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The Environment, Security, Conflict and War in Contemporary Africa: Issues, Challenges and Debates

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Abstract

Africa is a continent that is changing quickly. However, many people continue to see it as an odd location encrusted with stories and legends. This paper aims to educate the reader on Africa, with a particular emphasis on the continent's security concerns in the twenty-first century. Making broad generalizations about the 54 African nations is challenging and perhaps risky. Africa includes South Africa, a confirmed member of the BRICS, as well as countries in development and instability. However, all 54 nations are members of the African Union (AU). Most of them are the offspring of the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference, and almost all were conquered by European countries. Africa's political environment is essentially unchanged from the late 1950s and early 1960s, when most of its nations gained their independence. The nations on the continent have faced many of the same 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 Report, 31 out of 161 countries, including 17 in Africa—were at risk of a devastating conflict. More U.N. peacekeeping troops are stationed in Africa than any other continent. Around the turn of the century, seven of the fourteen major hostilities in the world took place in Africa. At least thirty-two non-separatist civil wars have erupted in African countries since 1960. It is where most of the world's wars occur. This paper looks at the various links between environmental elements and African security and insecurity issues. After a quick overview of the conceptual shift in security and human security, the forthcoming environmental issues that some people think Africa is facing will be discussed. The focus of this paper then shifts to the various ways that observers have asserted and denied links between conflict and the African environment. The reasons why African fighting has evolved so dramatically in such a short period of time are then covered. The distinctive features of

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contemporary African warfare are examined in this paper. The relationships between the politics of war zones and the strategies employed by armed group leaders to set their goals, locate friends, and organize and retain their fighters are highlighted by this examination of the social and political elements that shape the character of these conflicts. The paper's most important finding is that patronage politics is becoming increasingly important in explaining change in both the armed groups that oppose the state's authorities and the elite coalitions that control it. This argument serves as the foundation for the next section, which looks more closely at recent and ongoing conflicts to show how patronage politics truly impact warfare in Africa, even though there are many other goals and motivations at the individual, armed group, and community levels. The likelihood of conflict in Africa is examined in the last section. That part investigates whether the existing patterns can be sustained and looks for innovative ways to disrupt them that could signal a more substantial shift.

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

Introduction

With a focus on the continent's security issues in the twenty-first century, this essay seeks to inform the reader about Africa. It is difficult and possibly dangerous to make generalizations about the 54 African countries. After all, the 5,291-mile trip between London and Beijing is approximately equivalent to the 5,242-mile trip between Cape Town, South Africa, and Khartoum, Sudan. Africa comprises both developing and unstable nations, including South Africa, a verified member of the BRICS. Nonetheless, the African Union (AU) counts all 54 countries as members. Nearly all of them were colonized by European nations, and the bulk are the descendants of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. Under Article II, paragraph III of its Charter, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the forerunner of the AU, adopted the Berlin principles. As stated in OAU resolution 16, it "solemnly declares that all member states pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence." Africa's political environment is essentially unchanged from 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 many of the same 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 (Glant, 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). Most of the the world's conflicts take place there (Spivak, 2016, p. 109).

Consider travelling back in time. The current wars in Africa show a confusing assortment of rebel and militia outfits fighting a kind of gang war against faction-ridden government troops in countries like sections of Sudan and the Congo. Conflicts over how to deal with drug trafficking and its profits are reflected in Guinea-Bissau's factional instability. Political instability and violent outbursts in Chad are rooted in family and clan politics. Armed groups from the region travel across the terrain of 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 currently control many the country's rural districts. By 1973, many 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 utilized their liberated areas to showcase their ideas for future politics. Apartheid is a topic that inspires activists worldwide, and many foreign governments and international organizations supported South Africans in their fight against it.

The numerous connections between environmental factors and African security and insecurity concerns are examined in this research. More expansive notions of human security have replaced state-centric assumptions and the exclusive concerns of state leaders as the concept of security has changed in recent years. As the Cold War came to an end, worries about resource depletion, climate change, and environmental damage increased. Conflicts over limited resources, like oil and valuable minerals, as well as resources made scarce by environmental degradation, such clean drinking water and arable land, are becoming more common in Africa and are only expected to get worse in the years to come, according to some observers. Observers sought to ascertain whether there were any connections between the environment and conflict in Africa and elsewhere, as well as offering a variety of interpretations and possible solutions. This paper will examine the impending environmental disasters that some people think Africa is experiencing after giving a quick summary of the conceptual shift between security and human security. The several ways that observers have claimed and refuted connections between conflict and the African environment then become the main subject of

this paper. It also explains why African warfare has undergone such a dramatic and quick change. The distinctive features of contemporary African warfare are examined in this paper. 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 organize 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 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

Thirteen percent of the world's population lives in Africa, the second largest of the seven continents that make up twenty-three percent of the planet's territory. Africa is mostly a tropical continent that straddles the equator. It is bordered to the north by the Mediterranean Sea, to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, and to the east by the Indian and Red Seas. The Sinai Peninsula, which acts as a link between Africa and Asia, is in northeastern Africa.

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 colonization 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).

Around 1870, direct colonization and colonial conquest began. Otto von Bismarck, Germany's first chancellor, held the Congress of Berlin in 1878, where the European powers divided Africa. The "effective occupation" approach was used to carve out straight geographic lines of latitude and longitude like a cake (Chizea, 2023). Spain stole some of the "un Magnifique gâteau African," which was consumed by the five rival nations of Germany, Italy, Portugal, France, and Britain (Chizea, 2023). The continent was exploited and governed under the pretense of conquest, Christianity, trade, and "civilisation." The Belgian Congo was most heavily exploited under King Leopold II of Belgium. The presence of European nations in Africa led to the Scramble for Africa, the process of colonizing and annexing African land between 1881 and 1914. Each of these events has had a major impact on Africa's growth. Africa and Europe fought a brutal continental war for 150 years between 1807, when Britain banned the slave trade, and 1957, when the Gold Coast became independent and was renamed Ghana. Africa struggled under the psychological and physical domination of its former colonies even after gaining political autonomy from them at the end of the colonial era (Chizea, 2023, p. 216). But modern Africa did rise. After independence and the subsequent half-century of wars in various regions of the continent, decolonization occurred. Except for Ethiopia and Liberia, which were never colonized, every country that had previously been ruled by Germany, England, Italy, or France gained independence from their colonizers. During the Cold War, which ran from 1945 to 1980 and involved the US and the USSR, Western powers did not compel African states that received aid to embrace democracy or free market reforms. Their preference was for "friendly" anti-communist dictators such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, who was deposed in a coup supported by Belgium and the US Central Intelligence Agency. After the Cold War, starting in the 1980s, political and economic conditions set by Western financial institutions and donors became the norm. The IMF and World Bank introduced structural adjustment programs that urged poor nations to open 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.

