

AFRICAN VULTURES

THE NEW PREVALENCE OF INTERSTATE WAR IN AFRICA

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INTRODUCTIONⁱ

Cautiously triumphant, the International Crisis Group (ICG) proclaimed in 2006 that the world has witnessed an eighty percent decline in serious conflicts worldwide since the early nineties. Africa, too, has been marked by a remarkable downturn both in the number of conflicts and battle-related deaths. Reflecting a widely held sentiment, ICG's president, Gareth Evans, happily notes that (in Africa as well as the rest of the world) "we have seen an almost complete disappearance of interstate wars" (2006).

Evans hardly stands alone in his belief that interstate wars have lost much of their relevance in present day African international relations, and his statement is not entirely unwarranted: "Few conflicts in Africa have pitted state against state," Carbone claims (2004: 172). Thies (2007: 718) observes that African developing states "do not face a threatening external environment". Indeed somewhat counter-intuitively, Herbst notes that in Africa, "the continent seemingly destined for war given the colonially-imposed boundaries and weak political authorities, there has not been one involuntary boundary change since the dawn of the independence era in the late 1950s" (1990: 123).ⁱⁱ Some have termed this

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ⁱ Throughout this essay, when mentioning Africa, I refer to

Sub-Saharan Africa.

ⁱⁱ *Writing in 1990, Herbst could not know that Eritrea would, in 1993, become the first and only example of successful secession in Africa.*

conspicuous absence of interstate war the ‘African Peace’ (Lemke in Henderson 2008: 31). In all of these author’s statements, however, it is implicit or explicit that Africa does face seriously daunting internal challenges.

This rather sharp distinction between internal and external wars, both intrastate and interstate, fits neatly in one of the most influential contemporary schools of thought in conflict theory: the post-Cold War evolution of old into new wars. Old wars were essentially ‘Clausewitzian’, “tending towards the absolute; based on the trinity of state, army and people; and reaching its culmination in the decisive battle.” New wars, on the other hand, are globalised war economies, demobilising and parasitic (Shaw 2000: 173). “The new type of warfare is a predatory social condition”, Mary Kaldor, mastermind of the concept of ‘new wars’, has written (1999: 113). This dichotomy between wars of the past and wars of the present, however, has fuelled an erroneous simplification. For many observers, new and old wars have become synonymous with intra- and interstate conflicts respectively. Or, as Duffield put it, *their wars* (“internal, illegitimate, identity-based, characterized by unrestrained destruction” etc.) have been incorrectly juxtaposed to *our wars* (which “are between states, legitimate and politically motivated” (2002: 1052, emphasis in original). Consequently, it has become commonplace to argue that conflicts in post-colonial Africa have always been and are essentially *civil* and therefore internal. Jackson contends that it is “widely accepted that the nature of international conflict has fundamentally altered from interstate wars to intra-state civil conflict” and that “all [of Africa’s] most serious conflicts ... have been rooted in domestic politics and state structures” (2001: 322). However, in a continent with particularly porous borders and often merely *pro forma* state control, “military and political interference in the affairs of neighbouring countries is often the norm” (Dietrich 2000). The new vs. old wars dichotomy has clearly clouded some observers’ judgement on the characteristics of contemporary African conflicts.

This essay will argue that African conflicts, since the end of the Cold War, are often very much interstitial in nature. The African Peace is no more, as evidenced by Congo’s plight and numerous

other examples of significant African interstate conflict in recent years. Before elaborating upon these examples, however, I will first of all briefly explain how the African Peace managed to persist as long as it did, and what caused it to finally collapse. Secondly, this essay demonstrates that current African interstate wars are not traditionally ‘old wars’ (two armies facing off from trenches, so to speak), but predominantly what I call ‘vulture wars’. A number of African interstate conflicts will be put forward as examples of this development, with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) being the primary case in point. I will end with some concluding thoughts and consider possible future events.

AN AFRICAN PEACE?

