2000

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War and Recovery in Africa: Getting Beyond the Bitter Lessons

Hashim Gibrill
Clark Atlanta University

God knows that we in Africa are sick and tired of war and strife.1 Kwame Nkrumah, 1957

War and Recovery from War: The Pressing Agenda

Wars, conflict resolution, and recovery from wars are conspicuous features of Africa's current political and economic condition. No region of Africa is free from this ongoing dialectic. Africans are participants in an alternation between relative political stability and open warfare, conflict and conciliation, destruction and rebuilding. The widespread conflict is having a range of dire impacts. Often targeting combatants and non-combatants alike, casualties are numerous. Over four million Africans have been killed in war over the past two decades.2 Impelled by these conflicts, large-scale movements of people flee within and across national borders, resulting in Africa being home to approximately five million refugees or internally displaced persons; one third of the world's total population of refugees.3 The violence is taking the lives, violating the person, destroying the livelihoods, and fracturing the social structures of millions of Africans. Already-contentious political institutions and processes are imploding. Already- marginal economies are being further undermined.4


With the warfare and destruction have come strenuous efforts to abate the conflicts, stop the bloodshed, shelter those forced from their homes, reconcile participants, recreate political institutions, replant land, re-launch industries, and rebuild infrastructure. In West Africa, precedents in regional peacemaking and conflict resolution are being established on the ground and diplomatically.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) is revising long held positions regarding non-intervention in internal wars. The United Nations (UN) is readily legitimizing these regional efforts. Post-war reconciliation and reconstruction are underway in former conflict areas across the continent. Africa’s political elders, non-governmental organizations, researchers and commentators are producing important studies of the many conflicts, and blueprints for transformation. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan has presented his own comprehensive overview of the extent, causes and impacts of Africa’s wars, and required interventions to secure long-term peace.\(^5\) In sum, there is a growing, vigorous effort to learn lessons and put in place new strategies of conflict prevention, intervention, reconciliation and recovery in Africa.

Clearly, Africa’s wars are not a unique phenomenon. The "dirty" wars of Latin America, the "killing fields" of Cambodia, and the mass graves of the many conflicts in the former Yugoslavia testify to the universality of indiscriminately violent, hateful warfare. However, as part of the established tradition of portraying Africa as grotesque and barbarous, there is an overwhelming tendency in the Western media to focus almost exclusively on Africa's wars and despair, to the virtual exclusion of all else taking place on the continent. While the harrowing images from Africa's many war fronts portray real death, real destruction, and real despair, all too often, the final representation is that all is viciousness, famine and collapse, requiring external intervention, even a recolonization of Africa.\(^6\) Going largely unremarked is the successful mediation of conflicts, humanitarian assistance

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to refugees and neighbors, recovery from war and growing regional cooperation. Little attention has been given to the ending of settler political hegemony, the growth of Africa’s social and economic infrastructure, demands for and progress towards meaningful popular participation in politics, and other post-colonial and post-war progressive political and economic developments.7

Nevertheless, and in spite of the concrete achievements, the exigencies of post-conflict reconciliation and rebuilding are serving to multiply and deepen development challenges. The institutionalization of consensual political processes, the consolidation of national and continental sovereignty, the broadly beneficial utilization of scarce national resources, agricultural, industrial and technological innovation and growth, and regional integration are all being held hostage to the instability, disruption, destruction and terror of widespread warfare.

It is broadly recognized that “the causes of the myriad conflicts on the continent have probably not been thoroughly researched and understood” which has resulted in an urgent need for systematic analyses of “the complexities of the issues of conflict, peace and security.”8 Attaining lasting conflict resolution and sustained recovery involves strategies and policies derived from thoroughgoing, engaged analyses of complex, conflictual conditions. Thus, there is a pressing need to explore the underlying causes, characteristics, trends, dominant and subordinate interests, strategies, achievements and setbacks intrinsic to the problematic of war and recovery in Africa.

Currently a range of suggestions is being proffered regarding conflict prevention and resolution. Proposed and active strategies include an African intervention force, pacification by regional hegemons, proactive, preemptive intervention by UN peacekeeping forces, sidelining the state, and even re-colonization. These and other related strategies deserve careful examination to elaborate both the possibilities they hold for confronting the critical needs of conflict resolution and recovery, and to expose partisan, ideological, authoritarian and neo-imperial designs. This is not a call for dispassionate deliberations. There has already been too much futility that has left too many lives damaged and wasted.