With 54 different countries and a rapidly growing population of over one billion, Africa is the second-largest continent in the world. These countries only accounted for 2.2% of global trade

by value in 2022, compared to 38.5% from Europe and 40.7% from Asia, while having roughly 20% of the world's land area and 14% of its people (Chizea, 2023). Africa continues to be a marginalized continent in many ways. It is undeniable, however, that things are changing and will probably continue to change significantly soon. The early years of the twenty-first century have been dominated by economic growth in China and India, which has greatly aided in the expansion of the middle class in Asia. Despite often dubious statistical evidence, there are signs that this might be happening in some African nations, and Africa will be the continent to watch over the next 20 years and beyond. Even if they occasionally started from a weak base, the economic growth rates in several African countries are today among the highest in the world. Thirteen African countries saw average annual GDP growth rates of more than 6% between 2010 and 2020 (Chibundu & Chabal, 2022).

Unfortunately, Africa remains the world's poorest and least developed continent, even though certain countries have made great strides in the areas of democratic governance, healthcare, education, and security. The United Nations' 2018 Human Development Report lists Afghanistan as one of the "worst 20" countries, making it the only non-African country on the list. The lowest life expectancy in the globe at birth is 48.9 years, which is significantly shorter than the 83+ years in nations like Singapore, Japan, and Switzerland (Chizea, 2023). The small southern African nation of Swaziland has a high HIV/AIDS prevalence. With 156.9 deaths per 1,000 children in 2020, Angola had the highest rate in the world. Norway's average rate was 2.6 deaths per 1,000 infants before they turned five.

But there are other issues that should worry us besides progress and financial success. Africa still has a rich and diverse cultural legacy. The origins of humanity, the amazing legacy of past civilizations, historic cities, and a diverse range of art, music, and literature. But a lot of people do not know about these qualities. This limited public understanding of Africa is largely due to sensationalized stories in the international media, which typically show a lack of knowledge about African countries and people and focus on 'newsworthy' topics like civil war, terrorism, famine, drought, desertification, and other man-made and natural disasters.

Naturally, one would question why understanding and researching Africa's security concerns is crucial. In the past, the Great Powers neglected it in their geopolitical agendas. There has also been a belief that Africa is unusual and special (Baaz & Stern, 2020). One obvious response is: if it were not significant, why has it attracted so much interest from throughout the world, especially after the end of the Cold War? The United States elected AFRICOM, its newest Central Command, in October 2009 (Nigro & Lovelace, 2022). Prior to then, Africa was under the jurisdiction of PACOM, CENTCOM, and EUROCOM. Due in part to its

colonial past, Europe has historically shown greater interest in Africa than in the Americas or Asia, and it continues to do so now (Gebrewold, 2022; N'Diaye, 2023). The most active external force might be China, the more recent suitor (Taylor, 2022). The bond between the Arab world and Africa 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. The Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict in 2000, the 1977–1978 conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in Ogden territory, and Tanzania's invasion of Uganda in 1978 to oust Idi Amin are the only three distinct cases of interstate conflict that have occurred since African nations gained their independence.

Ethiopia versus Somalia in the 1970s, Rwanda versus Uganda in 2002, Libya versus Chad in the 1980s, and even South Africa's destabilization 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, many 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.

What's left for us is something else. According to Munkler (2021) and Kaldor (2019), many battles or conflicts in Africa have been dubbed "new wars." The majority of newly emerging disputes admit that they do not meet the traditional criteria of civil or interstate conflict because of the state's declining involvement. Given that politics in the Westphalia nation-state system is centered on the state, these disputes are perceived as taking place outside of politics as the state is no longer the primary topic of contention. The classification of "new wars" is somewhat vague, if not imprecise. The phrase "new wars" is not even used precisely by all the academics in this area. However, because of similar motifs, a collection of works can be categorized as a distinct entity. Many post-Cold War conflicts are fundamentally different from "old wars," they say, and are mainly internal in origin. These conflicts are not Clausewitzean in that they lack a coherent political logic, and the main reason of these disparities is the systemic impacts of

globalization. Lastly, international relations theory has failed to explain them for all these reasons.

The concept of new wars does lead us in the correct direction, even though 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. As a result, the emphasis is more on what we know about these conflicts, how we interpret them, and the analytical methods we employ than it is on the number of wars that have broken out in Africa since the conclusion of the Cold War. And finally, what can we learn?

A Conceptual Change 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 militarization. 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 consider 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 organization 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 criticize 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. Though they differ in how pessimistic they are about governments working

together, realists and liberals both tend to think that disagreements are driven by material capacities. At the same time, constructivists tend to emphasize interpersonal ties more. They frequently contend that knowledge, material resources, and collective behaviour enable social structures, which are created rather than given. Therefore, constructivists like Alexander Wendt (1999) argue that the security dilemma is a social structure that has been formed by inter-subjective understandings that have historically evolved, in part by defining interests in "self-help" terms, whereas realists view it as an inevitable aspect of the anarchic system. This has led constructivists to investigate the ideas and norms that have sparked disagreements and that may be applied to settle them and advance peace.

Critical security studies have attempted to rethink security in general and have provided a de-emphasis on the role of the state. This exercise expands on Robert Cox's (1981) distinction between critical and problem-solving theories. The earlier method makes assumptions about the current system and all of its components. Critical theories, on the other hand, focus on how existing connections and institutions came to be as well as how they could be changed. Critical security methods challenge existing state-centralism by pointing out that states have a wide range of personalities and, more importantly, frequently make their own population feel insecure. The phrase "human security" refers to critical security techniques that prioritize 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.