One of the most striking features of the African Peace is that it so blatantly runs against one of IR’s most widely accepted (though not uncriticised) concepts: the democratic peace theory (Henderson 2008: 31). Africa is probably the continent with the most pervasive lack of democratic institutions, but has nonetheless experienced remarkably few interstate wars: only three percent of interstate wars worldwide between 1946 and 1992 took place on African soil (ibid.: 32). Ali Mazrui highlights the irony of this: “in spite of artificial borders which have split ethnic groups, there have been very few border clashes or military confrontations between African countries.” On the other hand, however, “there has been insufficient tension and conflict between states to forge a strong *nation*, internally cohesive and able to weather disintegrating forces” (Mazrui 1986: 31-3; emphasis in original).

The African continent has been ravished by 30% of the world’s conflict since WO II

Quite aware of the randomness of many of their borders, the first generation of post-colonial African leaders understandably feared for a domino effect of disintegration, fragmentation and secession. To prevent this harrowing doom scenario, it was collectively decided in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) that all African colonial borders were to be mutually recognised (Carbone 2004: 172).ⁱⁱⁱ As all states feared collapse equally, the incentive to

ⁱⁱⁱ *Although states*

may not be the natural primary unit of analysis in Africa, the 1963 OAU agreement made them so.

ⁱⁱⁱ On the continent's Pan-Africanist sentiments, see Mazrui (2005).

abide by this charter was formidable. African borders have, in effect, been frozen for three decades. This agreement was encouraged by the United Nations, and actually has remained rather in tune with the new post-WWII world order. Only attributing the OAU agreement to a rational choice calculation would probably do injustice to the very real Pan-African solidarity that permeated the continent right after independence.^{iv} All in all, with the most debilitating factor – territorial claims – in international relations removed, it is hardly surprising that Africa experienced the interstate peace that it has (Henderson 2008: 33).

Internally, matters looked quite different. The African continent has been ravished by more than 30 percent of the world's civil conflict since the Second World War. Inheriting artificial colonial borders and facing no external threat to their existence, African states were never forced to rally the population to protect the nation, or to tax society to acquire means to fend off foreign aggressors.^v The subsequent, often severe, perceived illegitimacy of ruling elites emboldened budding rebel groups. "In this way, quasi-statehood inverted domestic and international relations with respect to armed conflict ... [Q]uasi-states turn Hobbes inside out: the state of nature is domestic, and civil society is international" (Jackson in Henderson 2008: 33). With domestic legitimacy in the firing line, and therefore the continuation of their rule threatened too, ruling elites often refrained from deploying troops to neighbouring countries for the sake of conquest or plundering. After all, this would leave their capitals wide open to rebel insurgency (ibid.: 35). This matter was compounded by the fact that African leaders, having witnessed some ninety *coups d'état* since 1963, have often deliberately crippled their own military capacity, fearing they could be the next regime to be toppled (Howe 2001: 2). In short, for thirty years Africa has been marked by a striking absence of "Darwinian processes of inter-state competition", and this absence has allowed weak states with little legitimacy to persist (Moore 2000: 8). It is precisely this phenomenon that brings us to Africa's distinct brand of interstate war.

^vAccording to Cramer (2008: 14), "the importance of building the fiscal foundations of a state cannot be over-emphasized". He contends, in concurrence with many others, that "weak taxation is the context in which governance worsens rather than improves in war to peace transitions, as there is no fiscal foundation for the state to support services or even to engage

