, the focus is not so much on how much war has occurred in Africa since the end of the Cold War, but rather on what we know

about these conflicts, how we interpret them, and what analytical techniques we use. What can we learn, last but not least?

A Conceptual Shift to Human and Environmental Security

Discussions about national security have typically focused on defending the state against internal subversion of the current political system or from external military threats. Therefore, security has been seen as governmental or national security, which is primarily defined in terms of militarisation. Similar to other regions, national security in Africa was more strictly defined as government security in the sense of upholding the status quo. The concept of security has changed in the last few decades, with the idea that it must take into account a variety of additional factors. For instance, Barry Buzan made the case in *People, States, and Fear* (1983) that security should be interpreted to encompass not only military elements but also political, economic, social, and environmental factors. This has sparked debate regarding the purpose of security and the conditions that constitute threats to it. As several observers have noted, we must stop thinking of the state as the main, if not the only, reference point for security-related issues. After all, it is only one type of social organisation that varies in location and time. Numerous academics and activists have contended that the environment and the individual, which are connected under the umbrella of human security, are more suitable referents of security.

Realist theorists highlight the ongoing issue of insecurity, which is mostly brought on by the security conundrum that the anarchic structure of the international state system creates. As a result, they now criticise efforts to bring about peace and security. Conversely, liberal theorists tend to advocate for institutions as a means of attaining global security and are nonetheless more hopeful than their realist rivals. They contend that by enhancing knowledge and openness, lowering transaction costs and the likelihood of cheating, and serving as a hub for coordination in the anarchic world, institutions aid in lowering a state's uncertainty and, consequently, insecurity. Both Realists and Liberals tend to believe that disputes are motivated by material capacities, albeit they differ in how pessimistic they are about governments cooperating. Conversely, constructivists are more likely to emphasise interpersonal connections. In particular, they frequently contend that shared knowledge, material resources, and behaviours enable social institutions, which are created rather than given. Therefore, constructivists like Alexander Wendt (1999) have argued that the security dilemma is a social structure created by inter-subjective understandings that have historically developed, in part by defining interests in "self-help" terms, whereas realists believe that it is an unchangeable fact of the anarchical system. This has led Constructivists to examine the ideas and norms that have produced conflicts, and which might also be employed for conflict resolution and peace-building.

Critical security studies have attempted to rethink security in general and have offered a deemphasis on the role of the state. This action expands upon Robert Cox's (1981) differentiation between critical and problem-solving theories. The former method assumes the current system and all of its components. On the other hand, critical theories concentrate on how current institutions and relationships came to be as well as how they might be altered. Existing state-centralism is questioned by critical security approaches,

which point out that states vary greatly in their personalities and, more significantly, often contribute to the insecurity of their own citizens. The phrase "human security" refers to critical security techniques that prioritise the individual in their research. As a result, security increasingly includes more general issues with infrastructure, livelihoods, political violence, narcotics, and health in addition to threats, armies, and government policies addressing conflict. A distinct set of security priorities emerges when human security is central to the study.

The UNDP outlined seven components of human security in their *1994 Human Development Report*: political security (fundamental human rights and freedoms), environmental security, food security, health security, personal security, and communal security. The approach that traditional political science has employed to frame the concept of security is state- and regime-centric, which is significantly different from this. Some academics found the move to human security worrisome because of how broad the idea is. As Mark Duffield argued:

Existing definitions of human security tend to be extraordinarily expansive and vague, encompassing everything from physical security to psychological well-being, which provides policymakers with little guidance in the prioritization of competing policy goals and academics little sense of what, exactly, is to be studied (Duffield, 2019).

Other critiques include the concern that the concept might cause more harm than good, in the sense that a human security approach may raise expectations and may be too moralistic to be attainable. According to some academics, the shift away from state-centric methods also minimises the significance of the state's role in providing security. Finally, the process of "securitisation," in which politicians and policymakers increasingly frame a wide range of social issues and practices through the lens of security, has caused significant concern among the "Copenhagen School" of international relations theory (Wæver et al., 2023; Wæver, 2007; Huysmans, 2020). "From this perspective, security is often less an objective condition and more the way in which professional groups compete for visibility, influence, and scarce resources," as Duffield observes (Duffield, 2019, p. 3). Such arguments have definite salience around the contested issues of "environmental security".

Environmental Insecurity in Africa

Two linked debates were more well-known in the international community after the Cold War ended. One was the reinterpretation of security, as mentioned above (Baldwin, 2017; Booth, 2011; Buzan, 2019; Krause & Williams, 2020). Individual, state, and international security were at risk due to environmental change, according to the other linked debate (Deudney & Matthews, 2021; Myers, 2009, 2003; Ohlsson, 2021; Dalby, 2022, 2019; Barnett, 2021). The idea of "environmental security" has served as the informal framework for these later conversations. However, there hasn't been much agreement on these topics, as we will see later. What exactly does the concept of environmental security mean? What are the sources of environmental insecurity in Africa? What are some possible responses to these problems?

It has often been maintained that disputes arise over environmental resources, particularly when those resources become more limited. Some analysts have concentrated on how the desire to gain access to

limited resources, such oil and diamonds, has motivated conflicts in the modern era. Others have concentrated on the ways that environmental degradation and climate change have worsened human insecurity and fuelled violence in some regions of the continent.

Using land as a resource as an example, one may observe how researchers have looked at the connection between conflict and the environment in Africa. Naturally, land continues to be central to social, economic, and political life throughout the majority of Africa, a continent that is still primarily agricultural. However, property rights are still unclear in modern-day Africa, and land tenure is still hotly debated in many parts of the continent. It should be mentioned that land is still valuable as a speculative asset in addition to being used for farming. As such, it is a highly political, and politicized, environmental resource. "How land use is governed is not just an economic question, but also a critical aspect of the management of political affairs," noted Calestous Juma. One may argue that in the majority of African nations, land use governance is the most significant political issue (Juma & Ojwang, 2019).

"Deprivation of land rights as a feature of more generalised inequality in access to economic opportunities and low economic growth have caused seemingly minor social or political conflicts to escalate into large-scale conflicts," the World Bank acknowledged in their 2018 report *Land Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction*, citing Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe as examples (Deininger, 2023). The importance of land-related origins of violence is also mentioned by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in their report on *Helping Prevent Violent violence*. Land dispossession is frequently the cause of population displacement, which is one of the main drivers of political instability, it states. It also suggests that scarcity of productive land and changes in land tenure systems are contributing factors to violent conflict. Moreover, it notes that any successful post-conflict resolution cannot be effective without resolving land-related disputes and insuring demobilized ex-combatants are able to gain access to land (Huggins & Clover, 2024, p. 4).

The emphasis on the extent to which land instability is thought to be a contributing factor to conflict varies. Naturally, a lot relies on the particular case being studied. In certain regions of Africa, land shortage can act as a structural catalyst for war. Conflict can also be directly caused by land. In these situations, various grievances and elements that fuel conflict and violence are coupled with land disputes, insecure tenure, or unequal access to land. Of fact, violent conflict is not always the result of land insecurity alone. Conflict does not occur in every nation that faces land scarcity or unequal access to or ownership of land. As Huggins and Clover observe:

Research suggests that the key determinant of whether violence will occur is not the extent of grievance in any given society, but rather the forms of social and political organisation which enable "boundaries" to be formed and people mobilized for violent ends (Huggins & Clover, 2024).

What becomes clear is that political entrepreneurs are often able to manipulate land issues to further personal gains. Because land use patterns and customary land tenure systems traditionally have an ethnic basis—something colonialism institutionalised in many regions of Africa—access to land is frequently entwined with ethnic elements in Africa and elsewhere. This has resulted in the emergence of significant

citizenship and migration difficulties, particularly those pertaining to autochthony claims, which can become highly salient.