Environmental security, food security, health security, personal security, community security, political security (fundamental human rights and freedoms), and food security are the seven components of human security that the United Nations Development Program named in its 1994 Human Development Report. The concept of security has been established by traditional political science using a state- and regime-centric approach, which is very different from this. Because of how broad the concept is, some scholars were concerned about the shift to human security. 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. Some scholars contend that the move away from state-centric approaches also downplays the importance of the state's security-related function. Lastly, the "Copenhagen School" of international relations theory has expressed serious concern about the process of "securitisation," in which politicians and policymakers increasingly frame a wide range of social issues and practices through the lens of security (Wae´ver et al., 2023; Wae´ver, 2007; Huysmans, 2020). "From this perspective, security is often less objective and more the way in which professional groups compete for visibility, influence, and scarce resources," notes Duffield (Duffield, 2019, p. 3). These kinds of arguments are particularly relevant when discussing the contentious "environmental security" concerns.

Environmental Insecurity in Africa

Following the conclusion of the Cold War, two related debates gained greater recognition in the international community. As previously said, one was the rethinking of security (Baldwin, 2017; Booth, 2011; Buzan, 2019; Krause & Williams, 2020). According to the other related debate, environmental change posed a threat to the security of individuals, states, and the entire world (Deudney & Matthews, 2021; Myers, 2009, 2003; Ohlsson, 2021; Dalby, 2022, 2019; Barnett, 2021). For these subsequent discussions, the concept of "environmental security" has provided an informal framework. But as we will see later, there hasn't been much consensus on these issues. What is meant by the phrase "environmental security"? What factors contribute to environmental insecurity in Africa? What are some possible fixes for these problems?

It has often been maintained that disputes over environmental resources arise, particularly when those resources become more limited. Some academics have concentrated on how the need for access to limited resources, such oil and diamonds, has caused conflicts in the modern era. Others have concentrated on how environmental degradation and climate change have made human instability worse and encouraged violence in some regions of the continent. One may see how experts have examined the relationship between conflict and the environment in Africa by using land as an example. Naturally, throughout most of Africa, which is still predominantly an agricultural continent, land remains a vital aspect of social, economic, and political life. 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 most 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. In actuality, land instability is not often the only factor contributing to violent conflict. Not every country that experiences land scarcity or unequal access to or ownership of land experiences conflict. As noted by Huggins and Clover:

> 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. Access to land is often intertwined with ethnic features in Africa and worldwide since customary land tenure systems and land use patterns have historically been based on ethnicity, which colonialism institutionalized in many parts of Africa. As a result, major citizenship and migration issues have emerged, especially those related to autochthony claims, which can become very prominent.

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 liberalization 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 pre-colonial customs as well as colonial project-based notions of place politics. The majority of African societies are multiethnic, with a few notable exceptions. The borders between native African polities were typically porous and pliable during the pre-colonial period. Due to the vast amount of area and the ease of movement, exit was the main form of political protest. The colonial imposition of citizenship, which essentially connected every individual to a certain territorially bounded government, profoundly altered African political and social life. Following independence, citizenship rules became more significant since the newly formed African governments had to establish for all time who was a lawful resident of their borders and, thus, eligible for the benefits of belonging and who wasn't.

Land issues are particularly vulnerable to the politics of identification and belonging when two or more communities have "shared" the land for an extended period of time (Hagberg, 2021). One major benefit in these situations is the ability to make your land claim from an indigenous position, such as being the "son of the soil," while your opponent is shown as a "newcomer," "immigrant," and "stranger." Because "citizenship does not entitle you to resources, it entitles you to enter the struggle for resources," it is important to assert citizenship in this situation (Mamdani, 2022, p. 505). In recent years, a combination of political and economic circumstances has made the compromise upon which co-habitation was predicated less and less feasible. 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 significant connections between environmental change and human security were identified in the UNDP's 2007–2008 Human Development Report: (1) the relationship between climate, agriculture, and food security; (2) the relationship between water stress and insecurity due to altered rainfall patterns that will reduce the amount of drinkable water available, among other things; (3) the impact of rising sea levels on vulnerability to climate-related disasters such as landslides, hurricanes, and floods; (4) the consequences of ecosystem disruptions and biodiversity losses; and (5) the spread of diseases like malaria, particularly in regions with insufficient public health resources.

Africa has supplied the least amount of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere in terms of both current fluxes and existing stocks, making it the continent with the least impact on climate change. Africa, for example, had 1 tCO2 (tonnes of CO2) per capita in 2007, compared to 4.3 tCO2 for the world average, 19.0 tCO2 for the US, 6.9 tCO2 for the EU15 (the 15 nations that made up the EU at the beginning of 2004), and 3.2 tCO2 for China. With an average of 7.9 tCO2/person in 2004, South Africa is the only outlier, mostly because of its heavy reliance on coal for energy (UNDP, 2007). Despite not being the ones who produced greenhouse gas emissions, the world's impoverished are the most vulnerable. According to the UNDP Report from 2007:

> 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. Rising sea levels, altered rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events that upset ecosystems, such landslides and floods, will all have an impact on crop output. Africa's temperatures are predicted to rise, raising the likelihood of drought and putting more strain on agricultural output. The majority of Africans are extremely vulnerable to environmental changes because a large percentage of the continent's population depends on crops and animals for a living. For instance, Uganda's Department of Meteorology issued a warning in 2018 that the country's coffee crop, which is crucial to its ability to generate export income, may be destroyed by even a small increase in temperature (Toulmin, 2019, p. 57).

Water remains an essential resource for people, crops, cattle, and energy generation throughout Africa. Changes in water supply will have a big impact on many aspects of Africans' lives, both in rural and urban places. Most of Africa, especially the Sahara desert, is expected to see a sharp decline in rainfall. East Africa is expected to see more rainfall, but it will be intense, increasing the risk of soil erosion and flooding. Predicted climate change may result in favourable changes in some regions of the world. For example, some regions of Canada and Russia are anticipated to see improved farming conditions over the coming decades. On the other hand, it is expected that no place in Africa will benefit equally from these advantages. Even in regions where more rainfall is predicted, a significant amount of it is expected to fall

in conditions that are heavier and more torrential, which would increase flow and erosion. In 2018, the worst floods to hit Africa in 30 years affected nearly a million people in 20 countries, including Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Togo, and Burkina Faso. Homes and crops were devastated by heavy rains and flooding, leaving many communities severely food insecure and at 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). Both urban dwellers and the human security of rural Africans will be significantly impacted by global climate change, which is expected to increase heat waves, flooding, pollution, and sea level rise. The impoverished majority, who already live in insecure situations with very little access to government services, particularly healthcare, water, and sanitation, are, of course, the most vulnerable.