In this pursuit, we seek to learn from and carry the existing analyses on the immediate level of issues, participants, character, impact, and ultimately research needs, forward. These analyses must get beyond the rush of events and reactions,


8 “Peace and Security in Africa,” Association of African Political Scientists Newsletter, May - August 1997, 1
and seek essential broad causes, dynamics, and new possibilities in philosophies, strategies, and achievements. This is where systematic, policy-relevant lessons can be elicited. These lessons can illuminate the proximate and fundamental causes of Africa's many wars, the survival and coping strategies of displaced communities, along with the requirements and results of humanitarian and military intervention. Furthermore, these analyses would also expose vested interests that must be overcome or deflected to resolve conflicts, reconcile and reintegrate combatant parties into civil society, and resettle the displaced.

The discussion that follows has two thrusts. One line of analysis centers on the lessons and continuing research needs regarding the causes, character and impact of Africa's wars, and the strategies and achievements of conflict resolution and post-war recovery. The other component of the discussion consists of notions towards confronting and seeking to get beyond Africa's debilitating warfare. In constructing both parts of this discussion, the admonishment is noted that "the interface between all the relevant forces in each catastrophe is so perplexing that only the ideologue claims to understand completely how and why things 'fall apart', or how to put things back together again."9

Africa's contemporary wars have diverse causes, involve an array of participants, and are having multiple, long-lasting impacts. In addition, post-conflict transformations are fraught with obstacles, challenges, and setbacks. This totality of war, warfare, resolution, and recovery has to be understood in its broad complexity. The following chart represents an initial analytical step, outlining the dynamic array of key actors, processes and issues. The challenge then is to elaborate the manifestations and interactions among these variables. What is the established empirical record? What can we assert with some confidence? What do we still need to understand? What can we do as scholars and activists?

## Chart 1: War and Recovery: The Analytical Array

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<td>Rescuers</td>
<td><strong>Initial contacts</strong></td>
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**Pressing Research needs**
- Women and war;
- Children and war;
- Protagonists;
- Victims;
- Rescuers;
War, Warfare and the State in Africa

War is a complex, dynamic phenomenon, and Africa’s wars defy simple depictions. But they have core realities that can be explored. In a broad overview, it is possible to say much regarding the causes, types, extent, participants and impacts of Africa’s wars.

As of January 2000, fourteen of Africa’s fifty-four countries were wracked by on-going warfare, or could be said to be in a situation of recent and precarious peace amid fragile recovery efforts. At the level of observable events, these many wars have diverse immediate causes. The armed conflicts constitute, variously, struggles for broadened political participation, economic fairness, an end to corrupt and repressive governance, the reversal of historic subordination, the revision of national boundaries, self-seeking dominance over rivalries, and cynical, strategic maneuvering of external, regional and non-African states. These violent political struggles for dominance, equality, national sovereignty, strategic access or pillage are concretized in diverse internal and inter-state conflicts across Africa.

Most often Africa’s current wars are combinations of nationalist and guerrilla insurgencies, sectional and factional conflicts, and anti-insurgency campaigns. They involve governments, opposing forces, and numerous supporting and secondary actors. They vary in intensity, being characterized as both sporadic and sustained warfare.

They are most often “internal” or “domestic” or “civil” wars because they are largely confined within national or narrow sub-regional boundaries. Africa’s

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10 This chart only sustained, intense political violence, excluding the many examples of violent government repression of political opponents in situations of putative peace in the context of military and civilian led politics.
internal wars include national liberation struggles in which "armed militants" wage war in the context of widespread, popular resistance to the ruling regime. In response to this insurgency, indiscriminate government campaigns target armed nationalist forces and their supporters, and invariably involve violent retribution and brutality against large sections of the population identified by the regime as sympathizers or collaborators. The national liberation struggles against colonial and settler-colonial regimes in Algeria, Guinea Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique, South Africa, Rhodesia, and Namibia, and the long-standing Anyangyang rebellion in Sudan provide various examples of the causes, trajectories, warfare, and outcomes of Africa's national liberation and anti-insurgency wars.