THE RESURGENCE OF INTERSTATE WARS IN AFRICA

It is indeed a fact that Africa has seen but one secession and no flat-out annexations since independence. But in the last decade or so, African international wars have assumed a wholly different guise; wars are not between two equals facing off on a battlefield, or even between two capable states, but increasingly between one substantially stronger aggressor and a fragile or collapsed prey. What we are witnessing is a disheartening tendency of ‘vulture states’ to pick at the remains of nations long gone. The war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is indeed a ‘new’ war (as opposed to an old war), but it is also – and this can hardly be over-emphasised – fundamentally an interstate conflict. Weak or collapsed states such as the DRC are easily invaded, as decade-long reliance on external recognition and aid as a base for sovereignty has precluded the need for taxation, and limited government involvement to urban centres only. Power is often retained through neopatrimonial mechanisms.^{vi} (Henderson 2008: 33), and as a result connections with or mandate over peripheral areas has all but withered completely. In a truly competitive international environment many of these states (collapsed states such as the DRC and Somalia or “geographic anachronisms” like The Gambia and Djibouti; cf. Herbst 1990: 137) would have perished long ago. However, as of late, it seems as if they will after all. The African Peace has come to an end, and those so long protected by it are now ripe for the picking. As will be demonstrated below, vulture states like Uganda, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe and others are dipping their beaks into the carrion with impunity, squabbling over who gets the best piece in the process.

From 1960 until 1990, rebel incursions and foreign invasions overthrew only two African governments (in Chad and Uganda). As of 1990, at least six regimes have been toppled by insurgents and interventions (i.e. armed force excluding) (Howe 2001: 4). Among the victims was Sierra Leone’s military regime, which had ousted the country’s democratically elected president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, from office in 1997, but was itself removed by armed forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) only a few months later (Africa Recovery 1998: 22). Around the same

effectively in factional politics, and the incentives to corruption increase correspondingly” (ibid.).

^{vi} Neopatrimonialism is described by Bratton & van de Walle (2008: 14) as a political system in which “relationships of loyalty and dependence pervade a formal political and administrative system in which leaders occupy bureaucratic offices less to perform public service than to acquire personal wealth and status”.

time, Angola worked hard to overthrow the government in Congo Brazzaville (Howe 1998: 43), smelling the opportunity of gaining sway over Brazzaville's oil-fields (Basedau and Mehler, 2003: 97). Other examples include former president of Somalia, Siad Barré, who was unseated in 1991 by internal forces heavily backed up by longtime antagonist Ethiopia, and the government of president Habyarimana of Rwanda (then already deceased), which was lifted from office by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, operating from and supported by Uganda. In these last two cases, it clearly is as Clapham (quoted in Howe 2001: 67, n99) observed: "on almost every occasion where state security in Africa has been threatened... the external factor [of intervention] has been critical".

Two principal factors contributed to this unfortunate demise of the African Peace. Firstly, and most obviously, the end of the Cold War meant that a number of states suddenly lost their support, and appeared quite unable to stand on their own two legs. Indeed, the "geopolitical confrontations of the Cold War partly concealed the ineffectiveness of states whose regimes were propped up and stabilised through external military and financial support" (Carbone 2004: 173). Mobutu's downfall is a principal example, but Somalia's Siad Barré, Ethiopia's Megistu and Rwanda's Habyarimana were all deposed of quickly after external support had dried up. This sudden change in the international stance towards Africa revealed which states had been run so utterly irresponsibly that they collapsed as soon as their crutches were removed.

A second cause for the resurgence of interstate war on the African continent lies in the changed capabilities of different states. At independence, although of course varying in size, population and resources, all countries ratifying the OAU charter faced similar circumstances and constraints. As a result, post-independence

leaders "used the OAU charter to reinforce their domestic strength by eliminating the threat of outside involvement in their affairs" (Weinstein 2000: 16; see also Herbst 1990: 135). However, recent history has not been equally kind to all of Africa. State capacity has diverged widely, ranging from a country

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lost

that had the fastest growing GDP worldwide for thirty years (Botswana), to countries that not just stagnated but actually experienced declining living standards after independence (e.g. Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan, etc.; cf. Easterly and Levine 1995: 31). As states no longer face the same constraints, universal abidance by the OAU charter lies under siege. With a number of 'black holes' emerging on the African continent^{vii}, regional frontrunners face unprecedented incentives to intervene (or invade), be it for personal financial gain or to safeguard regional stability.^{viii}