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. Although Africa and other

regions of the Global South would pay a disproportionate share of the burden created by environmental deterioration, the concerns of the industrialised Global North are frequently given priority in the literature on environmental security. In particular, the area frequently focusses on how environmental deterioration in the Global South may affect the security of Northern governments; this is referred to as "Malthusian" or "Neo-Malthusian" by both proponents and opponents (Dalby, 2022; Richards, 2019). As a result, this strategy emphasises the problems of the developed world and is notably state-centric and policy-prescriptive.

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). According to Homer-Dixon and others, because African states lack "adaptive capacity," they will be especially vulnerable to these dynamics (Homer-Dixon & Blitt, 2022, p. 9). According to the argument, states with low economic standing, a lack of human and financial resources, and a diverse population are less likely to be able to handle serious environmental issues.

Homer-Dixon investigates the relationship between violent conflict and the depletion 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 suggested that the depletion of the supply of physically controlled goods will lead to interstate "simple-scarcity" or "resource war" confrontations. For example, Michael Klare (2021) asserts that control over essential natural resources and competitiveness will drive the use of military force in the twenty-first century. Second, significant population

shifts brought on by environmental stress may be the catalyst for "group-identity" conflicts such as ethnic conflicts. 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 because 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 marginalized 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 industrialized 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 example, Lietzmann and Vest argue that environmental stress might serve as a structural source, a catalyst, or a trigger along the "conflict dynamic" and does not necessarily cause violence (Lietzmann & Vest, 2021, p. 40). Some have cited the Darfur War in Sudan as an example of a war fueled by environmental factors, including the decades-long

drought the area has experienced (Katz, 2020). The UN Environmental Program Report from 2007 referred to Darfur as "the world's first climate change war." However, a number of academics have quickly noted that conflict has considerably more complicated roots than this snappy moniker implies. According to Alex de Waal:

> 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 forecast 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.

Finally, a large number of African scholars have been keen to make clear that environmental change and degradation are not synonymous. Neither "perpetrators" nor "victims" are used to African farmers and herders because they are not isolated from "nature." For example, in their edited collection Lie of the Land, Leach and Mearns (2021) debunk several myths and half-truths that have shaped policy and thinking about the African environment in recent decades. Jeremy Swift, for instance, has demonstrated how concerns about desertification have been founded on incorrect data usage and a confusion of several change processes. According to James Fairhead and Melissa Leach (2021), the "forest islands" on Guinea's savanna were formed and maintained by human activity rather than being relics of a larger forest cover. They draw attention to the fact that colonial science, which frequently forms the basis of conventional wisdom on the African environment, was founded on prejudicial presumptions rather than empirical evidence. Additionally, he points out that alarmist statements about desertification and degradation have increased the influence of scientists, development organizations, and national governments (Swift, 2021, pp. 73–90). Their own research indicates that rather than reducing forests, Africans have promoted their growth. Instead of suggesting that there aren't any serious environmental problems in Africa, this type of work encourages readers to be far more cautious about environmental diagnoses and the facts they are based on.

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). For example, Daniel Deudney (2019) identified three basic issues: First, national security discourses rely on presenting everything outside the autonomous, sovereign state as potentially dangerous, which is fundamentally at odds with the "whole earth" sensibility at the core of environmental awareness and poses serious obstacles to transnational cooperation; Second, the mechanisms established to ensure national security, which rely on organised violence, secrecy, and technological know-how, are not very helpful when it comes to environmental issues, where solutions call for openness, transnational cooperation, and a good deal of creativity. Finally, given how interconnected the modern world is, it is highly doubtful that the cleavages of environmental disaster will occur along interstate lines. As a result, Deudney notes that "War is unlikely to result from such conflicts, but their resolution will be a complicated and messy affair" (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).

According to Simon Dalby, the idea of "environmental security" calls for a reconsideration of the terms "environment" and "security." We have a tendency to assume that the external environment is static, and security has historically been defined as keeping things constant.

Scholars of critical environmental security typically have a propensity to challenge institutions and behaviours that are frequently regarded as "natural" and/or unchangeable. According to them, security necessitates a comprehensive comprehension of how people engage with "nature." Humanity is altering what was once thought of as an external environment, and in the process, altering its living conditions in ways that make the environment being secured more artificial, as Dalby points out. Our thinking needs to catch up to this new reality" (Dalby, 2019, p. 4).

Adapting to this new reality has spurred creative thinking that often challenges some of the basic security assumptions made by traditional scholars and policymakers. For example, Conca and Dabelko (2020) proposed the concept of "environmental peace-making," which would require both the development of post-Westphalian forms of governance that could eventually bind states to cooperative agreements and practices to promote "learning" and the alteration of the global state-centric strategic climate. One example of this movement is the idea of transboundary natural resource management, which has evolved into a number of useful forms. Wildlife protection is the focus of transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs), such as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park between Botswana and South Africa and the Gaza/Kruger/Gonarezhou TFCA between Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. The Every River Has Its People Initiative, a transboundary natural resource management area (TBNRMA) that covers 160,000 km2 in Angola, Namibia, and Botswana and is primarily concerned with establishing sustainable livelihoods, is one example. There are other examples of unofficial networks of cross-border resource use, development corridors, and spatial development initiatives (SDIs) (Swatuk, 2020, p. 222).

The World Bank cautioned in the 1990s that a shortage of water in Southern Africa could lead to violent conflict, but more recently, they have stated that it offers an opportunity for regional peacebuilding. Larry Swatuk claims that TBNRM has functioned as a discursive political platform as well as a policy program (2020). Regional non-governmental organizations like the South African Peace Parks Foundation and international organizations like Conservation International and the World Conservation Union are involved in the constructed "peace parks." Through the Southern African Development Community (SADC), an interstate organisation dedicated to integrated regional development, they work with state agencies, parks, and wildlife departments. 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 politicized 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). Apart from the influence of these market forces, international environmental lobbying groups like the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and external non-state actors like the World Wide Fund for Nature (also called the World Wildlife Fund; WWF) have greatly impacted, if not directly dictated, wildlife conservation and management policies in Africa. These lobbying groups, development and environmental NGOs, and foreign agencies like the IMF and World Bank employ global conservation discourses to challenge an African state's authority to define the meaning and purpose of its own territory. The arguments made by Hardt and Negri (2021, pp. 35–37, 312–314), who claim that the "moral force" that many NGOs employ to influence international events is drastically altering the conventional thinking of modern sovereignty, particularly in developing countries, are very similar to this. These NGOs claim to represent those who are unable to represent themselves, in this example the flora and animals, and argue that their mandate is based on universal and global human interests. They assert that they stand for a moral requirement that transcends all state authority. These NGOs, together with their IFI and donor partners, often exploit the rhetoric of Western conservation and "environmental security" to criminalize long-standing local community traditions, limit state power, and alter modern sovereignty (Dunniy, 2020; Litfin, 2023). However, we now shift our focus to the unique characteristics of African warfare.

