

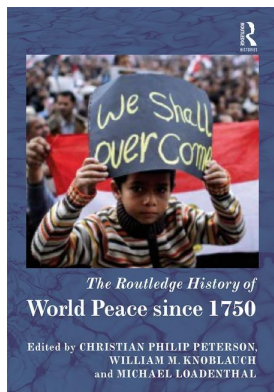
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UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT CONFLICT IN AFRICA

Trends, causes, and prospects

Leila Demarest and Amim Langer

Introduction

An important feature of Africa's post-independence history is undoubtedly the high number of violent conflicts.¹ Approximately 75 percent of African countries experienced internal armed conflict after gaining independence since the 1960s or 1970s. Even well into the twenty-first century, severe political tensions, violent government repression, and armed conflict continue to wreak havoc in numerous African countries. The relatively recent emergence of new violent conflicts in countries such as South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, are stark reminders of the daunting challenge that many African countries continue to face.

This chapter has two objectives. First, it aims to explain the main causes of recent violent conflicts in Africa. In this respect, it emphasizes how the dynamics of violent conflicts have changed over time, specifically, during, and after, the Cold War.² Second, it will reflect on the main challenges of peacebuilding and the future prospects for peace in Africa. Internal armed conflicts are difficult to resolve, and many ongoing conflicts are recurrences of previous conflicts (as the next section will examine).³ Since the 1990s, in an attempt to halt conflict recurrences, the international community has become increasingly involved in international peacebuilding in Africa and elsewhere. Hence, if anything, these observations underscore the daunting challenge African nations face in terms of building sustainable peace.

The evolution of violent conflicts in Africa (1945–present)

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) have jointly developed a comprehensive global conflict dataset that will be used in this chapter to analyze the evolution of violent conflicts in Africa in the post-World War II period. The UCDP/PRIO-dataset defines armed conflicts as violence between a state and a challenger that results in a minimum of twenty-five battle-related deaths per year. Figure 27.1 shows the evolution of armed conflicts in Africa between 1947 and 2014.⁴ It covers three types of armed conflict: Anticolonial conflicts, interstate conflicts, and internal conflicts. In the period following World War II, anticolonial liberation wars were the dominant type of conflict in Africa, even though the total number of countries affected by this type

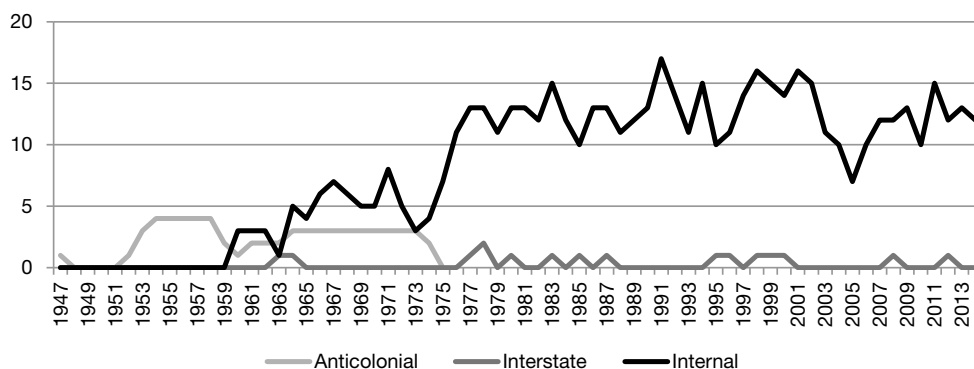


Figure 27.1 The evolution of armed conflicts in Africa (1947–2014)

Source: UCDP/PRIO armed conflict dataset V4.2016.

of violence remained relatively small (i.e., a maximum of four countries in a single year). Because Portuguese colonies gained independence later than Belgian, British, and French colonies, anticolonial conflicts in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique only started in the 1960s and lasted until the mid-1970s.