Bratton and van de Walle have stated that neopatrimonialism is "the *core* feature of African politics" (1994: 459; emphasis in original). Dealing a fully crippling blow to an already staggering neighbour requires little investment and can yield considerable profits, thus allowing rulers to cement rather than undermine their neopatrimonial systems authority. This vulture-like behaviour is crucial in understanding how interstate conflicts in Africa have changed in recent years. After all, post-Cold War weak states constitute easy pickings for unscrupulous leaders wishing to acquire funds to perpetuate their patrimonial rule. And neopatrimonial states urgently *needed* alternative funding, as international financial institutions' adamant demands for liberalisation and privatisation, and dwindling foreign aid for corrupt regimes increasingly strained their political system. War soon became a way to regain what was lost. Cramer (2008: 2) recognises that it is quite possible to do well out of war, and he mentions various entrepreneurs that do so (e.g. military officials, money changers, farmers, etc.). Tellingly, he foregoes the state, even though various African states are quintessential entrepreneurs, literally bartering for power and goodwill.

Dietrich confirms this assertion when he observes a trend towards more economically informed military excursions into foreign territory. In the DRC in particular, this 'military commercialism' is evident:

"The skeletal state structure in Kinshasa can issue export permits, country of destination documents, bank accounts and tax records free from inspection. The stronger country's elite can therefore use the façade of the neighbouring failed state's structure to legitimise illicit transactions." (Dietrich 2000)

vii 'Black holes' is a term of Manuel Castells (2000: 162), pointing at areas and territories characterized by complete exclusion and structural irrelevance within the global capitalist system.

viii Howe (2001: 5) mentions a few other possible motives for militarily capable states to intervene in other states' affairs (referring specifically to Uganda and Angola): "pre-emptive self-defence, greater availability of long-range weapons systems, the growth of armed participants, and the personalities of various leaders".

In the absence of external patronage, a number of African leaders have indeed been forced to, quite literally, think beyond borders to develop their own means of economic sustainability (Duffield 2000: 73). In the next section this process will be illuminated, employing a number of revealing examples.

BATTLEFIELD CONGO

^{ix} *This short historical section is derived from Ray (2002) and Weinstein (2000).*

^x *The Economist (2000: 27) described Mobutu's rule graphically: "[his was] one of the more grotesque rules of independent Africa ... regarding the country as personal possession. He renamed it Zaire, used the treasury as his bank account and ruled by allowing supporters and rivals to feed off the state".*

^{xi} *Laurent Kabila was murdered in*

As many of Africa's interstate wars take place in Congo, it is worth our while to briefly reflect upon the DRC's recent history.^{ix} Before being rebranded as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the country was known as Zaire and was ruled unscrupulously and singlehandedly by Mobutu Sese Seko.^x He exploited Zaire's wide array of natural resources for personal enrichment, and maintained power through his undeniable knack for neopatrimonial politics. His autocratic rule was supported by Belgium and France (both keen to maintain a certain level of involvement in their former colonial backyard) and the United States (who wished to contain the spread of communism in the region and found a willing ally in Mobutu). However, as the Berlin Wall crumbled, US interest in the region faded rapidly, and after France and Belgium were embarrassingly implicated in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, they too quietly receded from the stage. Mobutu's rule staggered on for a number of years, severely weakened by a rapid decline in foreign funding, and his resulting inability to continue his patronage politics.

Meanwhile, in late 1994, the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) had, with Ugandan assistance, seized Rwanda's capital Kigali, and ousted the Hutu government from office, sending them and their followers (the *Interhamwe*, primary perpetrators of the genocide) into exile in the dense forests of Zaire. However, it quickly dawned upon the Tutsi leadership that the 1.5 million Hutu outcasts were threatening Zairian Tutsis (called *Banyamalenge*), to whom many Rwandan Tutsis feel strong kinship. To prevent a second onslaught, Kigali backed Laurent Kabila – a long time insurgent in Zaire – in his attempt to overthrow Mobutu, but only after he pledged to provide security for the Banyamalenge.^{xi} Uganda, still Rwanda's primary ally, also pushed for increased

border security, as anti-government rebels had repeatedly staged attacks from Zaire's impenetrable borderlands. When in office, however, Kabila quickly forgot about his promises and soon turned his back on his former allies. By 1998, Kabila had grown so tired of being pushed around by Rwandan and Ugandan officials, that he expelled them altogether from the freshly renamed DRC. Thus, the stage for future events was set.