The Distinctive Features of Warfare in Africa

Even though 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 organizations is the second characteristic, and the third is the exclusion of many 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 organize and manage the civilian population in regions under their control, making them non-people-centric. Ethnic militias and home guards, which are formed during periods of broad unrest to protect specific areas, are exceptions to this tendency, as are a few new ideologically driven rebels who have the potential to bring about a new wave of change in the future of warfare in Africa. Controlling the resources and business networks that support patron-client systems of power is the main goal of most armed groups. In many of Africa's most conflict-prone nations, patronage is the foundation of power. The rulers of these nations have benefited from undermining their own government organizations. This is a reasonable reaction to these leaders' concerns that bureaucracy may contain political rivals who could seriously and even fatally threaten their grasp on power, even if they weaken the institutions that would normally foster economic growth and prosperity (Bates, 2018). The severity of this threat is highlighted by Africa's history of illegal government transitions, including coups d'état. Only in Sub-Saharan Africa have coups d'état remained common, albeit more often from the lowest ranks, notwithstanding the wave of democratic changes that swept the continent in the 1990s (McGowan, 2022).

Rulers who undermine their own bureaucracies feel confident when they use their personal influence to open up income opportunities for their followers. Although they still need official recognition of sovereignty, they use the accessories of legal statehood to control others' access to markets in order to form political alliances. For instance, governments can better control the flow of resources to suit their own interests by selectively applying the law to political opponents and using the sovereign prerogative to entice foreign companies to exploit mineral resources. In the decades following independence, leaders in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo (Zaire), and other countries effectively managed the breakdown of their governments' bureaucratic structures while maintaining control of their governments through their own networks of commercial transactions. These networks eventually spread into illicit territory, and corrupt operators and transnational criminals were among their business accomplices. These criminals require leaders who are willing to conceal their activities under the pretence of sovereign authority (Bayart, Ellis & Hibou, 2020). Since the remaining state-owned companies were either transferred to their elite coalition partners or simply dwindled, the

formation of these networks made it simple for these leaders to accede to pressure from foreign creditors to privatize them in the 1990s.

Therefore, when our time traveler in the paper's introduction arrived in the past, the primary tactic for acquiring power was to seize control of the state's bureaucratic branches. 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 claim that their managers benefit from exploiting their subordinates with the ruler's consent because of their favoured positions in the ruler's political networks. These junior officers could think they can employ substantial patronage resources to create 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 commercial gain even in the most bureaucratically weak state, seizing state power would put them one step closer to achieving their objective. Controlling and selling wood concessions, "blood diamonds," and other mining concessions was therefore a concern for both the government and rebel armies in the battles in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, and Congo. Even though governments and rebels do not completely disregard administering citizens, doing so would take important resources away from the need to amass as much cash as possible in order to draw in new fighters and keep the allegiance of current ones. The danger of paying close attention to administration is that especially skilled subordinates who served and protected civilians could gain popularity in these areas and use this as justification to run for office themselves. As a result, economic resources rather than the people are the main focus of political power conflicts.

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 organizations. 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 nonetheless retains legal sovereignty, which is necessary to provide foreign business partners formal permission to operate on the country's territory. Businesses that interact with rebels do so at their own risk; this does not protect them. These businesses become the focus of activist attention and may be subject to legal prosecution in their home countries if governments target them for resource theft alongside their rebel partners. The state must be controlled in order to influence how these rules are administered and generate the resources required to become a superior patron, as most countries have vested subsurface mineral rights in the state. Patronage resources can also be used by state rulers to divide their rebel opponents and weaken the alliance against the state. They can accomplish this by encouraging subordinate commanders to start their own rebel organizations and by selectively buying off commanders. Indeed, top coalition members may form rebel organizations to elevate themselves and their allies in the patronage system that is centred on the state. The prospect of war against the state not only makes co-optation more expensive, but it also makes it more likely that the rebel group will garner support from the politicians of a nearby state if it is situated near an international border. 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 governments' armed forces are not combined under these state sovereignty prerogatives. The bureaucratic armies and security forces of the former colonial and apartheid governments are different from the armed forces of the internationally recognized state with weak domestic institutions because the rulers still see significant risks in giving bureaucrats, especially those who use violence, authority. As a result, authoritarian administrations typically utilize a variety of armed outfits with variable but generally poor organizational and disciplinary capabilities to confront dispersed rebel groups. According to Stathis Kalyvas (2022), this leads to symmetrical irregular warfare, in which the state usually prevails as long as its sovereignty is still respected in international society. Because of their privileged access to foreigners (whether they be foreign officials, legitimate businesses, or shady operators), these states' rulers are able to maintain their positions at the top of their political networks and continue to divide and co-opt opponents.

The third characteristic of conflict in modern-day Africa is that the continent has less say over the choices made by the major political and economic organizations and actors worldwide, leaving its states more vulnerable to outside intervention. For instance, sovereign nations are more vulnerable to outside constraints on their leaders' autonomy 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 inclinations. Additionally, they must meet a growing number of standards to be eligible for foreign aid and to join international institutions. Rulers are branded as corrupt if they exploit their hold on illegal markets and other unorganized 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 organizations 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 organizations 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 organized crime networks (United Nations, 2016).

Numerous players in international society make patronage politics unsustainable in the poorest and most fragile republics in Africa. Since struggling leaders are deprived of the resources they require to maintain control over their constituents, it is conceivable that this pressure will cause these states to fall apart rather than reform. Rebels and criminal groups left to fend for themselves—likely in violent conflict with rivals—would profit from this development. But rebels' international standing deteriorates even more as states are increasingly meddled in internal issues. In addition to the deteriorating capabilities of the poorest states in Africa, this concurrent marginalization serves to strengthen inclinations towards symmetrical irregular warfare rather than a clear shift in the balance of power towards either states or rebels.