Following the end of the decolonization process in Francophone and Anglophone Africa in the 1960s, internal conflicts became the dominant type of armed conflict in Africa—a trend also observable in other parts of the world.⁵ As Figure 27.1 shows, the number of internal conflicts in Africa increased considerably in the 1970s and has remained relatively stable since then, roughly hovering between ten and fourteen active violent conflicts per year. While in the early 2000s the total number of violent conflicts declined sharply, from 2005 onwards, the emergence of several new and old conflicts brought the total number of conflicts again within this range. Moreover, the recent emergence of new conflicts in among others Mali (2012), the Central African Republic (2012), and South Sudan (2013) further quelled any remaining optimism related to the decline in conflicts that took place in the early 2000s. Thus, internal armed conflict has been the most important type of armed conflict in Africa since the 1960s, and it is likely to remain the predominant form of violence in the foreseeable future.

An important feature of armed conflicts in Africa is the high proportion of conflict recurrences. Figure 27.2 shows the evolution of conflict onsets and terminations for internal armed conflicts by distinguishing between conflicts that were not yet active the previous year and conflicts that were active the previous year, but ended in the same year.⁶ Conflicts are considered “terminated” when they have dropped below the threshold of twenty-five battle-related deaths. When the termination line (i.e., the gray line in Figure 27.2) is higher than the onset line (i.e., the black line in Figure 27.2), this implies a decline in the overall number of ongoing armed conflicts (see Figure 27.1). The volatility in both lines means that different conflicts determine the overall level of armed conflicts in Africa. In other words, this means that violent conflicts have not been confined to a select number of countries, but have affected a wide range of countries at different moments in time.

Regarding the number of conflict onsets, we can further distinguish between the onset of *new* conflicts and the recurrence of *old* ones. The UCDP/PRIO data program defines violent armed conflict as recurring when it involves the same actors and the same incompatibility;

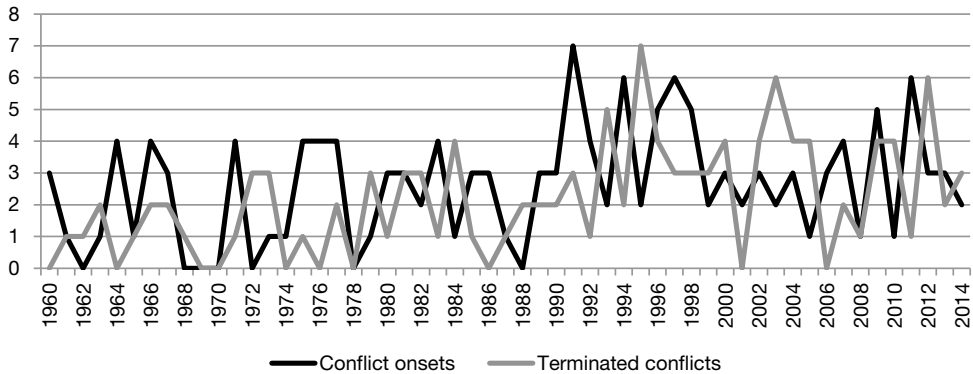


Figure 27.2 Conflict onset and termination (1960–2014)

Source: UCDP/PRIO armed conflict dataset V4.2016.

this includes either a struggle over controlling a particular territory (secession), seizing government control, or accomplishing both of these goals.⁷ An insurgency against the government, followed by a government take-over, and then a new insurgency against the “new” government is therefore considered as the same conflict. In Figure 27.3, the conflict onset line shown in Figure 27.2 has been disaggregated into the emergence of new conflicts and conflict recurrences. In 2011, for example, out of six conflict onsets, three were new conflicts, while three involved recurring conflicts. Figure 27.3 reveals that most conflicts that have emerged in the post-Cold War period were actually conflict recurrences.

The next section explains the main reasons why Africa has seen so many violent conflicts. Before explaining the main factors behind Africa’s contemporary violent conflicts, however, we will briefly discuss some of the main features of the conflicts that took place during the Cold War period. As shown in Figure 27.1, the Cold War was not so cold in Africa, with between ten and fourteen armed conflicts taking place in a single year. In the second part