Autochthony, which literally translates as "emerging from the soil," suggests localist forms of belonging. Its manifestations have sparked violent conflicts in rural areas when claims of autochthony are used to support property claims, as well as arguments over candidates' ancestry during election campaigns. "The recent drive towards political and economic liberalisation has engendered a rapid intensification of struggles over belonging, an obsession with autochtonie, and ever more violent forms of exclusion of so-called 'strangers,' even when they are citizens of the same country," Geschiere (2024, p. 237) reports. The concept of national citizenship as a whole has occasionally been compromised by this (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2020). On the African continent, these kinds of disputes are not new, though. Their roots can be traced back to precolonial customs as well as colonial project-based notions of place politics. The majority of African societies are multiethnic, with a few notable exceptions. In the pre-colonial era, the boundaries between indigenous African polities were generally fluid and porous. Exit was the primary method of political protest because there was so much territory and travel was so simple. African political and social life was significantly changed by the colonial imposition of citizenship, which effectively bound every individual to a certain territorially bounded government. After independence, citizenship laws increased in importance as the new African states now had to permanently define who legitimately lived within the border of its territory, and could therefore enjoy the privileges of belonging, and who did not.

When two or more communities have "shared" the land for a long time, land issues become especially susceptible to the politics of identity and belonging (Hagberg, 2021). One significant advantage in these circumstances is the capacity to assert your land claim from an autochthonous stance, such as being the "son of the soil," whereas your opponent is portrayed as a "newcomer," "immigrant," and "stranger." Since "citizenship does not entitle you to resources, it entitles you to enter the struggle for resources," asserting citizenship is crucial in such a scenario (Mamdani, 2022, p. 505). The compromise that co-habitation was based on is becoming less and less viable in recent years due to a confluence of political and economic forces. The recent armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire illustrates the saliency of autochthony claims in politicized struggles over land and citizenship (Marshall-Fratani, 2023). Of course, claims to autochthony need not necessarily lead to violence.

In addition to focusing on the possible effect of scarce environmental resources might have on the outbreak of armed conflict, scholars have also been interested in examining how climate change and man-made environmental degradation is impacting human insecurity (Hulme et al., 2020). Five main connections between environmental change and human security were identified in the UNDP's Human Development Report 2007-2008: (1) the relationship between climate, agriculture, and food security; (2) the relationship between water stress and insecurity due to altered rainfall patterns that will, among other things, reduce the amount of potable water available; (3) the relationship between rising sea levels and vulnerability to climate-induced disasters, including floods, hurricanes, and landslides; (4) the impact of ecosystem

disruptions and biodiversity losses; and (5) the spread of diseases, like malaria, particularly in places with weak public health resources.

With relation to climate change, Africa is the continent that has contributed the least quantity of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere in both of current fluxes and existing stocks. For instance, the total CO₂ emissions per capita in Africa in 2007 were 1 tCO₂ (tonnes of CO₂), compared to the global average of 4.3 tCO₂, the US figure of 19.0 tCO₂, the EU15 (the 15 countries that made up the EU at the beginning of 2004) of 6.9 tCO₂, and China's 3.2 tCO₂. With an average of 7.9 tCO₂/person in 2004, South Africa is the only exception, primarily because of its heavy reliance on coal for electricity (UNDP 2007). Despite the fact that the global poor have not caused the emissions of greenhouse gases, they are the most vulnerable. As the 2007 UNDP Report states: In rich countries, coping with climate change to date has largely been a matter of adjusting thermostats, dealing with longer, hotter summers, and observing seasonal shifts. Cities like London and Los Angeles may face flooding risks as sea levels rise, but their inhabitants are protected by elaborate flood defence systems. By contrast, when global warming changes weather patterns in the Horn of Africa, it means that crops fail and people go hungry, or that women and young girls spend more hours collecting water. And, whatever the future risks facing cities in the rich world, today the real climate change vulnerabilities linked to storms and floods are found in rural communities in the great river deltas of the Ganges, the Mekong and the Nile, and in sprawling urban slums across the developing world (UNDP, 2007).

Many scientific predictions indicate that Africa will face increased environmental insecurity given the expected climate change impacts. Crop production will be particularly affected by increased temperatures, changes in rainfall, rising sea levels, and extreme events, such as floods and landslides, that will disrupt ecosystems. Temperatures are expected to increase across Africa, which will increase the risks of drought and increase stress on agricultural production. Given that a high proportion of the population across the continent relies on crops and livestock for their livelihoods, most Africans are very vulnerable to environmental changes. For example, Uganda's Department of Meteorology warned in 2018 that even a slight temperature increase could wipe out most of the country's coffee crop, which is essential to the country for generating export revenues (Toulmin, 2019, p. 57).

In Africa, water is still a vital resource for people, crops, cattle, and the production of energy. Water availability changes will significantly affect many facets of life for Africans living in both rural and urban areas. It is anticipated that rainfall will drastically decrease in the majority of Africa, including the Sahara desert. More rainfall is anticipated in East Africa, but it will be heavy, raising the risk of flooding and soil erosion. In some parts of the world, predicted changes in the climate may generate positive changes, such as some parts of Russia and Canada, which are expected to experience more favorable farming conditions over the next several decades. In contrast, no location in Africa is anticipated to profit equally from these advantages. Even in areas where more rainfall is anticipated, a large portion of it is anticipated to fall in heavier, more torrential circumstances, increasing erosion and runoff. In 20 countries, including Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Togo, and Burkina Faso, over a million people were impacted by the greatest

floods to hit Africa in thirty years in 2018. Homes and crops were devastated by heavy rains and flooding, leaving many communities severely food insecure and at serious danger for health problems (Toulmin, 2019, p. 58).

Deforestation and desertification are two more issues associated with environmental degradation. There are worries that deforestation brought on by climate change and excessive clearing motivated by financial demands could enlarge Africa's deserts and increase soil erosion. Forests are essential to local lives in many parts of Africa, yet people's access, management, and control over these resources are sometimes restricted by law. Furthermore, whether as raw materials for pulp, fuel, or lumber, or as suppliers of carbon services to combat climate change, African forests are fast becoming a worldwide commodity (Toulmin, 2019, p. 85). According to some climate models, rising temperatures and increased evaporation would make the Sahel region considerably dry in the twenty-first century, offsetting any benefits from more rainfall. Others, however, have a more positive assessment of climate change in the Sahel, speculating that shifting rainfall levels could lead to better agricultural conditions over the next 20 to 30 years (Toulmin, 2019, pp. 15– 30). With predicted increases in heat waves, flooding, pollution, and sea level rise, global climate change will have a substantial impact on urban residents as well as the human security of Africans living in rural areas. Of course, those most at risk are the poor majority who already live in precarious situations with extremely limited access to water, sanitation and government services, especially regarding healthcare.

Africa has been blatantly helpless to address these security concerns in the international arena, even though the continent is expected to bear the brunt of the challenges brought on by climate change. In her 2019 book *Climate Change in Africa*, Camilla Toulmin notes that Africa's variety and its poor economic standing are two factors contributing to its helplessness in the global warming debate. "The interests of these countries are too different to speak with a common voice, as they include some of the poorest countries and an increasing number of oil and gas-producing nations" (Toulmin, 2019, p. 8).

Competing Approaches to Environmental Security

Environmental security studies and critical environmental security studies are two key methodologies within the topic of environmental security, according to Krause and Williams (2020). The approach to environmental security studies often concentrates on problem-solving, gathering information, building knowledge, and policy relevance. Much of the literature on environmental security tends to prioritise the concerns of the industrialised Global North, despite the fact that Africa and other parts of the Global South would bear a disproportionate amount of the burden generated by environmental deterioration. Specifically, the field tends to focus on how environmental degradation in the Global South will impact the security of Northern states, an argument described by supporters and critics alike as "Malthusian" or "Neo-Malthusian" (Dalby, 2022; Richards, 2019). Thus, this approach is notably state-centric, policy prescriptive, and prioritizes the concerns of the developed world.