Africa's internal wars also include ethnic and regional conflicts in which much, if not the entire nation is caught up in combat and flight. These conflicts, among sub-national groups and factions, involve rival forces struggling for political, economic, or social dominance. The periodic conflagrations in Rwanda and Burundi are such an example.

Other internal wars consist of sectional and factional insurgencies and militant revolts against ruling regimes in the context of often-terrorized populations. Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Angola, and contemporary Algeria provide various examples of these wars. Internal conflicts in Nigeria and Ethiopia have involved central governments battling against militant secessionist efforts.

While the domestic territory may serve as the primary location for conflict, neighboring states are often involved as safe bases for insurgent forces, havens for fleeing populations, conduits for forces and arms, and supporters and conciliators. Africa's internal wars do not take place within a vacuum. External manipulations and direct involvement impact contentious domestic situations. Often inter-state wars, in which sovereign states battle each other, take place in concert with internal wars. Sovereign states battle over borders, control of resources, regional hegemony, ethnic and racial solidarity and leadership.

**War and the State in Africa**

Why are African states so wracked with war? A past generation of African nationalists and political leaders saw the roots of Africa's wars in the psychological trauma, class contradictions, racist and ethnic oppressions, and imperialist machinations of colonialism and neocolonialism. More recent portrayals and

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policy positions regard Africa's widespread warfare as a "retreat from modernity," or a reflection of the inability of Africans to engage in consensual rule, or a core dimension of the modernization process.

There are both astute insights and false leads in these diverse explanations. Space does not permit that they be elaborated here. Whatever else it is, war is a profound crisis of the state. The immediate and particular causes of Africa's wars vary. Yet, as a collective phenomenon, the pervasive resort to sustained violence to maintain or challenge the political order tells us much about the contemporary state in Africa. War has its roots in the nature of the contemporary state in Africa, in terms of conflict among contending forces, or campaigns to suppress subordinate social forces, or the struggle over advantage and domination and liberation in context of new state structure.

Appreciating the complexities of the African State is a core analytical requirement of our problematic. For present purposes, it is argued that any systematic analysis of current political structures, processes, and capabilities in Africa must conclude that the contemporary African State is most often a composite, penetrated and contested state. This state exists within a global and regional structure of unequal individual and conjoined states. It also exists with various regime types (civilian, military, popular, authoritarian, one-party, multi-party), ideological elaborations (socialist, democratic socialist, nationalist, monarchist, redemptive), and marginalized economies.

The contemporary African State exhibits a complexity of political and authoritative structures. These structures include the formally sovereign, post-colonial states, largely demarcated by European imperialist penetration, and concretized in the broad agreement of Africa's post-colonial leadership to accept this interstate framework. There are also pre-existing, historic states and other political structures which, while no longer sovereign entities, commingle with, and challenge, contemporary states in terms of loyalty, legitimacy, efficacy, law, administration, and salience to the political and economic lives of citizens.


The contemporary African state is also a penetrated state, because its sovereignty is often significantly compromised. Political processes are manipulated by external interests via the sponsorship of compliant leaders, political parties and media, through covert or overt intervention, and through the power to dictate national priorities and policies intrinsic to Africa's current subordinated position in the global economic order (international division of labor), manifested most prominently in the continent's aid dependency and "debt peonage."

The African State is also a challenged state as it is the open objective of deep-seated struggles among contradictory and fractious dominant and subordinate social forces. Intrinsic to the contemporary state in Africa is an ongoing struggle for hegemony.14 In all states, on a global basis, hegemony is something that has to be recreated and shored up on a daily basis through processes of socialization, indoctrination, legislation, and by police and military action.15 The domestic struggle for hegemony includes the contested ability of a politicized social force to establish and sustain its political, economic, and cultural dominance, project its ideology, and defend its felt needs in a given local political, economic, legal, and administrative formation. In much of Africa, domestic hegemony, and the political, economic, and social hierarchies it encapsulates, are only tentatively in place or still up for broad contestation. Interstate hegemonic struggles also impact domestic struggles for dominance through indirect intervention and neo-imperialism.