Apart from their occasional involvement in internationally mediated peace talks, modern rebel organizations are excluded from the majority of international diplomatic channels. In the 1970s, things were very different for rebels. The Southwest 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.

These diplomatic and political avenues were open to other rebel groups that could convince foreign observers that they were the "sole authentic representatives" of particular populations. By the 1970s and 1980s, rival rebel groups were often supported by the governments of the Soviet and Western blocs. However, the rebels who were able to control these international lines were the most successful in locating and eliminating dissident groups. Outside funding and other forms of support allowed rebel movements to maintain this unity by enhancing the group's capabilities and denying competitors access to their own resources. International sponsors put pressure on the rebels to demonstrate their military readiness on the ground and to take control of their own freed territory because they wanted their preferred rebels to provide definite signs of victory. African rebels of that era displayed some of the same tendencies towards fragmentation that became prominent later, even though the structural incentives of the time pushed rebels towards population-centric campaigns—competing with the state to out-govern civilians—instead of the network-centric focus of later rebels. Furthermore, external support did not give the competing decentralized rebel organizations that tended to dominate later battles the same priority as bureaucratic hierarchical rebel structures capable of carrying out these duties.

The period of concerted international assistance for African rebels came to an end with the fall of colonial and apartheid rule. However, neighbouring states continued to sponsor a large number of African rebels. Moammar Qaddafi, the leader of Libya, backed a startling number of African rebel organizations prior to his own brutal death in the 2011 uprising. However, effective control on the ground and evidence of unity within rebel ranks were necessary for this and other forms of assistance. As subordinate commanders looked for their own supporters,

the absence of coordination of this aid—Qaddafi himself even backed rival rebel groups—also weakened rebel cohesiveness.

The world community's perception of African rebels as criminals during the 1990s has significantly restricted their access to resources outside of their control, beyond what they may obtain through illegal trade. It is possible that this trend has contributed to rebels' choices to fight using network-centric tactics rather than the more challenging task of persuading (now more doubtful) outsiders that they are fighting for a worthy cause. The phrase "rebel criminalisation" here refers to the widespread belief that African rebels fight for their own financial gain and engage in theft and pillage because they think it would improve their own situation. Robert Kaplan's 1994 article in Atlantic Monthly, which 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," was an early expression of this perspective on African rebels. He claimed that the breakdown of order unleashed armed predators to terrorize these societies (2004, p. 45). Mary Kaldor observed the following effects of globalization at play 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).

The criminalization of dissidents became more concrete as sanctions regimes changed. The growing awareness that trafficking in resources like "blood diamonds" was providing rebels with funding to carry out serious violations of human rights was the first step in this. In order to fund their organizations, rebels in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Angola concentrated on mining and selling diamonds, committing numerous war crimes and transgressing international humanitarian law. The same legal and illegal businesses that did business with the state were sometimes involved in the struggle for control of the resources needed to sustain the capital-based patronage networks that claimed the mantle of state sovereignty. Businesses and Angolan UNITA rebels colluded to mine and sell diamonds in defiance of UN sanctions, according to the 2000 Fowler Report. This study emphasized the connection between African trade and conflict. An investigation panel of specialists produced the report, which found a large number of people and businesses engaged in this trade (United Nations, 2000). Concerns about resource

looting and its link to human rights violations became central to international reactions to rebel activity in many African conflicts, and trade in timber and other natural resources also came under more scrutiny after the Congo's conflict broke out in 1996.

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 modern African conflicts. These conflicts stem from a variety of direct causes and include the objectives and motivations of armed groups, including local power struggles, personal objectives or concerns, property disputes with neighbouring populations, and the defense of one's family and community. This argument is based on challenges to the central authority of state regimes over the distribution of patronage and the control of other people's access to economic possibilities. Introducing competitive elections and abruptly raising or decreasing 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-Brazaville), 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 network-centric warfare.

In the case of Chad, the connection between elections, political violence, and patronage politics is particularly clear. In the early 1990s, this nation was among several in Africa to make the shift to multiparty democracy. These political trends were particularly destabilizing in Chad and other countries because they gave subordinate members of patronage networks additional chances. In order to civilianize militia 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 Comité de Sursaut National for la Paix and the Democratie and the Forces Armeé for la République Fédérale—were acknowledged as political parties. In what Andreas Mehler refers to as "politico-military entrepreneurship in its purest form," political faction leaders organise new rebel movements and move between the presidential patronage system in order to obtain "violence rents" that they can use to fund the establishment of their own networks of patrons (2020, pp. 207–208). The possibility of coalition governments not only drew in foreign donors who provided funding for resettlement and disarmament initiatives, but also encouraged political entrepreneurs to use violence as a means of relocating within the nation's political networks and gaining access to additional resources (van Dijk, 2019). Even while Chad's politics were violent and factionalized even before the 1990s, as subordinate members of these networks found new ways to further their own agendas, the institutional façade of formalized political rivalry moulded persistent conflict.

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 lords the ability to regulate who has access to land. These bosses and their supporters could gain more land if they supported the right politicians. After developments brought political rivalry, beginning with the 1992 election, opposing parties armed their supporters in an attempt to punish their opponents and reward their supporters with promises of more land access (Boone, 2021). About a quarter of a million people were displaced in 1992 as a result of elections, and in 2007, over half a million people were displaced and 1,000 people were killed (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The effectiveness of the ruling party's attempts to displace the opposition by controlling the allocation of patronage resources and to limit voters' options at the polls through intimidation and electoral fraud was demonstrated by the 1997 election's comparatively low level of violence. The electoral violence in Kenya highlights the broader issue of electoral choice in systems of politics that rely on patronage and have weak formal institutions.

Supporters' arguments become increasingly violent as the outcome becomes more uncertain, with the main target of the violence being control of the primary source of patronage resources. Violence, contested elections, and patronage politics were also associated in Congo-Brazzaville in the 1990s. In 1992, electoral rivalry between competing factions invigorated the broad but uneasy coalition of the previous authoritarian single-party administration, which rewarded allies with oil export earnings. In order to fight in the 1992 three-way election, politicians organized young supporters into personal militias out of fear that another party might seize power and use oil profits for their own ends. Up to 300,000 people were displaced and over 2,000 people were killed as a result of the violence that surrounded this election and its aftermath. Between 10,000 and 15,000 people died during the even more controversial 1997 election (Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2019, pp. 38–40). Control over patronage resources was successfully recentralized by the restoration of a major party by the 2002 elections. 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.