While scope and methodology are important to those who employ a critical environmental security studies approach, they are equally interested in discussing ontological and epistemological issues with those who take a problem-solving stance. Scholars of critical environmental security studies often assume that the

latter group starts with the erroneous assumption that the world is a collection of self-regarding states, some of which are more economically developed and have greater (political, military, and technological) power than others (Swatuk, 2020, p. 209). Below, we will look at each strategy.

Environmental Security Studies and Neo-Malthusian Approaches

In environmental security studies, a large portion of the Neo-Malthusian thesis focusses on showing links between armed conflict and environmental degradation. According to Thomas Homer-Dixon, perhaps the most well-known author associated with this approach, there are six types of environmental scarcity that could lead to violent conflict: (1) the greenhouse effect; (2) the depletion of stratosphere ozone; (3) the loss and degradation of good agricultural land; (4) the removal and degradation of forests; (5) the depletion and pollution of fresh water supplies; and (6) the depletion of fisheries (Homer-Dixon, 2021). Homer-Dixon and others have argued that Africa will be particularly susceptible to these forces, given that African states lack "adaptive capacity" (Homer-Dixon & Blitt, 2022, p. 9). The claim is that economically poor states lacking both financial and human capital, and being ethnically diverse, are less likely to be able to manage severe environmental challenges.

Homer-Dixon works to look into the relationship between violent conflict and the degradation of renewable resources, including water, forests, fisheries, and agricultural land (2021, 2020, 2019). According to his research, there are three theories that connect environmental change with conflict. First, it is proposed that interstate "simple-scarcity" or "resource war" conflicts will result from dwindling supply of physically controllable commodities. For instance, according to Michael Klare (2021), the employment of military force in the twenty-first century will be guided by competitiveness and control over vital natural resources. Second, "group-identity" conflicts like ethnic clashes may be triggered by large population movements brought on by environmental stress. Third, extreme environmental scarcity would produce "deprivation conflicts" manifested in civil unrest and insurrection, as well as worsen economic deprivation and upend social institutions, particularly the state (Homer-Dixon, 2019). According to Homer-Dixon and similar thinkers, greater demand brought on by population expansion or rising consumption, decreasing supply as a result of erosion or degradation, and/or unequal access and distribution are the main causes of scarcity (Homer-Dixon, 2019, p. 280). According to Homer-Dixon, those who can afford it would seize resources due to scarcity, while those who cannot will be marginalised in terms of the environment.

It should be noted at the outset that the degree of causality given to environmental factors has varied across Homer-Dixon's published record. Indeed, Homer-Dixon has stepped away from making grand causal claims about the links between environmental degradation and violent conflict. In 2019, he concluded:

environmental scarcity is not sufficient, by itself, to cause violence; when it does contribute to violence, research shows, it always interacts with other political, economic, and social factors. Environmental scarcity's causal role can never be separated from these contextual factors, which are often unique to the society in question (Homer-Dixon, 2019).

Other writers have been both more alarmist in their pronouncements and more grandiose in their causal claims. For instance, Robert Kaplan (2004) exemplifies the alarmist approach when he asserts that growing

human suffering and conflict are directly related to environmental degradation in Africa and other regions. The immediate ramifications for the Global North—the "coming anarchy," as he puts it—are the main worry of Kaplan and others. Ironically, people in the industrialised world are depicted as being both isolated from the factors that led to these changes and possibly harmed by their consequences, which mainly include rising immigration, the spread of illnesses, and social disintegration.

Scholars vigorously dispute these assertions. For instance, a sizable body of academic research indicates that environmental change rarely directly causes conflict and only infrequently does it indirectly (Kahl, 2023). Researchers have noted that environmental disruptions like climate change typically do not contribute to the causes of conflict. Therefore, drawing a straightforward correlation between growing environmental shortage and warfare should be done with caution. For instance, Lietzmann and Vest contend that environmental stress need not directly result in violence, arguing that it can act as a structural source, a catalyst, or a trigger along the "conflict dynamic" (Lietzmann & Vest, 2021, p. 40). The conflict in Darfur, Sudan has been offered by some as an example of a war driven by environmental conditions, namely the drought-related problems the region has suffered for decades (Katz, 2020). Darfur has been regarded as "the world's first climate change war" as it was dubbed by a 2007 UN Environmental Programme Report. Yet, many scholars have been quick to point out that the origins of conflict are far more complex than this catchy epithet suggests. As Alex de Waal notes:

In all cases, significant violent conflict erupted because of political factors, particularly the propensity of the Sudan government to respond to local problems by supporting militia groups as proxies to suppress any signs of resistance. Drought, famine and the social disruptions they brought about made it easier for the government to pursue this strategy (de Waal, 2017).

However, policymakers and the public are still drawn to alarmist arguments that armed conflict and environmental change are causally related. However, some opponents have quickly pointed out that environmental change does not always have to immediately result in war in order to be considered a security danger. According to Camilla Toulmin, "it is evident, though, that the more dire forecasts of temperature increases and rainfall failures could unleash significant food and water shortages and political unrest in many regions" (Toulmin, 2019, p. 13). Many would point out that these factors force us to reconsider our definitions of security, who is being secured, and by whom.

Lastly, many academics in Africa have been eager to clarify that degradation and environmental change are not the same thing. It is incorrect to think of African farmers and herders as "perpetrators" or "victims" because they are not distinct from "nature." For instance, Leach and Mearns (2021) dispel a number of myths and half-truths that have influenced policy and thought regarding the African environment in recent decades in their edited collection *Lie of the Land*. For example, Jeremy Swift has shown how arguments regarding desertification have based upon improper uses of data and a conflation of independent processes of change. James Fairhead and Melissa Leach (2021) have argued that the "forest islands" in Guinea's savanna are not remnants of a wider forest cover, but have been created and sustained by human action. They point out that colonial science, which is often at the root of accepted understandings of the African

environment, was based on biased assumptions rather than scientific data. Furthermore, he notes that alarmist pronouncements regarding desertification and degradation have strengthened the power of national governments, development agencies, and scientists alike (Swift, 2021, pp. 73–90). Their own research shows that forests have not diminished, but have been promoted by Africans. Work such as this does not suggest that there are no serious environmental problems in Africa, but rather urges readers to be much more critical about environmental diagnoses, and the data on which they are based.

Critical Environmental Security Studies

As demonstrated by the Homer-Dixon case, many academics have opted to use a conventional state-centric framework when discussing environmental security. That is, concentrating on how shifts in the richness or scarcity of resources affect the likelihood of armed conflict between or within states. Many of these experts' ontological and epistemological presuppositions have been questioned by researchers who employ what is known as a critical environmental security studies methodology. These opponents often dispute the legitimacy of tying environmental issues to national security measures (Dalby, 2019, 2022, 2023; Deudney, 2019; Barnett, 2021; Gleditsch, 2020). Daniel Deudney (2019), for instance, outlined three fundamental concerns: First, national security discourses rely on portraying everything outside the autonomous, sovereign state as potential threats, which is fundamentally at odds with the "whole earth" sensibility at the heart of environmental awareness and presents significant challenges for transnational cooperation; second, the structures created to ensure national security, which are reliant on organised violence, secrecy, and technological expertise, are of little assistance when it comes to environmental problems, where solutions require transnational cooperation, openness, and a fair amount of creativity. Finally, the high level of interdependence in the contemporary world makes it highly unlikely that the cleavages of environmental harm will match interstate borders. This leads Deudney to observe that "Resolving such conflicts will be a complex and messy affair, but the conflicts are unlikely to lead to war" (Deudney in Conca & Dabelko, 2020, p. 312).