Rwanda's role and incentives for assaulting the DRC are perhaps the most straightforward. Following its horrific civil war, Kigali was eager to quell any Hutu unrest, and consolidating state control was its chief concern (Weinstein 2000: 14). With Hutu rebels rearming in the eastern provinces of the Congo, Rwanda's fear of a re-enactment of history is quite understandable. As it became increasingly clear that Laurent Kabila could not be counted on to provide security, Rwanda's resolve to depose of him hardened. However, the legitimate concern for border security notwithstanding, Rwanda, like virtually all other involved states, has conspicuously manoeuvred its army around large mineral deposits in the DRC (ibid.: 17). Apparently, national security is not all there is to the matter.

For a long time, Rwanda and Uganda cooperated in a functioning marriage of convenience. The main common ground lay in the fact that Uganda, too, was plagued by guerrillas operating from its borderlands with the DRC. Between 1996 and 2003, Uganda has continuously had a force 10,000 men strong present in the DRC, occupying a portion of the country larger than Uganda itself (Reno 2002: 416). Uganda's president, Yoweri Museveni, is particularly worried about the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel force hell-bent upon ousting him from office. To complicate the matter further, Museveni is convinced that these rebels are backed by the Sudanese government, as payback for Ugandan support for insurgents in Southern Sudan. Reportedly, forces of the two have been embroiled in a number of battles already (Weinstein 2000: 14).

These matters of border security aside, Uganda proves to be a principal economic agent in the DRC as well. A UN panel of experts has reported that Uganda (along with Rwanda and Burundi)

January 2001 during a failed coup attempt. He was succeeded ten days later by his son Joseph Kabila, who was confirmed president through highly contested elections in November 2006.

is, “at an alarming rate,” engaged in both mass-looting and systematic robbery of Congo’s natural resources. It also notes that this exploitation is not just executed by individual Ugandan businessmen or rogue army officers, but that government structures, too, “have been the engines of this systematic and systemic exploitation” (2001: 3). This becomes apparent when glossing over Uganda’s official trade figures, which record that gold exports rose from \$12.4 million in 1994-5 to an incredible \$110 million in 1996-7. The IMF noted that gold by the turn of the millennium had become Uganda’s largest non-coffee *official* export (Reno 2002: 424, emphasis in original). To facilitate ‘trade’ with the DRC, the Ugandan Army (Ugandan People’s Defence Force, UPDF), quickly after the invasion occupied Kisangani, a major regional transport and resource trade hub. Despite initial friendship, the UPDF has clashed repeatedly with Rwandan forces over control of this strategic target (Carbone 2004: 181).

Approaching from the south are Angola and Zimbabwe. Angola, too, has preyed upon Congo’s weaknesses for years now, and again, the main incentives for state involvement are twofold: national security and acquisition of resources to perpetuate patrimonial rule. Under Mobutu’s rule already, the rugged terrain of Zaire harboured a large number of UNITA rebels (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*; a rebel movement receiving support from the United States in the civil war against Angola’s communist government). Making the most of Mobutu’s complete disinterest, they used the DRC to funnel diamonds out of Angola, and to smuggle weapons in, all the while staging attacks on Angola territories incessantly. When Laurent Kabila took office in the DRC, he vowed to expel UNITA if only Angola would rush to its aid in an attempt to repel the approaching armies of Uganda and Rwanda. Angola, perceiving Uganda and Rwanda to have supported UNITA anyway, was quite susceptible to this promise. However, gradually Angola came to recognise the economic opportunities presented by a presence in the DRC, and – among many other activities – its official petrol company, Sonangol, has been involved in exploiting Congo’s oil reserves (Dietrich 2000; Weinstein 2000: 14).