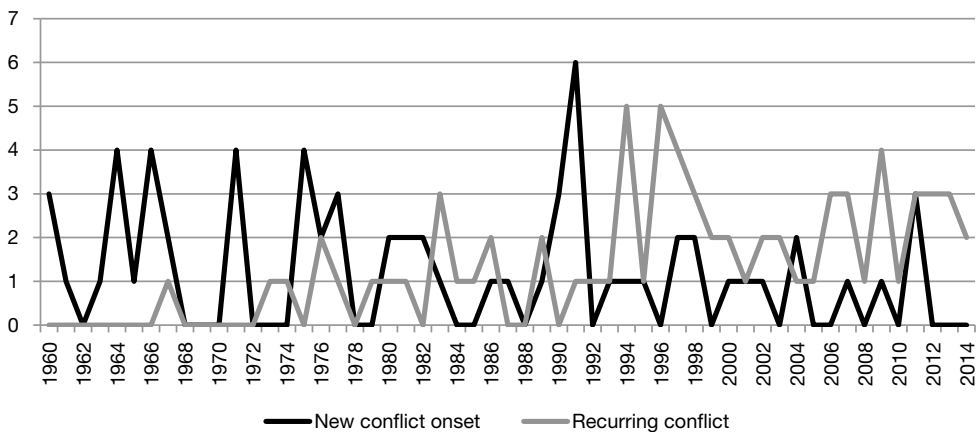


Figure 27.3 New versus recurring internal armed conflict in Africa (1960–2014)

Source: UCDP/PRIO armed conflict dataset V4.2016.

of this section, we discuss the main causes of contemporary conflicts, including flawed democratic transition processes, widespread poverty and economic decline, corruption and poor governance of natural resources, and the presence of severe socio-economic and political inequalities between ethnic and religious groups, also termed “Horizontal Inequalities.”⁸

Conflicts during the Cold War period

As more and more African countries achieved independence during the 1960s and 1970s, their leaders faced the daunting challenge to bring about rapid economic development, while at the same time building a coherent nation state.⁹ The latter issue was particularly difficult, given the fact that “inter-state boundaries were . . . artificialities at every point, as kingdoms, ethnic groups and families were dissected arbitrarily according to European whims and caprices.”¹⁰ Making matters worse in this respect was the fact that different ethnic groups and regions had different levels of economic development, a direct result of the colonial policy to invest almost exclusively in areas beneficial to the colonial masters. Furthermore, colonial rulers created sharp divisions between different groups by privileging particular ethnic or religious groups over others (see, for example, Belgian colonial policy in Rwanda and Burundi). These divisions between groups and their elites were transposed into the newly independent states which, combined with the absence of democratic cultures, contributed to a shift towards authoritarianism and military dictatorship across the continent.¹¹ At the same time interference from old colonial powers and new players such as the United States and the Soviet Union also influenced the political and economic trajectories of African states. In what follows, we will illustrate how colonial legacies and Cold War politics contributed to the emergence of the civil wars in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria.

One of the first major civil wars in Africa erupted in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 1960, DR Congo was led by the first prime minister of the country, Patrice Lumumba, who had won the multiparty elections in 1959.¹² Lumumba’s policies of national ownership and independence sharply clashed with Belgian interests, which were aimed at maintaining privileged economic access to the country. To undermine the Lumumba regime, Belgium started economically and militarily supporting secessionist movements in two mineral-rich provinces of DR Congo; i.e., Katanga and Kasai. The ensuing violent conflict led Lumumba and President Kasavubu to call on the UN for assistance. The failure of the UN to halt the Belgian military intervention led Lumumba to ask the Soviet Union for support. Opponents quickly labelled Lumumba a communist, and he was arrested by his army Chief of Staff, Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko, and was eventually killed in detention, with Belgian complicity.¹³ Mobutu later took over power in 1965 and installed a military dictatorship, which lasted until 1997.

In Nigeria, the North and South of the country were initially governed separately until Lord Lugard unified both regions in 1914.¹⁴ The North was mainly inhabited by Hausa-Fulani Muslims, while Christian groups inhabited the richer South; the Yoruba were the largest ethnic group in the West, and the Igbo dominated the East. The first years of Nigerian independence were characterized by severe instability, corruption, and distrust between regional leaders. A bloody coup in January 1966 brought in a military dictatorship that citizens perceived to be Igbo-controlled. Anti-Igbo riots broke out in the North, and as a result many Igbos fled to their home regions in the South-East of the country. This political turmoil was aggravated when the South-East of Nigeria declared independence as the state

of Biafra. The independence declaration marked the beginning of the Nigerian civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970. Yakubu Gowon, who had taken power in yet another coup d'état, quelled the uprising at a severely high death toll. After the civil war, Nigeria would continue to be characterized by military rule until the start of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