According to Simon Dalby, issues with a vaguely environmental connotation, pollution, and ozone depletion are increasingly self-servingly positioned as part of global political discourse and policy initiatives (Dalby, 2022, p. 95). These methods continue to sideline discussions about access, justice, and rights in the context of environmental security, according to critics (Swatuk, 2020). For them, environmental justice and environmental insecurity are closely related topics. They argue that the weakest links in very complex interconnected networks determine the overall security of the system. Dalby contends that "the geopolitical sensibilities are also starting to shift from matters of border protection to thinking about global interconnections and the fact that affluence is making the poor and marginal insecure due to climate change" (Dalby, 2019, p. 12).

Simon Dalby suggests that the concept of "environmental security" requires us to rethink both terms – security and environment. Traditionally, security has been understood in terms of making things stay the same, and we have tended to take the external environment as a static given. Critical environmental security scholars generally have a tendency to problematise practices and institutions that are often considered

"natural" and/or immutable. They also maintain that security requires a holistic understanding of the ways in which humans interact with "nature." As Dalby notes, "humanity is changing what was once understood as an external environment, and in the process changing its circumstances of life in ways that make what is being secured increasingly artificial. Our thinking needs to catch up to this new reality" (Dalby, 2019, p. 4). Dealing with this new reality has sparked innovative thinking that frequently questions some of the fundamental security presumptions held by conventional academics and decision-makers. Conca and Dabelko (2020), for instance, put forth the idea of "environmental peace-making," which would necessitate both the development of post-Westphalian forms of governance that might eventually bind states to cooperative agreements and practices to promote "learning" as well as the modification of the global state-centric strategic climate. The concept of transboundary natural resource management, which has taken on several practical forms, is one example of this movement. Transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs), including the Gaza/Kruger/Gonarezhou TFCA between Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park between Botswana and South Africa, are dedicated to the preservation of wildlife. Transboundary natural resource management areas (TBNRMAs) differ by focusing more on developing sustainable livelihoods, such as the Every River Has Its People Initiative involving 160,000 km² in Angola, Namibia and Botswana. There are also cases of informal networks of resource use across boundaries, spatial development initiatives (SDIs), and development corridors (Swatuk, 2020, p. 222).

The World Bank identified Southern Africa as a region where water scarcity could lead to violent conflict in the 1990s, but more recently, they have suggested that it offers the opportunity for regional peacebuilding. Larry Swatuk has noted that TBNRM has functioned as much as a discursive political site as a policy program (2020). The constructed "peace parks" involve international actors like the World Conservation Union and Conservation International, as well as regional NGOs like the South African Peace Parks Foundation, who link to state institutions, parks, and wildlife departments that coordinate their efforts through the Southern African Development Community (SADC), an interstate body dedicated to integrated regional development. Many Southern Africans, however, are dubious of the purported peace-building goals behind TBNRM because of South Africa's historical domination over the area. According to Swatuk (2020, p. 225), the experience of TBNRMs in Southern Africa "reveals a constructed landscape – the 'peace park' – the establishment of which mirrors vast power asymmetries within states, among states in the region, and between Africa and actors external to the continent." Indeed, the TBNRMs serve as an example of a key argument put out by academics of critical environmental security, which is that "biodiversity preservation" entails contentious and highly politicised concerns.

A final example, the national parks in Africa, can be used to illustrate this. Because of the foreign exchange earned by tourism, especially ecotourism, national parks are becoming vital for many African republics. Travel and tourism accounted for 10% of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP in 2021 and grew at a real-term pace of more than 5% each year (Christie & Crompton, 2022). The desires and preferences of foreign tourists are sometimes given precedence over those of native Africans, which has had a considerable effect on how African lands and resources have been managed (Dunniy, 2020; Igoe, 2024; Neumann, 2022). In addition

to the impact of these market forces, external non-state actors like the World Wide Fund for Nature (also known as the World Wildlife Fund; WWF) and international environmental lobbying organisations like the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) have significantly influenced, if not outright dictated, wildlife conservation and management policies in Africa. The power of an African state to determine the purpose and meaning of its own territory is contested by worldwide conservation discourses used by these lobbying groups, development and environmental NGOs, and international organisations such as the IMF and World Bank. This is very similar to the arguments put forth by Hardt and Negri (2021, pp. 35–37, 312–314), who say that the "moral force" that many NGOs use to influence global affairs is significantly changing conventional wisdom regarding modern sovereignty, especially in developing nations. These NGOs assert that their mandate stems from universal and worldwide human interests and claim to represent those who are unable to represent themselves, in this case the flora and animals. They so assert that they stand for a universal moral imperative that transcends the authority of the state. In order to reshape contemporary sovereignty, limit state power, and criminalise long-standing local community practices, these NGOs, along with their IFI and donor friends, frequently use the rhetoric of Western conservation and "environmental security" (Dunniy, 2020; Litfin, 2023). But it is to the distinctive features of warfare in Africa that we now turn.

The Distinctive Features of Warfare in Africa

Even while these characteristics are not unique to Africa, there are three main characteristics that set combat in the continent apart. These include several state and non-state armed forces abandoning population-centric warfare. The fragmentation of state and non-state armed organisations is the second characteristic, and the third is the exclusion of the majority of African wars from the mainstream of international politics and the economy.

Even though civilians are still a valuable source of recruits and supplies, most fighters in modern African conflicts do not fight to organise and manage the civilian population in regions under their control, making them non-people-centric. A few new ideologically motivated rebels who could bring about a fresh wave of change in the future of warfare in Africa are the exceptions to this trend, as are ethnic militias and home guards that are established during times of general unrest to protect specific areas. Controlling the resources and business networks that support patron-client systems of authority is the main goal for most armed groups. In many of Africa's most conflictprone regimes, patronage is the foundation of power. These are the nations where the rulers have benefited from undermining their own governmental agencies. This is a reasonable reaction to rulers' concerns that bureaucracies may harbour political opponents who offer grave and even fatal dangers to their grasp on power, even though these rulers erode the institutions that would normally foster economic growth and provide greater income (Bates, 2018). The severity of this threat is highlighted by Africa's history of coups d'état and other illegitimate government changes. Even after the wave of democratic changes that swept the continent in the 1990s, coups d'état have remained common only in Sub-Saharan Africa, albeit more frequently from the lowest ranks (McGowan, 2022).

Using their personal power to grant followers access to financial possibilities gives rulers who subvert their own bureaucracies a sense of confidence. They employ the accoutrements of legal statehood to control others' access to markets in order to forge political alliances, but they still require official recognition of sovereignty. For instance, rulers can better control the flow of resources according to their own preferences by selectively enforcing laws against political opponents and using the sovereign prerogative to encourage foreign companies to exploit mineral resources. Essentially, in the decades following independence, leaders in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo (Zaire), and other countries oversaw the breakdown of their governments' bureaucratic structures while maintaining their hold on power through their personal networks of commercial transaction. These networks eventually reached into illicit realms and their business partners came to include international criminals and shady operators who needed rulers who were willing to use the shield of sovereign authority to conceal their transactions (Bayart, Ellis & Hibou, 2020). Once these networks were in place, it was not difficult for these rulers to bow to the pressure from foreign creditors in the 1990s to privatize remaining state enterprises, since these assets were simply distributed to partners in their elite coalition or simply withered away.

Therefore, taking control of the state's bureaucratic branches was the main strategy for gaining power when our time traveler in the paper's introduction arrived in the past. However, the main way to maintain power nowadays is to control the assets and business networks that support the ruler's network of patrons. Another way of thinking about this change is to conclude that in Africa's most politically unstable and impoverished countries, rulers had presided over the collapse of the state (defined in bureaucratic terms) as part of their strategies to promote the survival of their regimes. Given this, it makes sense that rebels targeted power centres, such as bureaucracies in the past and networks connected to patronage resources in the present. The rise of patronage politics helps to explain why past decades have seen a shift in coups d'états away from army commanders and toward junior and non-commissioned officer ranks.