Zimbabwe, too, joined the fray. Mugabe's motivations for getting mixed up in the DRC have little to do with national security (Zimbabwe does not even border the DRC). Mugabe, a quintessentially patrimonial politician, demanded compensation for costs incurred – if not in cash than in direct concessions to or transfer of natural resources. After helping Angola and Kabila to stave off the advancing Rwandan and Ugandan armies, Zimbabwe's forces dug themselves in around mining towns such as Kananga and Mbuji-Mayi (Weinstein 2000: 16-17).

With all these parties in the mix, Congo had truly become a killing field.^{xii} Its utter incapacitation facilitated 'Africa's scramble for Africa' (Africa Confidential 1999). In the process, 5.4 million people, mostly innocent civilians, have been killed.^{xiii} Entirely in accordance with the new wars paradigm, the DRC's quagmire has often been termed a 'privatised war', or a 'network war' in which "the conflict has moved beyond the conventional divisions between sovereign states and armies" (Raeymaekers 2002: 10). However, for Rwanda and Uganda explicitly and for Angola and Sudan implicitly, the rather statist notion of border security is pivotal to their involvement in the DRC (Weinstein 2000: 15). Moreover, pilfering resources to consolidate domestic rule and retain control over the neopatrimonial state is of primary concern for these vultures states. Indeed, Uganda, Rwanda, Angola and others "use warfare to refashion their relations with a changing global political economy and protect their regimes" (Reno 2002: 417). This reinserts an important interstate element into the equation; one that deserves our full appreciation.

OTHER HOTBEDS

Beyond the scope of this essay to explicate in depth, but still worthwhile to mention briefly are the numerous other interstate conflicts that have erupted in the last two decades. One example is Sudan's meddling in Chad's affairs, culminating in the attack on a Chadian border town called Adré. Chad's president, Idriss Déby, responded by declaring that his country was now 'in a state of war' with Sudan (De Waal 2006: 63). Once again, border security

^{xii} Reuters, "Congo war-driven crisis kills 45,000 a month-study", 22 January 2008.

Available at <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L22802012.htm>, accessed on 22 December 2009.

^{xiii} BBC News, "Sudan cuts Chad ties over attack", 11 May 2008. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7394422.stm>, accessed on 23 December 2009.

seemed to be one of the main justifications for invading. Sudanese leadership justified the raid by accusing Chad of aiding and abetting rebels in Darfur, and subsequently cut all diplomatic ties on 11 May 2008. In a television address President Omar Al-Bashir said to the nation that Sudan reserves the right to retaliate.^{xiv} Chad, for its part, firmly believes that Sudan arms and supports insurgents staging attacks on Chadian territories from lawless Darfur. The conflict, all in all, has taken 200,000 lives already.^{xv} Sudan has supported rebels in the Central African Republic for very similar reasons. It is able to do so with relative impunity because, although a truly troubled state itself, militarily speaking it is one of the regional frontrunners (Prunier 2008: 9).

The same patterns emerge when we consider Ethiopia's 1999 invasion of Somalia (and occupation of the central city of Baidoa). "Resistance was apparently beyond the powers of the Somalian 'state'" (Ray 2002: 64); rather unsurprising considering the Somali government even has a hard time enforcing peace in the most central quarters of its capital Mogadishu. Ethiopia "crossed the border to chase members of a fundamentalist group Al-Ittihad Al-Islam which has been fighting to unite Ethiopia's eastern Ogaden region with Somalia."^{xvi}

Regrettably, the list of interstate conflicts provided in this essay is far from exhaustive, and only superficially covers but two African regions (the Horn and central Africa). On an even more grim note, arguably, the most dangerous phase of these conflicts has yet to commence. Considering the economic possibilities provided by both state and individual looting, African Vultures have to provide their soldiers with comparably lucrative opportunities *after* withdrawal in order to prevent military unrest.^{xvii} Recalling the distrust and anxiety with which most neopatrimonial African states regard their own armed forces, we can see why for example Nigeria is continually involved in foreign military deployment: keeping soldiers away from the capital keeps the capital safe (Dietrich 2000). Worryingly, this mechanism can potentially turn into a destructive *perpetuum mobile*, encouraging continuous external involvement by a growing number of states. Moreover, the financial windfalls benefiting Vulture states render invasion

^{xiv} BBC News, "Chad army 'attacked Sudan forces'", 10 April 2007. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6539273.stm>, accessed on 23 December 2009.