Political instability is intrinsic to the current state in Africa, as the struggle for hegemony is sharply ongoing. This struggle for hegemony continues on a daily basis in terms of the factions, fractions, perceptions, battle lines, and contentions within regularized politics. Politics can, and all too often does, become war when those currently holding the reins of state power are mightily challenged, or when there has been a steady, prolonged escalation of political violence to contain growing challenges, or when destabilization is orchestrated by external forces pursuing their own nefarious agendas. Authoritarianism, intolerance of opposition,


15Hegemony as a state of affairs portrays a social order "in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations." Gwynn Williams, quoted in Ralph Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society, (London: Quartet Books, 1973), 162.
fragile and ineffectual political institutions, preponderance of rhetoric over substance are all core facets of Africa's contemporary politics.16

The core characteristics of the state in Africa also expose the complexities and intractability of the root causes of Africa's many wars. Therefore strategies have to be fashioned that recognize these characteristics and their many specific empirical variations. The crux of the matter is that intrinsic conflict has to be managed, and the structural weaknesses and tensions of current state structures have to be transcended. We have more to say in this regard.

Africa's Wars: A Brief Overview

Algeria

In Algeria the current civil war between the armed forces of the military-lead state, state-armed militia and the militant forces of resurgent political Islam is essentially a struggle over political ideology and the distribution of national resources. Thus, it has cultural and class dimensions. The conflict has international ideological and strategic dimensions in terms of external support for both the Algerian state and for the Islamist militants; and due to the presence of Algerians in France, the conflict is also affecting domestic French politics in the form of anti-immigrant, anti-Islamic legislation, hostile police action, and rabid verbal and physical attacks on Algerians and other Africans by racist political parties and hate groups.

Sierra Leone and Liberia

The decade-long turmoil in Sierra Leone and Liberia began as insurgencies against discredited, authoritarian regimes. They rapidly became complicated, vicious wars in which the armed forces of reconstituted transitional and elected governments have engaged in alliances and battles with insurgents, militias, mercenaries and sub-regional peacekeepers. Also involved as advisors, observers, conciliators, rescuers covert arms suppliers and assistance providers have been forces and representatives of the US, Britain, the OAU, and the UN. As in other wars, prominent supporting actors include arms dealers, oil and mining corporations, diamond smugglers and overseas communities. In addition, as in all the various wars across Africa, many groups in civil society (religious organizations, women's organizations, overseas communities) and foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have sought to provide refuge and craft peace in the midst of conflict.

More specifically in Sierra Leone, the war among the national army, multinational peacekeeping and insurgent forces, local militia groups, South African, British and other foreign mercenaries is part ethnic and class based sectional struggle, part inter-state combative diplomacy, part self-serving brigandage, and part cynical collusion among soldiers of fortune, diamond smugglers and mining companies. The war has significant continental and international facets. Precedents in regional diplomacy and peacekeeping are being set or solidified. Also, due to a bungled attempt to cover-up British involvement in the conflict, the nascent Labour government faced an early crisis of credibility and statecraft.

South Africa

South Africa’s national liberation struggle against the Apartheid State was, firstly, a sectional struggle driven by profound racist oppression and class exploitation. The conflict had related underlying sectional and factional dimensions revolving around ideological, ethnic, and class schisms and solidarity within and among contending racial groups. The war for national liberation also had major inter-state, Pan-African, and Cold War dimensions in terms of continental and global anti-racist solidarity and struggles for strategic, economic, and ideological hegemony.

Rwanda and Burundi

In Rwanda and Burundi bitter ethnic and class divisions drive the episodic, explosive political violence. These historical enmities are interacting with transnational and sub-regional political solidarity and rivalries, resulting in violent domestic and inter-state politics. Similar, often related, insurgencies and inter-state alliances are a central facet of the longstanding struggle for political dominance and territorial integrity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sudan and Somalia

Race, religious and class forces drive the civil war in Sudan in an historical struggle over political dominance and autonomy. A clear international dimension is also present in the form of external support for the contending forces, and aggressive, punitive United States economic and political diplomacy. In Somalia a primarily sectional conflict pits clans against clans in a competition for political dominance and territorial autonomy.