In Angola, the war of liberation against the Portuguese colonial power ended in 1975.¹⁵ Soon after gaining independence, however, violent conflict broke out between different groups wanting to control the state. The two largest parties were the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The MPLA received military support from the Soviet Union while the UNITA forces of Jonas Savimbi were backed by the United States. Both superpowers saw the conflict in terms of their ideological struggle and the Angolan civil war became known as a so-called "proxy war" (akin to Vietnam in the 1960s, or Afghanistan in the 1980s). Due to continued foreign support, the Angolan civil war lasted for decades. However, a noticeable change occurred towards the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, when both superpowers agreed to stop providing military support to their respective clients and started to push for peace negotiations. Despite the curtailment of foreign military support, the Angolan civil war continued unabated until the early 2000s. Interestingly, since the early 1990s, the conflict parties had found alternative means of financing their war efforts, with the MPLA relying on oil revenues and UNITA relying on revenues from diamonds.

The causes of contemporary violent conflicts

The Angolan civil war demonstrates how the underlying dynamics and rationale of conflicts appear to have changed in the post-Cold War period. In what follows, we will discuss the main causes of contemporary conflicts, focusing on the following four factors: Flawed democratic transitions, poverty and economic decline, corruption and poor governance of natural resources, and the presence of horizontal inequalities.

Flawed democratic transition processes

Although democracies are arguably the most stable and peaceful types of regimes, transition processes hold particular risks for political stability.¹⁶ The "third wave" of democratization occurred in Africa in the 1990s. While some countries (e.g., Ghana, Benin, Senegal, Zambia) were able to successfully introduce and consolidate a democratic system, in other countries democratization processes fueled instability and sometimes even resulted in violent conflicts. Successful democratization in Africa was mostly dependent on the existence of prior institutions on which stable democratic rule could be built.¹⁷ Countries that had maintained some degree of political openness and accountability before the 1990s were often more successful in their democratization process. Moreover, countries where democracy was largely imposed by external actors during peace negotiations were most at risk of conflict recurrence, particularly if national elections were contested.¹⁸

Many examples demonstrate that international emphasis on multiparty elections to promote peace in Africa has often failed to ensure political stability or democratic governance.¹⁹ Consider Angola. While the 1992 presidential elections aimed to end the long-running civil war, ultimately, these elections proved to be the starting point for a resurgence of the rebellion. In particular, when UNITA leader Savimbi lost in the first round of the presidential elections, he returned to armed struggle with his still mobilized forces.

Likewise, in Rwanda, the Arusha Accords of 1993 foresaw the conduct of elections as a crucial step in ending the Tutsi rebellion against the Hutu government. The prospect of losing these elections led Hutu extremists to incite ethnic hatred and carry out a well-prepared genocide in 1994, which resulted in an estimated death toll of at least half a million people.²⁰ In Liberia, post-civil war elections in 1997 reinforced the position of the (former) authoritarian ruler Charles Taylor, who continued his repressive rule, with a second civil war erupting in 2000.

The situation in South Sudan, Africa's newest state, further underlines the challenges of democratic transition. South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan in 2011 six years after the warring parties signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In the intermediate period, the UN and other external actors supported the development of the South Sudanese government institutions. However, shortly after gaining independence, a civil war broke out in 2013 between two factions of the former South Sudanese People's Liberation Army. On retrospect, the new independent government was poorly prepared to handle internal tensions.²¹ While the international community was an early, strong advocate for holding multiparty elections to increase the ruling regime's legitimacy, they paid scant attention to the severe rifts between South Sudanese leaders, widespread political corruption, and the state's inability to provide for its citizens. From the start, the regime was a democratic state only in name, not in substance.

These case studies illustrate that elections are crucial periods that can trigger violent internal armed conflict because they often induce zero-sum competition between divided political elites. However, economic disparity is another important cause of political upheaval and violent conflict.