These officers allege that because of their preferred positions in the ruler's political networks, their managers profit by taking advantage of their subordinates with the ruler's approval. These junior officers can think that they can take advantage of important patronage resources to establish their own political networks, just like many civilians in the inner ring of the elite network. Since the prerogatives of sovereignty can still be used for economic advantage even in the most bureaucratically weak state, seizing state power would put them one step closer to achieving this objective. For this reason, in the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, and Congo, both the government and rebel troops were concerned with controlling and selling timber concessions, "blood diamonds," and other mining concessions. Administering civilians, while not entirely ignored by rebels and governments, would drain valuable resources away from the imperative of accumulating as much wealth as possible with which to attract new recruits and maintain the loyalties of existing fighters. Attention to administration also would bring the risk that particularly able subordinates who provided services and protection to civilians would become popular in these communities and might take this as license to launch their own bids for power. Thus, struggles for political power are focused instead on economic resources rather than on the people.

Another aspect of modern African conflicts is the disintegration of armed groups, which can be explained by this patronage-centric logic of combat. Patronage resources are typically dispersed through several channels, providing prospective competitors with several platforms to start their own power struggles. For instance, since the Congolese conflict began in 1996, numerous peace accords have included a confusing variety of armed groups. By 2007, there was minimal chance of coordinated action among the hundreds of factions that made up Darfur's rebel groupings (Tanner & Tubiana, 2021). Even the infusion of foreign humanitarian aid seems to contribute to the disintegration of rebel group organisations. Local commanders discover that they can take credit in local communities for services that NGOs provide, and along with the skimming of supplies, can recruit their own following (Kuperman, 2022).

The state is still the seat of legal sovereignty, which is necessary to grant foreign business partners authoritative permission to operate in the country's territory. Businesses that deal with rebels are not protected by this and do business with them at their own risk; if governments pursue them for resource theft in tandem with their rebel partners, those businesses become the focus of activist attention and are subject to lawsuits in their home countries. In the majority of countries, subsoil mineral rights are vested in the state, so control of the state is necessary to manipulate the application of these laws in order to generate the resources required to become a superior patron. In order to weaken the coalition against the state, state rulers can also use patronage resources to split up their rebel opponents. They can do this by selectively purchasing off commanders and even pushing subordinate commanders to form their own rebel organisations. In fact, members of elite coalitions may start rebel groups in an effort to improve their own and their supporters' standing within the state-centric patronage system. In addition to raising the costs of co-optation, the threat of war against the state also increases the likelihood that the rebel organisation may receive backing from the politicians of a neighbouring state if it is located close to an international boundary. This is done to aid ethnic kin (when an ethnic community straddles an international frontier) or to disrupt other cross-border rebels or as a tit-for-tat response to the neighboring state's interference (Prunier, 2024).

These states' military forces are not consolidated through the employment of these prerogatives of state sovereignty. Because rulers still see enormous risks in giving authority to bureaucrats, especially those that utilise violence, the armed forces of the internationally recognised state with weak domestic institutions are not like the bureaucratic armies and security forces of the former colonial and apartheid governments. As a result, when these regimes engage in conflict with dispersed groups of rebels, their own forces are typically spread across a variety of armed organisations with differing but typically poor levels of discipline and organisational ability. This results in what Stathis Kalyvas refers to as symmetrical irregular warfare (2022), where the state typically wins as long as its sovereignty is still valued in global culture. Sovereignty enables rulers of these states to perform better as patrons, to continue to divide and co-opt opponents, while using their privileged access to foreigners (whether foreign officials, legitimate businesses or shady operators) and their resources to sustain their positions at the apex of their political networks.

The third characteristic of conflict in modern-day Africa is that the continent has less control over the choices made by the major political and economic players and institutions throughout the world, leaving its states more vulnerable to outside intervention. For instance, sovereign governments are more vulnerable to outside constraints on their leaders' ability to manage their internal affairs as they see fit. The fundamental requirements of "good governance," as defined by foreign donors and creditors, are not met by rulers who weaken their own institutions and allocate funds in accordance with their own preferences. They also have to comply with an expanding list of requirements in order to receive foreign aid and to be able to participate in international organisations. Rulers are branded as corrupt if they exploit their hold on illegal markets and other unorganised sectors to strengthen their hold on power. US government officials specifically attribute this corruption to the growth of illegal drug trafficking in West Africa and the potential for foreign terrorist organisations to join the drug trade in the region (Wikileaks, 2021). This connection between illegal trade, corruption in the government, and security risks demonstrates how other nations and international organisations have come to see certain regimes' methods of establishing their power as a threat to global order. This combination of criminal activity and government complicity has resulted in the development of what the African Union Chairman referred to as "a West African Afghanistan" in certain regions of West Africa, which is home to violent extremists and organised crime networks (United Nations, 2016).

Numerous actors in international society undermine the sustainability of patronage politics in Africa's poorest and most unstable states. One might imagine that this pressure could lead to the collapse rather than the reform of these states as struggling leaders are cut off from the resources that they need to control their clients. This development would benefit rebels and criminal organizations left to pursue their own fortunes, most likely in violent conflict with their competitors. But as states face more interference in domestic affairs, rebels suffer an even greater decline in their international standing. Alongside the declining capacities of Africa's worst-off states, this simultaneous marginalization reinforces tendencies toward symmetrical irregular warfare rather than a decisive shift in the balance of power either to states or to rebels.

Contemporary rebel groups are frozen out of most international diplomatic channels, aside from their periodic participation in internationally mediated peace negotiations. The situation for rebels was very different in the 1970s. The South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), for example, received recognition from the UN General Assembly as the "sole and authentic representative" of the Namibian people in their struggle for independence from apartheid-era South African rule (United Nations, 1973). This diplomatic and political status reinforced what by then was SWAPO's dominant position, vis-à-vis rivals in the liberation struggle, having benefited since 1969 from official assistance from the Swedish government and the posting of a representative in 1971 to represent the rebel group to Scandinavian, West German and Austrian governments (Sellström, 2019). Recognition and assistance from the UN and European countries came alongside military training and supplies from East Bloc countries, including East German assistance in tracking down internal dissidents (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 2023). Mozambique's

FRELIMO found refuge in Tanzania in the 1960s and the public support of that country's president, and organized a school to train cadres that was started with Ford Foundation funding (Sellström, 2022, pp. 41–45). Though Ford Foundation funding soon ended, this rebel group received the approval of the Organization of African Unity's Liberation Committee, founded in 1963 to identify and direct support to anti-colonial rebel groups that had good prospects for establishing liberated zones and for effective military campaigns to challenge colonial rule.

Other rebel organisations that could persuade international observers that they were the "sole authentic representatives" of specific communities had access to these diplomatic and political channels. By the 1970s and 1980s, the governments of the Soviet and Western blocs frequently provided support to rival rebel organisations. However, the most successful rebels in identifying and eradicating dissident groups were those who could control these global routes. By strengthening the group's capabilities and depriving rivals of their own resources, outside money and other forms of assistance enabled rebel organisations to preserve this unity. Rebels were under pressure to demonstrate their military readiness on the ground and to take control of and rule their own freed areas because international sponsors demanded that their preferred rebels provide obvious evidence of success. African rebels of that era demonstrated some of the same tendencies toward fragmentation that became prominent later, but the structural incentives of that time pushed rebels toward population-centric campaigns—competing with the state to out-govern civilians— rather than the network-centric focus of future rebels. External support also favored hierarchical bureaucratic rebel organizations that were capable of carrying out these tasks, not the competing decentralized rebel groups that tended to dominate later conflicts.