Shocks other than competitive elections disturb the centralized distribution of patronage. Reforms in Mali that decentralized the country's government first appeared to provide a means of coopting ethnic Tuareg community leaders during an uprising that began in 2006. However, the true benefits of this local government were entirely due to Libya's leader, Moammar Qaddafi. His funding of regional development initiatives increased local government's political significance. Qaddafi also supported the candidates he liked in the increasingly costly race for votes in Mali's multiparty local elections. Young males were also enlisted by Qaddafi's government to work in Libya. Due to their dependence on their hosts, some of these foreign migrants were recruited into Qaddafi's security forces. Some of the leaders of previous Tuareg uprisings against the governments of Mali and Niger were absorbed by this mixing of political networks throughout the Sahara desert.

This equilibrium was thrown off when Qaddafi's government collapsed in Libya in 2012, and other competing political networks emerged. Cut off from their former customers and unable to find new sources of income, hundreds of thousands of migrants went back to their home countries. Some of these migrants and members of politically marginalized communities joined separatist militias as a result of the illegal smuggling activity and the threat of kidnappings and ransom demands. Others collaborated with al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Maghreb to achieve "violent upward mobility," taking advantage of the organization's control over the routes that smugglers used 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 organizations 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 Congo. These include local home-guard militias formed to defend towns from attacks by other armed groups, as well as ambitious regional leaders who enlist armed supporters to run in elections 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 mounting international pressure to democratize his government and dwindling patronage funds. Like rival Kenyan leaders, he reacted by rewarding supporters and punishing detractors through regional land disputes. These divisions and the focus on raising funds to buy communities' support persisted from the start of the massive conflict in 1996 until its conclusion, which claimed up to three million lives by the mid-2000s.

Patronage-based explanations of the nature of current African violence do not preclude other elements, such as the influence of outside involvement. In the 1990s, Rwandan, Zimbabwean, Angolan, and Ugandan troops joined the Congo war. However, the way these operations unfolded and the actions of each army were indicative of the type of regime politics that existed in their different nations. In countries like Zimbabwe and Uganda, where the leader's personal authority outweighed the established institutions, army commanders were more likely to be chosen on the basis of political considerations than their qualifications, and their actions in the field were more likely to involve business dealings with armed Congolese groups for mutual gain.

Regimes that primarily rely on controlling people's access to economic opportunities and the distribution of patronage as the basis for exercising authority usually lack the political will and resources necessary to keep militaries centered around bureaucratic hierarchies, which are the cornerstones of military effectiveness. The 1998–2000 border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea exemplifies this criterion, with its distinct front lines, heavy weaponry, and mass movements that resembled a struggle between national militaries rather than the more common pattern of symmetrical irregular warfare. Following protracted guerrilla warfare by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in Eritrea and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front in Ethiopia, the administrations in both nations came to power in 1991. Both were able to keep tight control

over field commanders through political commissar regimes and exclude ambitious comrades who challenged this bureaucratic centralization since they were insurgent organizations. This substantial difference in the structure of a dictatorship's basis of political power affected how it waged war.

In any event, the administrations of most African states, particularly the larger and more varied ones, face challenges from elite alliances with a history of violent intra-elite conflict, acute resource shortages, and weak formal institutions. Therefore, it makes it reasonable that leaders in these circumstances would focus on limiting the use of violence and enact policies that are hostile to the growth of bureaucratic institutions.

The Future of Warfare in Africa

African combat will remain network-centric and consist of fragmented rebel and state forces as long as the continent's most unstable and impoverished countries have patronage politics and weak formal institutions. The persistence of an international system that considers African war to be a criminal matter will not much change this pattern of conflict because fighting for ideological or programmatic grounds has no advantages.

Two major trends indicate that the issues plaguing patronage-based political systems may worsen in the future of war in Africa. The first is the growth of international trade and cross-cultural exchanges, which often upsets existing unstable and weak political structures. Second, states in Africa are under more external pressure to implement bureaucratic changes. Recent events demonstrate that these demands, which are frequently coupled with enormous help (in comparison to local resources) to address the structural causes of conflict, frequently end in unsatisfactory outcomes. Two other developments raise the possibility of a dramatic shift in future conflicts in Africa. First, since the mid-1990s, successful multilateral African interventions have emerged in hostilities in West Africa and, more recently, in Sudan and Somalia. The second is the appearance of more significant ideological components in the goals and deeds of rebel groups. Violent religious extremists in Somalia, the Sahel nations of Mali and Niger, and northern Nigeria depend on external financing sources that cut across the societal barriers to the Diaspora community's support. A further move away from the localized and internationalized marginalization that penetrates so many conflicts today is indicated by the fact that some accept and even recruit foreign warriors.

Two factors that show the intensification of present tendencies exacerbate the difficulties patronage-based regimes face in maintaining peace and order. For example, Guinea-Bissau has suffered greatly as a result of the global increase in the illegal drug trade. After multiparty

politics were introduced in the late 1990s, the nation's ruling party was divided into two groups and engaged in a civil war. Subsequently, gangs started using South America as a transshipment hub to send cocaine and other illegal substances to the European market. Factional tensions were exacerbated by narco-corruption as politicians battled for control of drug revenue. President João Bernardo Vieira was assassinated by military forces in 2009 as part of the fight for control of the nation's $2 billion drug trade, which is more than twice its declared GDP. A second round of presidential elections that appeared to elect the Prime Minister who pledged to reform the security forces was thwarted by a military coup in April 2012 (Collier, 2020b).

Political violence in nations like Guinea-Bissau supports analyses that link criminality to political violence and revolt. Politicians, former rebel leaders, and other resource-hungry individuals vie for resources when drug shipments arrive in coastal countries in West Africa. In this wealth, they perceive their own paths to power (Johansen, 2021). For instance, in 2018, 700 kilogrammes of cocaine—the amount of the entire annual budget of Sierra Leone—were found on an aircraft that was seized by authorities. In this instance, the drugs were destroyed and the traffickers were found guilty. In other cases, competition for control of this new source of income has caused governments that were already divided to become unstable, increased the stakes in elections, and drawn security force personnel who would use their agencies and guns to seize control of this wealth source for themselves.