Poverty and economic decline

A low level of GDP per capita is among the most robust predictors of civil war occurrence.²² In turn, violent internal conflict severely hampers development in conflict-affected regions.²³ This dynamic can leave countries trapped in recurring cycles of conflict (i.e., the conflict trap).²⁴ In the Central African Republic and Libya, for example, recent conflicts have brought development back to 1990-levels, destroying all economic progress made in previous years.²⁵ Because of the recurring insurgencies that DR Congo has faced since the 1990s, the country's 2014 per capita GDP was the same as in 1990. Finally, in South Sudan, GDP per capita measures have declined sharply since independence.

The 1970s was a time of economic crisis in Africa; the crash of oil prices and drastic declines in the value of primary commodity exports on the world market put severe strains on African economies. In addition, most African countries saw their debt increase rapidly to unsustainable levels by the 1980s, forcing them to implement Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as a condition to continued economic and financial aid by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These SAPs generally curtailed public spending and promoted economic liberalization and privatization; they also led to increased unemployment and aggravated African citizens' poor living conditions.²⁶ Socio-economic deprivation fueled resistance against incumbents and constituted an important motivation for participation in insurgencies against the state in the 1990s.

Low levels of development are often also associated with weak states, which in turn are unable to deter rebel challengers with military power, or buy off opponents by distributing revenue through patronage channels.²⁷ In addition, weak states often do not control the

peripheral regions of their territory and it is quite often in such remote rural regions that rebellions tend to originate.²⁸ The volatile Sahel region demonstrates this dynamic: It is characterized by low state penetration and rebel groups from different country origins maraud the region. The power of African states also declined during the 1990s, as SAPs commonly cut government spending and limited their involvement in the market.²⁹ This erosion of state power contributed to its loss of the monopoly of violence. In short, economic discontent and low state capacity made armed rebellion increasingly viable in the 1990s. However, poverty and underdevelopment as such do not necessarily cause violent conflict. Instead, they constitute a fertile environment in which contestations over wealth, state resources, and political power can escalate into violent conflict.

Corruption and poor governance of natural resources

The 1990s also saw the emergence of natural resources as a way to finance rebel groups after support from Cold War-era superpowers dried up. When US funding ended, UNITA rebels in Angola turned to the diamond trade to finance their continued struggle. The bloody civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone were similarly financed with rents from diamonds and timber. As a response to the “blood diamond” trade, the Kimberley Process was set up in 2000 as a voluntary agreement that obliges state governments and industries to verify the origin of diamonds to halt the financing of rebel groups. The role of natural resources has led some scholars to claim that rebellions in Africa after the Cold War were mainly driven by rebels’ greed and economic motivations.³⁰

Yet, the exploitation of resource rents is not only the prerogative of rebel groups; many African rulers commonly syphon off their countries’ wealth to personal accounts abroad. The corruption of political elites may lead to grievances among local populations which in turn can fuel political mobilization and possibly violence. Grievances may also emerge because of discontent about the distribution of the benefits of natural resource extraction. For instance, in Nigeria’s oil-rich Niger Delta, local communities suffer from pollution and loss of livelihoods, but the vast majority of oil revenues are being transferred to the Federal Government.³¹ Resistance against the marginalization of the region that began in the 1990s fueled a rebel insurgency in the 2000s. A peace agreement and an amnesty deal were implemented in 2009, but violence has resurfaced in recent years. This is hardly surprising given that the local population continues to be negatively affected by oil production, while rents continue to be accrued by the Federal Government and corrupt elites in and outside of the Niger Delta.

The consequences of poor governance and corruption are especially visible for oil, gas, and mineral resources. Marginalization and weak state capacity in regions where such resources are being developed can incentivize rebels to take up arms against the state. Yet, mismanagement and contention can also arise over land and other renewable natural resources. At the root, these conflicts commonly revolve around wealth distribution. Indeed, poor governance of natural resources in Africa typically coincides with the favoring of one ethnic group over others.