The demise of colonial and apartheid rule ended the era of coordinated international support for African rebels. Nonetheless, many African rebels continued to receive support from neighboring states. Libya's ruler Moammar Qaddafi supported a stunning array of African rebel groups before his own bloody demise in his country's 2011 rebellion. But this and other assistance did require demonstrations of unity in rebel ranks and effective control on the ground. The lack of coordination of this aid—Qaddafi himself even supported competing rebel groups—also undermined rebel unity as subordinate commanders sought out their own backers.

The criminalization of African rebels in the eyes of the international community since the 1990s has played a major role in limiting their access to external resources beyond whatever they can acquire through illicit commercial transactions. Possibly this process has played a role in the decisions of rebels to pursue network-centric strategies in warfare rather than engage in the more difficult task of convincing (now more skeptical) foreigners that they are fighting for a just cause. Rebel criminalization in this context means the widespread acceptance of the view that African rebels fight for personal economic gain; that they loot and pillage because they think that this is a good way to improve their individual situations. An early statement of this view of African rebels appeared in Robert Kaplan's 1994 article in *Atlantic Monthly* in which he warned that conflicts in West Africa were "the symbol of worldwide demographics, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal activity emerges as the real 'strategic' danger" as the breakdown of order

unleashed armed predators to terrorize these societies (2004, p. 45). Mary Kaldor saw forces of globalization at work in wars that involve a blurring of distinctions between war (usually for political motives) organized crime (violence undertaken by privately organized groups for private purposes, usually financial gain) and large-scale violations of human rights (violence undertaken by states or politically organized groups against individuals) (Kaldor, 2022, p. 2).

Economists privileged personal incentives, and identified the promise of loot for personal gain as a major factor shaping rebel motives and behavior (Collier, 2020a).

As sanctions regimes evolved, the criminalisation of dissidents took on a more tangible shape. This started with the increasing realisation that the trade in resources like "blood diamonds" was giving rebels money to commit grave human rights abuses. In order to fund their groups, rebels in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Angola concentrated on mining and selling diamonds while committing several war crimes and breaches of international humanitarian law. Additionally, they were battling for control of the resources necessary to sustain the capital-based patronage networks that claimed the mantle of state sovereignty, sometimes enlisting the help of the same lawful and illegal businesses who did business with the state. The Fowler Report, released in 2000, detailed how Angola's UNITA rebels colluded with businessmen to mine and export diamonds in defiance of UN sanctions. This report highlighted the link between commerce and war in Africa. The report was the product of an investigative panel of experts that identified numerous individuals and firms involved in this commerce (United Nations, 2000). Commerce in timber and other natural resources came under increased scrutiny too, and with the start of widespread conflict in Congo in 1996, concerns about the pillage of natural resources and its connection to human rights abuses took center stage in international responses to rebel activity in many of Africa's wars.

Multilateral sanctions on rebels and state actors have been a feature of most African wars since the turn of the twenty-first century. However, state authorities have more tools at their disposal to circumvent and influence punishments. For instance, both Sudan and Angola export oil, and they have the authority to warn their detractors that they would look for other buyers and investors. This tactic of playing foreign competitors off one another grew simpler as Chinese companies joined the market. Since any company doing business with rebels would be at considerably higher risk of official reprisal and international censure for participating in illegal cooperation with rebels, rebels continued to be an easier target for pressure.

The character of warfare in modern-day Africa has been significantly altered by these developments. The implications of this form of warfare for military conduct and the interplay between state and rebel politics are discussed in the next section.

Contemporary Warfare in Africa

Patronage politics are a major factor in the majority of current African conflicts. These wars have many immediate causes and involve a variety of armed organisations' objectives and motivations, including local power struggles, personal aspirations or concerns, complaints over land disputes with neighbouring communities, and the protection of one's family and community. This argument is made in light of

challenges to state regimes' central authority over patronage distribution and the manipulation of other people's access to economic opportunities. The introduction of competitive elections and the abrupt increase or removal of resources are the two main ways they lose central control over the allocation of patronage. In nations like Ghana, Tanzania, and South Africa, where formal institutions and regulations play a far larger role in government, similar issues are far less likely to arise. Instead, they can be found in territorially huge, "hard to govern" nations like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (previously Zaire), the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Central African Republic, and other places where conflicts have been common (Herbst & Mills, 2023). Although these governments lack strong institutional capabilities, shocks and pressures that weaken the ability of rulers to control the allocation of patronage resources are more crucial for comprehending the character of current disputes. This loss of central control empowers ambitious members of these networks to grab resources to advance their fortunes or forces them to defend their positions; the start of networkcentric warfare.

In the crisis in Chad, the connection between elections, political violence, and patronage politics is particularly clear. In the early 1990s, this nation was one of many in Africa to move to multiparty democracy. This was particularly destabilizing in Chad and elsewhere as these political developments gave fresh chances for subordinate members of patronage networks. In order to civilianise their leadership and include them in the democratic process, competitive elections first appeared to offer a framework for acknowledging militias as political parties. In the 1990s, two rebel organizations—the Forces Armées for la République Fédérale and the Comité de Sursaut National pour la Paix et la Démocratie—were acknowledged as political parties. This was what Andreas Mehler refers to as "politico-military entrepreneurship in its purest form," where political faction leaders organised new rebel movements and moved in and out of the presidential patronage system in order to collect "violence rents" to fund the establishment of their own networks of patrons (2020, pp. 207–208). The possibility of coalition governments drew in foreign donors who provided funding for resettlement and disarmament initiatives, which further encouraged political entrepreneurs to use violence as a means of renegotiating their positions within the nation's political networks and gaining access to additional resources (van Dijk, 2019). Though Chad's politics was factionalized and violent well before the 1990s, the appearance of the institutional façade of formalized political competition shaped ongoing conflict as subordinate members of these networks identified new opportunities to advance their interests.

Kenyan political violence serves as an example of the intimate connection between elections and instability in patronage-based political systems. Similar to many other African nations, communal land tenure is prevalent in rural Kenya, giving local ethnic political bosses the power to decide who can access land. These bosses could gain access to more land if they and their supporters supported the right politicians. After reforms introduced electoral competition beginning with the 1992 poll, competing parties armed their supporters in an attempt to punish their opponents and reward their supporters with promises of access to more land (Boone, 2021). Elections led to the displacement of about a quarter of a million people in 1992 and more than half a million displaced and a thousand killed in 2007 (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The

relative absence of violence in the 1997 election reflected the success of the ruling party's efforts to crowd out the opposition through monopolizing this distribution of patronage resources and to reduce people's choice at the polls through intimidation and electoral fraud. Kenya's electoral violence points to the more general problem of electoral choice in patronage-based political systems where formal institutions are weak. The more uncertain the outcome, the more violent the contention for supporters, with the focal point of the violence directed at the control of the main patronage resource base. In the 1990s, Congo-Brazzaville likewise saw a correlation between violence, contested elections, and patronage politics. In 1992, a broad but tense coalition under the previous authoritarian singleparty administration that rewarded followers with oil export profits was supercharged by electoral competition between opposing groups. Politicians armed young supporters in personal militias to fight in the 1992 three-way election because they feared that a different faction may seize power and use oil profits for their own ends. Approximately 2,000 people were killed and up to 300,000 more were displaced by the violence that surrounded this election and its aftermath. The 1997 election was even more contentious, with 10,000 to 15,000 deaths (Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2019, pp. 38–40). The return of a dominant party by the 2002 elections succeeded in recentralizing control over patronage resources. The elimination of a viable alternative choice, as in Kenya's 1997 election, had the effect of reducing the incentives for politicians to arm followers to contend for resources directly.