^{xv} BBC News, "Chad army 'attacked Sudan forces'", 10 April 2007. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6539273.stm>, accessed on 23 December 2009.

^{xvi} BBC News, "Ethiopian troops in Somalian border raid", 9 March 1999. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/293630.stm>, accessed on 23 December 2009.

^{xvii} Junne, too, re-

forces basically self-funding, eliminating one of the last incentives for quick withdrawal and peaceful attitudes.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This essay's main aim has been to counterbalance the claim that it is "widely accepted that the nature of international conflict has fundamentally altered from interstate wars to intra-state civil conflict". This is a fallacy, and I have hypothesised that, perhaps unwittingly, Mary Kaldor's distinction between new and old wars has spawned an invalid binary way of looking at African conflicts. It has been suggested that the remarkable absence of "Darwinian processes of inter-state competition" has allowed fragile or failed states to persist, and that their presence has provided vulture states with unprecedented incentives to invade. Border security and maintaining neopatrimonial systems of governance appear to have been important motives. These significant interstate elements suggest we reconsider the inference that African wars, and the DRC's conflict in particular, are privatised network wars with little active state involvement. Looting resources enables military forces to be effectively self-sufficient, and soldiers' demands for continued opportunities to enrich themselves could lead to an ever-increasing number of interventions and invasions on the African continent.

Ali Mazrui lamented the 'insufficient tension and conflict between states', because this inhibited the development of strong nations, as opposed to the way centuries of interstate conflict did forge cohesive and capable states in Europe. Charles Tilly has famously remarked that "war made the state and the state made war" (Tilly 1975: 42). Ever-present danger required European states to develop, whereas African states for the longest period since their independence have operated in a rather placid international environment. Cramer, too, observes the disjunction "between the kind of path of state development envisaged in typical international visions of war to peace transitions [i.e. liberalisation and good governance]

fers to 'war as a way of life'. He notes that the "absence of law enforcement provides opportunities for all kind of shady trades: smuggling, trafficking, receiving, speculation, - activities which would fall away in the case of a return to stable statehood" (2009: 59).

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and the historical evidence on how successful states have actually developed” (2008: 15).

However, at the moment Africa’s international environment is a far cry removed from placid. Do Africa’s new interstate wars, like the early European ones, have the potential to spark considerable improvements in state capacity? And is its future indeed so bleak as to necessitate war to mould a nation? Will Africa, like Europe, one day consist of nations cast out of ‘blood and iron’ (Herbst 1990: 118)? Congo’s crisis has prompted *Africa Confidential* (1999: 1) to state that “pressures have intensified yet imply not a generalised collapse of Africa’s nation-states and the end of its borders, but rather a massive restructuring of the continent’s international system, which will strengthen some states and maybe obliterate others”. The way matters stand now, I fear that the international community is not willing to get involved in Africa’s disputes to the extent required to actually suppress the brutalities and interstate predation. However, it also seems unlikely that real territorial revisionism will be condoned, as the same apprehension that pervaded the members of the OAU in 1963 still immobilises the international community today.^{xviii} Tilly surmised that “the enormous majority of European states failed” (1975: 38), but although various African states have *de facto* ceased to exist, their sovereignty is preserved. The international community fears that systematically rewarding secession and conquest through recognition is far too likely to generate all-out anarchy in Africa. This is understandable, but it paralyses much of the state-building dynamics of war. Furthermore, I assume that vulture wars, because of the relatively limited commitments required and the easy money to be made, may just constitute another form of African rentierism, and are therefore more likely to undermine than to cement a strong African state. The future is not looking all too bright.

^{xviii} *The situation in Somalia confirms this concern completely: the official government is completely incapacitated and governs but a few blocks of Mogadishu. Actually functioning and de facto autonomous Somaliland, however, is recognised by not a single state.*

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