Angola and Mozambique

The generation-long wars in Angola and Mozambique illustrate the range of participants and contentious issues involved in Africa's wars. Both conflicts began in the 1960s as primarily national liberation struggles among
competing nationalist forces and against the weak but intransigent imperial state, Portugal. Once formal national sovereignty had been won, the conflicts transformed into intertwined domestic struggles for political dominance and control of mineral and other prized national resources, and a regional war of neo-imperialist rivalry and destabilization. These conflicts have ranged Marxist-influenced state forces against contending domestic subordinate nationalist and insurgent forces. External states openly or covertly involved in the conflicts have been apartheid South Africa, Zaire, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Other significant participants have included the regional Frontline States, Portugal, and the UN. Supporting actors have included the numerous arms dealers, oil and mining corporations, diamond smugglers and overseas communities. Core contentious interests have centered on domestic and sub-regional ethnic, racial and class antagonisms, control of natural resources, Cold War strategic and ideological struggles, and the configuration of post-colonial state structures.

There is much that needs to be elaborated regarding the specifics of Africa’s current wars. The immediate causes, the array of belligerents and supporting actors, and the plight of the many communities caught up in the warfare, all require detailed, committed research.

The Ethics and Characteristics of Africa’s Wars

There is also much to reflect on as regards the character of warfare in Africa. A central realization is that Africa’s wars can be distinguished by ethical considerations that focus on the objectives of the war and the character of the warfare. Not all wars are unjust; not all means are legitimate. In this ethical calculation, ideological and humanitarian considerations usually dominate our reasoning. It can be argued on ethical grounds that armed liberation struggles against intransigent racist, exploitative states (e.g. apartheid South Africa, Rhodesia, colonial Algeria) or violently repressive, sectional, corrupt regimes (Sudan, Zaire), are justifiable and legitimate responses of oppressed and exploited peoples. On the other hand, those wars that degenerate into largely rapacious, nihilistic insurgencies (Sierra Leone, Liberia), genocidal outburst of inter-communal hatred (Rwanda, Burundi), or drag on interminably and viscously (Angola, Algeria) must be condemned for the destructive conflicts they have become, whatever the validity of original motivating factors.

Many of Africa’s wars, however, are not readily classified as just or criminal conflicts. In these cases, the availability of other avenues to redress legitimate grievances, and the impact of war in terms of casualties, displaced communities, the level of destruction, are among the core bases of ethical evaluation.
Multiple local and external belligerents and supporting players are involved in Africa’s wars. National armies, palace guards, insurgent and irregular forces, mercenaries, military advisors, arms merchants, financiers, mining concessionaires, exile communities and international peacekeepers are all prominent participants. There are also the rural and urban communities, individuals, organizations and personnel caught up in the warfare as targets, evacuees, and assistance providers; all engaged in a tortuous relationship with the protagonists.

The effects of war in Africa are many, profound and long term. A common feature is the brutality, summary justice, and large-scale refugee condition occasioned by Africa’s wars. The warfare is often indiscriminately vicious, causing large numbers of civilian casualties and giving rise to millions of refugees and displaced people.

Africa has approximately 13 percent of the world’s population; yet 35 percent of the world’s refugees and displaced men, women and children are African. Put another way, 1-in-10 of continental Africa’s 700 million people has currently been forced to flee their homes. Broad estimates of those killed in Africa’s wars over the last 20 years range up to 4 million. Of this number, at least 3 million were civilians caught up in the bloodshed. Accommodating refugee movements can undermine already fragile political and economic structures in the host states that are often equally stressed communities.

Small arms proliferation has militarized civil societies, with destabilizing and harrowing results. Brigandage has become an act of war, and even a way of life, for many belligerents. More than 20 million land mines continue to kill and maim tens of thousands every year, in many cases after conflicts have been significantly muted or resolved. Critical livestock is similarly being ravaged. Families have disintegrated, and social structures shattered. Professionals, scientists, teachers, poets, novelists, journalists, and the intelligentsia in general have fled or been violently eliminated.

History and sociology inform us that in times of war, socially sanctioned and acceptable behavior is vitiated by what heretofore would be regarded as illegitimate, on the very margins of society. Societies are traumatized. Historic relations between parents and children, leaders and citizens, priests and followers and among neighbors break down. Your neighbors are killers; your pastor may be a killer; you are a killer; you are scarred; you are scared; you are bitter; or you are numb; or you have a complex range of conflicting emotions. All of this has resulted in numerous secondary casualties of war.
The narrow resource bases and already indebted national treasuries have been wasted on the procurement of material and mercenaries. Health care, sanitation, and other social assistance systems have been disrupted, resulting in outbreaks of cholera, and other epidemic diseases. Already limited, underdeveloped infrastructures have been destroyed. Subsistence and commercial agriculture has been dislocated due to the forced abandonment, burning, and looting of crops, the theft and killing of livestock, the breakdown of marketing channels, and the inability of farmers to prepare the land and plant the next season’s crops. These tragedies have resulted in widespread hunger and sometimes famine. Also, domestic and foreign investors flee to be replaced by the inflation and profiteering of hot money chasing the financial gains of war. Consequently, the development agenda is stretched further into the future due to the costs of resettlement, reconstruction, clearing the mines, caring for the maimed, and much more besides.