Drug shipments across coastal West Africa appear to have declined after 2016–2017, but this might have been a sign of a shift into the Sahel, where armed groups challenge the government (UNODC, 2021). The suspicion of a connection between Saharan and Sahelian rebel groups was heightened in November 2019 when a partially burned Boeing 727 with cocaine residues was found in northern Mali. In a June 2022 letter to the UN Secretary-General, the African Union Chairman stated, "The disintegration of the army and the dismantling of all State structures has created the conditions for Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), along with various organized crime networks, to control the entire North" (United Nations, 2022).

Closer ties between armed groups and international drug trafficking pose a danger to patronage regimes by undermining the ruler's monopoly on the allocation of economic opportunities. Junior partners are able to separate themselves from patronage networks and take direct ownership of resources because of the variety of access points available in this political environment. In addition to increasing network dispersion and control competition, rulers' inability to monopolize this distribution of economic opportunity also reduces their ability to

coopt rebels and other armed groups. This exacerbates a major element of the majority of current African wars.

In certain cases, international pressure on regimes to implement additional reforms weakens centralized 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 democratization. However, a new market for votes was created by administrative decentralization and local council elections (Languille, 2021). Moammar Qaddafi of Libya gained access to the northern Mali patronage system through massive increases in campaign spending, which gave him access to campaign funding and commercial prospects. His government's collapse and the return of armed Malians and others from Libya to the Sahel further widened this rift in political power. When peacekeeping and military training are taken into consideration, the cost of foreign intervention and state-building activities in Liberia and Sierra Leone commencing in the late 1990s usually exceeds the overall GDP of these states. However, rather than settling disputes over resource networks, reforms seem to be spreading.

This is not an argument that political liberalization is inherently unstable. Instead, liberalization expands access to resources, which is unstable under patronage-based governments. Liberalization has the potential to strengthen institutions in countries like Ghana that already have robust ones. When adopted as part of an indigenous political process, as in Nigeria, reforms show higher levels of durability. The political system there has also been impacted by some of the same problems with links between increased political violence and administrative and electoral reforms. However, Nigerian authorities have successfully reduced the size of the military and professionalized its officer corps in an effort to depoliticize 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 responsibility for 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 visited Darfur in 2004. The most notable were the independent actions of the Ethiopian military in Somalia starting in 2006. Ethiopia has developed capabilities that are out of proportion to its neighbours thanks to its massive population base, strong growth rates since

the mid-1990s, and GDP that doubles on average every nine years. Despite close coordination with a number of western countries, Ethiopia's government has increased its capabilities through actions that often directly contradict the recommendations of its non-African partners. Both countries have the potential to become regional hegemons if their economies grow and their military continue to professionalize. This future scenario portrays a continent with wildly uneven state capacity, with islands of strong institutions and economic vibrancy in a few major nations and political instability and unrest in adjacent regions. Since they will have significant African neighbours with whom their conflicts are not accidental, this will alter the calculus of armed groups in unstable areas. The situation in South Sudan and Somalia, Ethiopia's neighbours, must be monitored by the country's leadership. For the upcoming years and decades, stability in these nations is doubtful. Policymakers in stronger, more stable countries will search for proxies they believe will advance their goals and result in more favourable political outcomes. If stability is desired by their supporters, rebel groups may once again have to demonstrate their capacity to govern areas they control to get outside assistance, which would be a sign that population-centric warfare is making a comeback.

Another possible future development is the resurgence of global ideological narratives among rebel groups. Marxism-Leninism's appeal as a narrative of resistance and a model for rallying rebels was weakened with the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War (Kalyvas & Balcells, 2021). Rebel organizations in the Sahel, such as Ansar al Dine in Mali and al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Maghreb, are currently drawn to militant Islamist internationalism. In Somalia, Al Shabaab likewise promotes its internationalist credentials. These groups offer a political agenda that goes beyond stealing the wealth of the current political system, even though they engage in illicit trade and take advantage of regional ethnic and other petty divisions. They manage the individuals and locations under their control with extreme care. These two characteristics show that these groups adopt a population-centric approach. They can recruit and discipline members across racial and other social borders because of their ideological and programmatic goals, but they are not immune to disintegration. Because they attract foreign donors who wish to support their political objectives, they are less marginalized internationally than most other African rebel organizations.

For violent religious fanatics, this future scenario also poses serious difficulties. For instance, they deliberately leave women out of their hiring pools. They combat sectarian disputes that anger the local population. Those who live under their control experience the harsh reality of strict theocratic government that is intolerant of local cultures. Other broad storylines may nevertheless appeal to those who are dissatisfied with the governance of their violent and

corrupt governments. 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 organizations blended promises of a new form of government with widespread nationalism 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. This problem is best summed up by the dichotomous framework of national security vs. human security (Johansen, 2021). State security is the main emphasis of what is commonly referred to as national security. Realpolitik is a powerful complement to realism, which is typically the conceptual realm of this viewpoint. 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. Since nations are becoming more interconnected, as evidenced by globalization, the hermetically isolated state of realism is more fiction than reality.

However, the problems are more profound, especially when it comes to the developing world and, most notably, Africa. Africa's states, economy, civilizations, 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. According to the basic assumptions of the national security school and the realist perspective it uses, nations are the main actors since they are unitary actors and interact in a world founded on Westphalia. In Africa, none of these presumptions are always accurate (Dunniy & Shawney, 2021). There is no greater security danger across states. Despite accounting for 42% of all organized violent deaths worldwide, Africa was really responsible for 83% of non-state fatalities between 2012 and 2022 (Kahl, 2023). Weak states that do not meet the criteria for Weberian states are more prevalent in Africa than unitary actors. A unique anarchical logic shapes the security needs of the African state system, despite the fact

that it is a component of the global system and is thus impacted by the anarchic logic of international politics (such as during the Cold War). The state structure in Africa is distinct. As stated by Herbst:

> 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 makes something of different forms of anarchy (Henze, 2022, p. 194).

The connection between warfare and the environment is still hotly debated. Though doing so entails (and may mask) significant political challenges, it is necessary to rethink security outside the limited interests of the state and state leaders. Therefore, environmental security is a hotly debated political topic as well as a very real phenomenon.

The governance of African governments will undoubtedly have a significant impact on future war operations in Africa. There will be observable indications of a shift in conflict once African administration is radically changed. In the same way that Chinese people now reflect on their nation's history, future Africans will reflect on Africa in the 20th and early 21st centuries. The grounds for the breakdown of state power and the emergence of warlords vying for political dominance were set by a protracted era of decline that lasted for centuries. However, this state is likely to be short-lived, as China has demonstrated.

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