The presence of severe horizontal inequalities

A range of studies has shown that ethnic and religious diversity as such does not increase the risk of conflict.³² However, when specific ethnic or religious groups are systemically

marginalized or when there are sharp group-based or horizontal inequalities, the risk of violent conflict and civil war increases significantly.³³ As discussed above, many African states at the time of independence were characterized by severe inequalities between regions and cultural groups. Yet, new ruling elites often did little to address these inequalities; more often than not they even favored their own ethnic group members with positions in power and economic investments in their home regions.³⁴ The presence of severe horizontal inequalities has been associated with a range of conflicts in Africa, including among others in Chad, Sudan, and Uganda.³⁵ In the post-Cold War period, economic decline and democratization pressures led to new contestations over existing inequalities.

In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, the death of the former authoritarian ruler Houphouët-Boigny and the subsequent transition to multiparty democracy fueled underlying tensions that had previously been restrained under a single party state.³⁶ The North of the country had always been less developed than the South, but many migrants from the North lived in the South and worked in the important cocoa export economy. When the price of cocoa collapsed on the world market, unemployment and local competition for land rose in the South. In addition, political leaders from the South tried to capitalize on local resentment to win support among their constituents. They increasingly employed an exclusionary political discourse against "non-Ivoirians" (migrants from the North) to gain votes, which led to the exclusion of Alassane Ouattara, the Northern presidential candidate, from the 2000 election. Heightened tensions led to the outbreak of civil war between North and South in 2002. While the war ended two years later, the violence led to the *de facto* partition of the country. Reunification elections in 2011, again supported by external actors, such as the UN, led to a resurgence of violence in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011, when incumbent president Gbagbo refused to admit his defeat.³⁷ International intervention after the 2011 elections brought Gbagbo's opponent, President Ouattara to power.

In Eastern Congo, land has long been an important resource; yet land rights remain contested.³⁸ Distrust exists between indigene communities in the region and Rwandan migrants who have lived in the country for decades. The Rwandan elites were favored by the Mobutu regime, which saw them as local power brokers in the East. As a consequence, they were able to acquire important properties under his regime. In the 1980s and 1990s Mobutu lost his hold on the regime due to decreasing revenues to distribute among local elites. At the same time, the corrupt dictator lost support from foreign backers who, after the Cold War, now demanded democratization. With the introduction of multiparty elections, indigene-settler land rights became strongly contested with local politicians inciting for violence. As the settlers were in the minority, democratic transition put them under increased pressure and national politicians turned against them for electoral gain.

It was also in the Eastern Congo that Laurent-Désiré Kabila started a rebellion that would oust Mobutu in 1997.³⁹ He was backed by the Tutsi-led Rwandan government of Paul Kagame and supported by the settler Tutsi community in the East, who hoped to regain political and economic power. Kabila's troops marched across the country, barely opposed by the weak national army, and conquered the capital of Kinshasa. He became president, yet turned against his former Rwandan allies as well as the settlers. These moves led to the second Congo war, in which Kabila was assassinated and succeeded by his son Joseph. While the war officially ended in 2002, various rebel groups remain active in the Congo and cause instability and insecurity for local populations. The unresolved land rights issue continues to fuel much of the local violence. In addition, Eastern Congo's rich mineral resources have formed an important financing source for rebel groups.

As the examples of Côte d'Ivoire and DR Congo demonstrate, democratization processes can engender politics of exclusion. Economic decline due to export failings and cuts in government expenditures may reinforce existing socio-economic cleavages and fuel contestation over resources between cultural groups. These issues frequently make their way into the new electoral arena, often accompanied by inflammatory ethnic discourse and violence. In the context of poverty and weak states, these factors open the path to civil war.

The challenges of sustainable peacebuilding in Africa

While new forms of instability and conflict emerged in Africa in the 1990s, the end of the Cold War also led to the revitalization of the UN Security Council and new commitments towards peacebuilding on the continent—a shift reflected in UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's 1992 Agenda for Peace report. Although the international community has increasingly intervened in conflict countries in Africa in order to restore or maintain peace and stability, not all conflict countries receive equal attention and interest. Indeed, one common critique is that the UN and other major powers principally intervene in African conflict countries when their own strategic interests are threatened or when they perceive there to be potential political or economic benefits, and not primarily for the protection of the local population.⁴⁰ To some extent this critique may explain why sometimes international interventions have not materialized or have only happened at a very late stage or in a limited manner. For example, the intervention in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 was notoriously late.⁴¹ Yet, even when Western powers decide to intervene, their recipes for peace have not always proved successful.