The effects are long lasting. Recovery strategies need to be innovative, profound, and thoroughgoing. Africa’s wars defy simple depictions. But they have core realities that can be explored to discern common causes, catalysts, driving forces, and impacts. This exploration can then serve as a significant resource basis for strategies of transcendence.

Conflict Resolution in Africa

Given the current prevalence of war in Africa, what are the strategies that are being adopted to stop and transcend war? To what degree do we have a sustained record of how these strategies are working out as processes on the ground? How do we understand conflict resolution in Africa as a theoretically and empirically grounded concept? So again, what do we know, what do we need to know still, what can we do?

The broad picture regarding conflict resolution is one of diverse, often uncertain, and sometimes controversial strategies with a mixed record of achievement. Currently in Africa, conflict resolution processes are fashioned or emerge in a piecemeal fashion. This involves an array of stopping the bloodshed, cease-fire, demobilization, reconciliation and rehabilitation measures. External intervention in Africa’s wars to resolve conflicts has been as clear a reality as involvement in the prosecution of war. Thus, there is a broad range of local and international actors, pursuing actions that range from self-serving and strategic, to policing and peacekeeping, to humanitarian and diplomatic, to implementing.

Core issues regarding efforts to resolve Africa’s current wars include the imperative of Africa getting its own house in order; the new departures in regional peacekeeping; the complexities of dispute resolution; the challenges of demobilizing
and reintegrating armed forces; and the strategies and challenges of post-conflict reconciliation and recovery.

**Getting Our Own House in Order**

There is a widely asserted need for Africa to get its own house in order. African states and commentators as well as the international community are expressing this sentiment. This crisis of profound political instability has to be overcome through the commitments and energies of Africans themselves.

From an African perspective, there are various goads prompting the urgency of self-help. There is continental pride, solidarity, and most significantly the long-standing tradition of conflict resolution in which we assist our neighbors. This tradition is being reinvigorated with new departures in regional peacekeeping. There is also general frustration, even exasperation, with the prevalence and intractability of some of the conflicts. Notable conflicts, such as those in Angola, Sudan, and Ethiopia, have been going on for decades. There is also the realization that all this strife is delaying the implementation of national and regional development initiatives, holding us back as other regions forge ahead. There is also the realization that in the end, peace can only be sustained if it is grounded in local realities and traditions. There is the complementary realization that external interveners in Africa's wars and conflict resolution efforts have often sought to shape and fashion processes according to their precepts and specific entrenched global interests.

Political influences from current global changes are also clearly impacting Africa's commitment to stability. Essentially this impact has two broad dimensions. First is the widespread demand for "democratization" and "economic liberalization". Second is the impact of the demise of the Soviet bloc and the subsequent withdrawal of support for African "socialist" regimes such as Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique.

The call for Africa to get its house in order is embodied in renewed calls and planning for an African interventionist force (The African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) and specific interventions by Nigeria, South Africa, and others to broker or impose stability). This strategy is, of course, not new. We recall that much earlier Kwame Nkrumah argued for the establishment of an All African People's Revolutionary African People's Revolutionary Army.\(^\text{17}\) interveners, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the UN are supporting their actions through resolutions, diplomatic, and material support.

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Precedents in conflict resolution are being established. These include direct military intervention by neighboring states such as Nigeria's intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone, South Africa's efforts in Lesotho, Uganda's intervention in Rwanda, and Zimbabwe's, Uganda's and Angola's intervention in the current fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is also the hiring of private armies to both prosecute war and impose a halt to the fighting. The activities of Executive Outcomes and Sandline International in Sierra Leone provide a prominent example. There is also the evolution of the non-interference in internal affairs founding principle of the OAU.\(^\text{18}\)

**Getting Beyond the Vicious Circle**

The struggle to avoid war has to be fought with commitment and coherence on as many fronts as war itself. There are vested interests at all stages in the transition to political and economic recovery. Recovery has to address war in all its facets and take place against a general background of Africa's already profound development needs. Recovery is also caught up in and structured by this same struggle for hegemony. However, this time, recovery is specifically in the struggle to shape and control a post-war future.