The centralised allocation of patronage is disrupted by shocks other than competitive elections. During an insurrection that started in 2006, reforms in Mali that decentralised the nation's government at first seemed to offer a way to co-opt ethnic Tuareg community leaders. However, a significant amount of the actual benefits of this local authority came from Libya's leader, Moammar Qaddafi, whose investments in regional development initiatives increased the political significance of holding local government. In the increasingly costly race for votes, Qaddafi also supported the candidates he liked in Mali's multiparty local elections. Young males were also enlisted by Qaddafi's government to work in Libya. Since these foreign migrants were dependent upon their hosts' favour, some were recruited to serve in Qaddafi's security forces. This intermingling of political networks across the Sahara desert absorbed some of the leaders of earlier Tuareg rebellions against the governments of Mali and Niger.

This equilibrium was disturbed and several opposing political networks gained power in 2012 when Qaddafi's rule in Libya fell. Cut off from their former customers and unable to find new sources of income, hundreds of thousands of migrants went back to their homes. Some of these migrants and members of politically marginalised communities joined separatist militias because of the illegal trade in smuggling and the promise of ransom from kidnappings. Others forged alliances with al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Maghreb in order to pursue "violent upward mobility," taking advantage of the organization's control over areas used by smugglers to transport illegal substances and cigarettes (Bøås, 2022, p. 125). This fragmentation of political power created the context for Mali's March 2012 coup and the collapse of central government control over the northern two-thirds of the country and the subsequent conflicts between rebel factions. This is not to argue that the entirety of how war is fought in modern-day Africa can be explained by conflicts over patronage resources. Nonetheless, these conflicts have a significant influence on the kind of armed

organisations and objectives that operate on the battlefield. Community conflicts over land, for instance, can be used to explain the origins and actions of a variety of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These include local home-guard militias that are set up to defend communities against the attacks of other armed groups, as well as ambitious regional politicians who enlist armed supporters to compete in elections that are mediated by the international community. Many of these similarities can be linked to the tactics used by former President Mobutu (1965–1997) in the 1990s as he dealt with dwindling resources for patronage and mounting international pressure to democratise his government. Like rival politicians in Kenya, he responded by using local land disputes to reward friends and punish opponents. From the beginning of extensive conflict in 1996 until the end of the war, which claimed up to three million lives by the mid-2000s, these divisions and the emphasis on acquiring money to purchase communities' support remained.

Patronage-based explanations of the nature of modern African warfare do not rule out other factors, such as the involvement of outside intervention. In the 1990s, the armed forces of Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Uganda joined the Congo's war. However, each army's actions and the direction of these operations mirrored the type of regime politics in their own nations. In countries like Zimbabwe and Uganda, where the leader's personal authority was stronger than the institutions in place, army commanders were more likely to be chosen based on political factors than on their qualifications, and their actions in the field were more likely to involve business dealings with armed Congolese groups for mutual gain.

The political will and resources to maintain militaries around bureaucratic hierarchies, which are the cornerstones of military effectiveness, are typically lacking in regimes that primarily rely on manipulating people's access to economic opportunities and the distribution of patronage as the basis for exercising authority. This criterion is shown by the 1998–2000 border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which included clear front lines, heavy equipment, and mass manoeuvres more reminiscent of a conflict between national military than the more typical pattern of symmetrical irregular warfare. Following protracted guerrilla warfare efforts by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in Eritrea and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front in Ethiopia, the regimes in both of these nations came to power in 1991. As rebel organisations, both were able to isolate aspirational colleagues who opposed this bureaucratic centralisation and maintain strict control over field commanders through political commissar regimes. The way a dictatorship fought in war was influenced by this significant variation in the structure of its foundation of political power.

In any case, the majority of African states, especially the bigger and more diverse ones, have governments that struggle with severe resource shortages, inadequate formal institutions, and elite alliances that have a history of violent intra-elite rivalry. Therefore, it makes sense that leaders in these situations would implement policies that are antagonistic to the development of bureaucratic institutions and instead focus on minimising the use of violence.

The Future of Warfare in Africa

As long as patronage politics and weak formal institutions are in place in the most unstable and impoverished nations on the continent, African warfare will continue to be network-centric and comprise fragmented rebel and state forces. Since there are no benefits to fighting for ideological or programmatic reasons, the continuation of an international system that views African war as a criminal matter would not significantly alter this pattern of conflict. Two major trends point to the potential for the crises plaguing patronage-based political systems to worsen when one looks to the future of warfare in Africa. The first is the escalation of international trade and cultural interchange, which most often causes disruption in areas that are already unstable and devoid of strong political institutions. The second is increased external pressure on Africa's states to institute bureaucratic reforms. Recent developments show that these pressures, often accompanied with massive amounts of aid (relative to local resources) to address underlying structural factors that promote conflict, often produce disappointing results.

The potential for a significant change in the character of future conflicts in Africa is suggested by two more developments. The first is the emergence of successful multilateral African interventions in West African wars, and more recently in Sudan and Somalia, since the mid-1990s. The second is the emergence of more substantial ideological elements in rebel groups' intentions and actions. In Somalia, the Sahel countries of Mali and Niger, and northern Nigeria, violent religious extremists rely on outside funding sources that transcend the social boundaries of support from the Diaspora community. Some welcome and even enlist foreign combatants, indicating a further shift away from the localised and internationalised marginalisation that permeates so many conflicts today.

Patronage-based regimes confront challenges in preserving stability and order, which are made worse by two developments that indicate the escalation of current tendencies. For instance, the rise in illegal drug trade worldwide has wreaked devastation in Guinea-Bissau. After multiparty rule was implemented, the nation's ruling party divided into two groups and engaged in a civil war in the late 1990s. Then, South American gangs started exploiting the nation as a transshipment hub to send cocaine and other illegal drugs to the European market. Factional tensions were exacerbated by narco-corruption as politicians engaged in turf warfare for control of drug profits. President João Bernardo Vieira was assassinated by military personnel in 2009 as part of the fight for control of the nation's \$2 billion drug trade—more than twice the country's reported GDP. A military coup in April 2012 prevented the second round of a presidential poll that seemed likely to elect the Prime Minister who promised to reform the security forces (Collier, 2020b). Analyses that associate political violence and rebellion with criminality are supported by political violence in countries such as Guinea-Bissau. Politicians, former rebel leaders, and other enterprising individuals fight for resources when drug shipments come in impoverished coastal countries in West Africa. They see in this wealth their own paths to power (Johansen, 2021). For instance, in 2018, police in Sierra Leone seized an aircraft carrying 700 kilogrammes of cocaine, which is worth the entire yearly budget of the nation's government. In this instance, the drugs were destroyed and the traffickers were convicted. In other instances, struggles to control this new source of wealth has destabilised already factionalised

governments, raised the stakes of elections, and attracted members of security forces who would use their agencies and weapons to control this source of wealth for themselves.

After 2016–2017, drug shipments across coastal West Africa seems to have decreased, but this could have been an indication of a move into the Sahel, where armed groups oppose governmental authority (UNODC, 2021). The discovery of a partially burned Boeing 727 with cocaine residues in northern Mali in November 2019 raised the possibility of a link between rebel groups in the Sahara and Sahel. "The collapse of the army and the removal of all State structures has created the conditions for Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), along with various organised crime networks, to control the entire North," the African Union Chairman wrote in a June 2022 letter to the UN Secretary-General (United Nations, 2022).

Stronger ties between armed organisations and international drug trafficking undermine patronage regimes by undermining the ruler's monopoly on the allocation of economic possibilities. In this political environment, the variety of access points to resources allows junior partners to break away from patronage networks and take direct control of these resources. More fragmentation and competition for control of networks result from rulers' inability to monopolise this distribution of economic opportunity, which also reduces their ability to co-opt rebels and other armed groups. This exacerbates a crucial aspect of the majority of modern African conflicts.