As discussed in the previous section, since the 1990s, the international community has mainly adopted a model of political and economic liberalization as a means to build sustainable peace. One crucial aspect of the political liberalization process is the organization of multiparty elections, which have sometimes led to the re-ignition of violence between (former) conflict parties (e.g., Angola, Rwanda, Liberia). Political liberalization is often complemented by important economic reforms. The proposed economic reforms to a large extent continue to mirror the policies of the SAPs of the 1980s, and are aimed at among other things reducing public expenditures and stimulating private sector growth.⁴² However, rather than bringing rapid relief and improvement in living standards, these policies often lead to a worsening of the socio-economic situation of the population.

While the introduction of multiparty elections is usually widely advocated and supported by the international community in post-conflict countries, much less support is given to the long-term build-up of democratic institutions (cf. the case of South Sudan). Further, the proposed political reforms are often also criticized because they appear to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach that risks jeopardizing national ownership and derailing local peace processes.⁴³ Rather than imposing Western models of governance, scholars have increasingly argued for more local engagement and ownership of peace processes. The idea here is that local actors and stakeholders will bring a more detailed understanding of local conflict dynamics and possible avenues for peace.⁴⁴ Similarly, the proposed economic reforms undermine the power of African states and hinder elites' ability to distribute resources to their clients.⁴⁵ This, in turn, can fuel political divisions as was the case during the 1990s (e.g., DR Congo). In addition, the "standard" economic policies advocated in post-conflict countries often reinforce existing inequalities by favoring relatively economically advantaged regions and (ethnic) groups.⁴⁶ Indeed, evidence suggests that inequalities between the Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, a crucial factor in the genocide, have actually increased since the end of

the civil war.⁴⁷ Thus, while the international community continues to promote political and economic liberalization as key recipes for durable peace, at least in the short term, these policies may actually result in more economic and political tensions, divisions, and grievances.

Conclusion: Future prospects of peace?

Since the end of the Cold War recurring internal armed conflicts have cost the lives of millions of African citizens. While some African conflict countries have been able to make the transition into stable, peaceful democracies, in other countries, the prospects for durable peace remain dire (e.g., DR Congo and Sudan). International actors, such as the UN, have increased their efforts towards peacebuilding in Africa, but in many countries the cycle of violence has proven extremely difficult to break. Arguably, an important reason for this has been that the prescribed peace “medicine”—i.e., widespread political and economic liberalization and reforms—often has had the perverse effect of introducing new tensions, inequalities, and grievances into already fragile societies, thereby increasing the risk of conflict recurrence.

The above analysis leads to a number of pertinent policy recommendations. First, it is crucial that international donors and “peacebuilders,” such as the UN or other international actors, give more systematic and comprehensive consideration to possible social, economic, and political externalities of the policies they are advocating in post-conflict countries.

Second, in order for post-conflict countries to become peaceful and stable democracies, more long-term engagement is needed from the international community. The development and strengthening of democratic state structures and institutions (e.g., judicial and legislative branches of government) is a long-term process and hence requires long-term engagement and support. Although this risks creating dependencies (e.g., continued UN presence in Liberia after the end of the civil war in 2003), continued support is often necessary to halt reoccurrence of violence during potentially volatile situations, including elections and government crises. It is only by adequately preventing relapses into violence that stable democratic institutions can ultimately be given a chance to develop.

Third, economic policies should not only aim to improve economic growth and states’ finances, but should also aim to provide inclusive growth, to reduce poverty and to decrease horizontal inequalities. While these objectives are not mutually exclusive, they may at times require difficult trade-offs. From a conflict perspective, the reduction of horizontal inequalities may be particularly important. Indeed, instead of exclusively promoting those sectors of the economy where most growth can be expected, long-term investment in poorer areas of the country should also be encouraged in order to keep horizontal inequalities in check, thereby reducing the risk of conflict recurrence.

However, sustainable peacebuilding does not only require well-designed and timed reforms, but it also requires political willingness and engagement. This does not only concern domestic political elites, but also international actors, including the UN, and third-state governments. Rhetorical commitment towards international peacebuilding therefore needs to be backed up by sufficient resources to create self-sustaining cycles of peace.

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