There is a core need for reconciliation at the level of the people rather than just at the level of leaders. If we are satisfied with reconciliation only at the level of leaders, we face the ever present danger that such resolution will be capricious, vulnerable to personal relations among temporary actors, rather than entrenched in institutions, understandings, shared commitments, and popular visions for the future. In contrast, reconciliation at the level of the people lessens the possibilities that future leader schisms will result in calls to and responses from masses of ordinary citizens that it is acceptable for leaders to couch political disputes and strategies in genocidal terms.

The goal has to be that the people will reject such leaders before they reject their fellow citizens. What does this involve? Civic education; the creative use of historical procedures and regulations; reinvigorating trusted institutions; breaking the political hold of historic and new enmities; substantive progress toward social, economic, and political equity; and training our next generation of scholars, intellectuals, and anti-war activists.

Another area requiring attention can be regarded as creative Pan-African statecraft. This Pan-Africanism will focus on aspects such as borders, citizenship, mobility, policy-making, institutions, peacekeeping, etc. There is a clear need to

\(^{18}\)Compare the OAU stance regarding the Nigerian civil war of the 1960s and the current war in Sierra Leone.
transcend the legal, political, economic, and psychological barriers of the current state structure in Africa. Symbolic and substantive borders shape the arena of struggle, exacerbate historic rivalries, and create new rivalries. These boundaries also slow progress toward African unity.

This is not an exercise in romantic idealism, but rather, hardheaded practicality. Regional integration is a core element of the current phase of globalization. The European Union stands at the apex, but other examples include NAFTA, Caricom, LAFTA, and ASEAN. Sentiments of African unity have longer currency than that of European union; yet much remains to be done to turn sentiments into substantive, sustained economic integration and political union. The political vision that propelled the drive towards African Unity needs to be recaptured. The proposed African Economic Community (AEC) in 2025, if realized, would be a contribution. However, what is required is a greater vision that seeks the creation of regional institutions that would reinvigorate, strengthen and extend the current mandate and practice of the OAU. In the end the OAU has to transcend its current limits. At present, the organization is the only viable continental political institution. And it is our institution, i.e. created by Africans. Creative coordination between OAU and regional powers, such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Egypt, has to be developed. Such cooperation between multinational institutions and regional hegemons is a reality elsewhere (e.g. Europe, the Americas). There is no reason why Africa should be exceptional in this regard.

This issue of regional powers and their responsibilities for balancing and stabilizing the politics of their sub-region has been long debated. Among the more recent discussions, Mazrui’s writings are probably the most sustained and commented upon note. They have helped legitimize Nigeria’s interventions in West Africa. Recent interventions by South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Angola in neighboring conflicts have brought this issue to the fore of the policy agenda.

Another key concern centers on enhancing coping strategies of the civilian populations in times of war. How do people survive the terror and rigors of war? What can be done to facilitate and enhance, and not get in the way of, exist coping strategies developed by the secondary casualties?

There is also the need for dedicated intervention philosophies, legal codes, strategies, and resources. Requirements include early intervention in simmering conflicts aimed at countering war-talk and preventing the escalation of initial clashes.

Other interventions include anti-mines legislation and banning small arms trade. Non-African countries have specific responsibilities in this regard. The
mercenaries, diamond smugglers, arms dealers, financiers, etc. are not from Mars. The United States, European and Asian countries must show greater diligence regarding the rapacious, cavalier activities of their own nationals in Africa’s war zones. They must develop the political will to prosecute/sanction their own nationals once evidence is gathered of nefarious involvement in Africa’s conflicts. African scholars and activists resident in Europe and North America have a particular responsibility to investigate, expose and agitate for action against the traffickers in arms and looted and smuggled resources.

There is also, of course, the need for the global community to devote much greater diplomatic commitment, manpower and resources to facilitate conflict resolution in Africa. There is much to be done to elaborate and realize these and other prevention, resolution, and recovery strategies. This is where the discussion is heading.