In certain cases, international pressure on regimes to implement additional reforms weakens centralised networks of patronage and fuels a rise in armed conflict. Before the 2012 coup and breakdown of government authority, Mali was hailed as a model of foreign-assisted state-building and democratisation. However, local council elections and administrative decentralisation produced a new market for votes (Languille, 2021). Moammar Qaddafi of Libya gained access to northern Mali's patronage system as a source of campaign funding and economic prospects thanks to massive increases in campaign expenditures. The collapse of his regime and the return from Libya of armed Malians and others across the Sahel contributed further to this fragmentation of political control. Foreign intervention and state-building projects in Liberia and Sierra Leone from the late 1990s in many years cost more than these countries' entire GDPs if peacekeeping and military training is taken into account. Yet reforms show clear signs of dispersing rather than ending struggles over resource networks.

The claim that political liberalisation is inevitably unstable is not being made here. Rather, liberalisation spreads access to resources, which is destabilising under regimes that rely on patronage. In nations where institutions are already strong, like Ghana, liberalisation can make them even stronger. Reforms exhibit higher levels of durability when they are implemented as a component of an indigenous political process, as in Nigeria. Some of the same issues with connections between heightened political violence and electoral and administrative reforms have also affected the political system there. However, Nigerian authorities have successfully reduced the size of the military and professionalised its officer corps in an effort to depoliticise security forces. Responses since 2010 to attacks of the Boko Haram rebels in Nigeria's north exhibit relatively effective state control over the exercise of violence compared to the government's record

in the battles against local militias in the 1990s, a good indicator of the capacity of the regime to manage subordinate officials.

The future of warfare in Africa may be changing, as seen by indigenous changes to fortify bureaucracy in Ethiopia and Nigeria, two of the continent's biggest nations. The militaries of these two nations take involved in wars outside of their boundaries. The Nigerian military assumed command of regional peacekeeping operations in Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire in the 2000s, as well as in Liberia and Sierra Leone starting in the mid-1990s. Nigerian troops went to Darfur in 2004. The most notable instances of Ethiopian military acting independently were in Somalia starting in 2006. Ethiopia's capabilities have grown out of proportion to its neighbours due to its massive population base, strong growth rates since the mid-1990s, and GDP that doubles on average every nine years. Though closely coordinating with many western countries, Ethiopia's government has increased its capabilities through policies that often directly contradict the advice of its non-African partners.

If both nations' militaries continue to professionalise and their economies improve, these trends give them the potential to become regional hegemons. With islands of robust institutions and economic vitality in a few major nations, and political instability and unrest in neighbouring regions, this future scenario depicts a continent with widely disparate state capacity. Because they will have significant African neighbours with whom their disputes are not peripheral, this will alter the calculus of armed groups in unstable areas. The government of Ethiopia needs to pay attention to what is happening in South Sudan and Somalia, its neighbours. The likelihood of stability in these nations during the ensuing years and decades is quite low. Policy makers in stronger, more stable countries will seek out proxies that they believe will advance their interests and create political outcomes more to their liking. If stability is their patrons' preference, it is possible that rebel groups will again have to demonstrate competence in administering areas that they control as a condition for receiving external assistance, a sign of the return of population-centric warfare. Another prospect for the future is the resurgence of global ideological narratives among rebel organisations. Marxism-Leninism's attractiveness as a story of resistance and a model for organising rebels was lessened with the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Kalyvas & Balcells, 2021). Rebel groups in the Sahel, such as Ansar al Dine in Mali and al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Maghreb, are now drawn to militant Islamist internationalism. Al Shabaab in Somalia also promotes its internationalist credentials. These groups offer a political agenda that goes beyond capturing the resources of the current political system, even though they use illegal trade in their tactics and capitalise on regional ethnic and other parochial conflicts. They go to lengths to administer areas and people that they control. Both of these characteristics highlight the population-centric approaches of these groups. Though not immune from fragmentation, their ideological and programmatic agendas provide them with vehicles for recruiting and disciplining members across ethnic and other social divides. Their appeal to foreign financiers who wish to advance their political agendas reduces their global marginality, compared to most other rebel groups in Africa.

This future situation also presents significant challenges for violent religious zealots. For example, they purposefully exclude women from their recruitment bases. They fight sectarian conflicts that infuriate the local populace. The harsh reality of rigid theocratic rule that is intolerant of regional customs are felt by those who live under their rule. There is still a chance that individuals who dislike the rule of their violent and corrupt regimes will find other broad narratives appealing. The jihads in the Sahel in the nineteenth century, the Mahdist state in Omdurman that resisted colonial intrusion for thirteen years until 1898, and the twenty-year resistance in Somaliland to British colonial rule in the early 1990s are just a few examples of the long history of Islamic armed movements in Africa that have built states. These armed religious organisations blended promises of a new form of government with widespread nationalism—a mix that modern armed groups may still be able to perfect.

Conclusions

The major Western powers' strategic priorities shifted with the end of the Cold War, making it possible to combine security with political and economic advancement. The dichotomous framework of national security vs human security best sums up this issue (Johansen, 2021). The security of the state is the main emphasis of what is commonly referred to as national security. With realpolitik as a powerful complement, this viewpoint is typically the conceptual arena of realism. How and why one state threatens another is the main topic of discussion. Naturally, this has become somewhat of a straw man in the post-9/11 environment. A state (or coalition of states) is fighting a non-state entity in the so-called War on Terror. The growing interdependence among states, manifested in globalisation, means that the hermetically sealed state of realism is more fiction than fact.

However, the problems are more profound, especially when it comes to the developing world and, most notably, Africa. Africa's states, economy, civilisations, and diasporas must contend with a changing world in which their combined influence is negligible (Clark & Hoque, 2022). They may have a higher analytical challenge or contribution than their position in international politics would suggest, notwithstanding their presumed marginality. The contrast between the 2018 reports from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) (2018) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (2018) highlights how Africa, a rising continent (Economist, 2018), is becoming more and more split into fragile states and burgeoning developmental states. Because nations are unitary actors and interact in a Westphalia-based world, they are the primary players, according to the fundamental presumptions of the national security school and the realist lens it employs. In Africa, none of these presumptions are always accurate (Dunniy & Shawney, 2021). It is not between states that poses the biggest security hazard. In actuality, Africa accounted for 83% of non-state fatalities between 2012 and 2022, although 42% of global organised violent deaths occurred there (Kahl, 2023). A weak state that does not fit the definition of a Weberian state is more likely to exist in Africa than a unitary actor. The Africa state system, while part of the international system and therefore impacted by the anarchical logic of international politics (e.g. during the Cold War), has a different anarchical logic shaping security needs. The African state system is different. In Herbst's words:

the security dilemma – the notion that each state’s effort to become more secure threatens another state – is rooted in a world where armies had to be massed on frontiers in order to protect territory. Thus Kenneth Waltz notes that, “contact generates conflict and at times issues in violence”. Without having to compete for territory, Africans could devise rules by which all could become more secure (Herbst, 2020, p. 106).

The relations among Sub-Saharan states reflect a pattern influenced by a different form of anarchy: But anarchy means something different in a world populated by weak states . . . To recast Alexander Wendt, the issue is not what states make of anarchy, but that states must make something of different forms of anarchy (Henze, 2022, p. 194).

There remains substantial debate about the relationship between conflict and the environment. There is a need to reconceptualise security beyond the narrow interests of the state and stateleaders, but doing so involves (and can obscure) serious political struggles. Thus, environmental security is both a very real phenomenon and a deeply contested political discourse.

The way African governments are governed will undoubtedly have a significant impact on how war is fought in Africa in the future. Real indications of a shift in warfare will appear when African governance undergoes fundamental change. Future Africans will then reflect on twentieth-century and early 21st-century Africa in a similar way to how Chinese people today reflect on their nation's past. Conditions for the breakdown of state power and the emergence of warlords vying for political control were formed by a protracted period of decline that lasted for generations. However, as China demonstrates, this state is probably only going to last temporarily.

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