

# Are Africa's Wars Part of a Fourth Generation of Warfare?

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## Introduction

*The Boer woman who slaps her protruding belly at you, and shouts 'when all our men are gone these little Khakies will fight you' is a type of savage produced by generations of wild lonely life ...Change their country and they may become civilized people fit to live with.*[1](#)

This article addresses the ideas encompassed by Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) from the viewpoint of the most conflict-ridden continent in the world - Africa. Africa's wars have been well documented, and have been categorized from a variety of differing perspectives. At the same time, the arguments put forward by 4GW theorists have largely focussed on contemporary conflicts where American armed forces have been deployed, including Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the aims of this paper is to argue that whilst there are serious problems with the application of such an American-centric approach to the chronological development of warfare, there are a number of elements within the 4GW approach that may be helpful in describing contemporary patterns of conflict in Africa. In particular, a close reading of the 4GW approach reveals a strong implication that warfare is returning to a pre-nation-state style of intra-state wars, but an enhanced version partly driven by new technologies - particularly information and communications technology - that implies small group, or cell, structures in insurgencies.

4GW represents an interesting development of the Pentagon's strategic vision of future wars dominated by high-tech, light forces controlled by tightly connected networks allowing American commanders to 'see everything, decide rapidly and execute immediately'. Its significance in the theoretical debate has been reinforced by a recent special issue of *Contemporary Security Policy* that involved several papers discussing a theoretical approach put forward by the retired US Marine Corps Colonel, Thomas Hammes.[2](#) Hammes points out that the 4GW approach to warfare - the latest manifestation of which is known as 'transformation' - is really a culmination of a series of earlier concepts including the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). He goes on to point out that, whilst initial results in Iraq and Afghanistan were promising at the start, the enemy refused to accept defeat and launched a protracted, political 'fourth generation war' that is currently unfolding and evolving. This type of war is held to be a new phase in the development of warfare in which networks of irregular troops combat more sophisticated armed forces by using political factors as force multipliers. As such it has wide-ranging repercussions for counter-insurgency warfare and engagement of Western militaries internationally, not just in Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, recent experiences in Somalia illustrate

some of the experience of American intervention and the need to revisit theories of warfare in the light of realities on the ground, which, to his credit, Hammes tries to do.

Within the field as a whole, there is also a danger that Africa is lost in a sea of analysis that actually concentrates on Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Afghanistan. Africa remains a critical area in geo-political analysis as organised global groups opposed to the United States (and others) take advantage of the chaotic conflict patterns and collapsed states around the geographical regions of West and Central Africa in particular, along with the Horn and Somalia. Indeed, American analysts are beginning to view Africa as part of a new frontier on the 'war on terror', particularly since the appearance of several African fighters in the ranks of combatants in Iraq and the success of Islamist forces in firstly, gaining control of Somalia and, secondly, engaging in a proxy war against the United States, through their opposition to the Ugandan and Ethiopian troops they claim are supported by the US itself rather than the African Union.<sup>3</sup>

This paper analyses the basic ideas of 4GW and then moves on to look at the conflict environment surrounding African conflict. It then concludes that, whilst 4GW may represent a step forwards in terms of developing counter-insurgency warfare, there are a number of issues within Africa that raise significant questions about the theoretical base. There are a number of key issues that are addressed within this paper, including whether or not contemporary African insurgencies do actually represent a new stage of evolution in warfare, or whether they are continuations of longer patterns of warfare deriving from pre-colonial conflicts. In addition, the paper goes on to outline the main characteristics of 4GW and to draw parallels between these approaches and contemporary conflict patterns in Africa. Finally, the paper concludes that whilst the historical determinism of 4GW has no relevance to Africa, the analysis of 4GW modes of warfare has some resonance and can be enriched by a deeper study of African wars and the people who wage them. At the same time, the diversity of African wars may also mean that aspects of 4GW can manifest themselves differently in alternative conflict environments. In practice, proponents of the 4GW model may be correct about some of the characteristics of contemporary conflict, but less knowledgeable about the motivations of combatants. This could be a serious flaw in the policy implications of 4GW, but also an opportunity to develop policy more fully and to take African conflict seriously. Furthermore, the reintroduction to the African security discourse of the term 'war' and the treatment of African conflicts as warfare could reduce the tendency to treat Africa as an exception to analysis of warfare and engage the wider security studies community in looking at military approaches in Africa, rather than to sink back into common stereotypes.

## **What is Fourth Generation Warfare?**

4GW is one of a number of approaches to strategic thinking about asymmetric warfare that appear to have gained new impetus following the experiences of American and other forces in Iraq and Afghanistan fighting networks of mainly Islamic insurgents. Recent relatives of 4GW include ideas around the 'Long War' being fought in collapsing states through counterinsurgency, and also parallel developments recently in a special issue on the future of guerrilla warfare within the journal *Small Wars and Insurgencies*. In an interesting article criticising contemporary

doctrine, Robert Tomes outlines the ideas of 'full spectrum dominance', arguing that this is flawed when faced with net-based insurgency warfare, and what is required is a particular type of flexible and adaptive armed forces.<sup>4</sup> Whilst all of these ideas are inter-related in some way, 4GW represents an important stream of thinking because it partly comes from within the US military establishment itself, although it remains a peripheral influence rather than a core strategic approach. Hammes has 'functional expertise' in low intensity conflict, which effectively means that he has been engaged in training insurgents in a variety of countries. In addition, he also states that it was his service in Somalia that led him down the path to 4GW.<sup>5</sup> In other words, 4GW has resonance within current thinking and approaches to insurgency and Hammes' approach at least, partly originated from African experience, specifically in Somalia.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to replicate any detailed exposition of 4GW, particularly when this is done elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> However, there is a specific set of issues arising out of the definitions of 4GW that deserve attention in the African context. The core idea of 4GW is that the state's monopoly on violence is over and any understanding of war must take into account culture and politics as well as technology and tactics. Within (largely American) academic circles, 4GW is regarded as something of a maverick approach, simultaneously radical in terms of its post-Clausewitz tack and conservative in 'saying nothing new'. However, there are clear parallels between elements of 4GW and what scholars of African warfare on the ground engaged with post-conflict efforts are saying with regard to careful contextualisation of local conflicts in terms of history, culture and politics.<sup>7</sup>

4GW theories are based on a dualistic approach of an evolutionary model of warfare, coupled with a theory of what 4GW actually is. For the evolutionary model, Hammes follows Lind and Wilson's (1989) model of generations of warfare moving from post-feudal wars based on nation states (exemplified by Napoleon), 'industrial war' (exemplified by the First World War), an increasing development of manoeuvrability (exemplified by *Blitzkrieg*), through to 4GW (exemplified by informal, non-state warfare amongst groups of combatants rather than formal militaries).

Clearly, the typology of generations of warfare is open to question from a number of standpoints, not least that all of the initial three stages are basically European, or at least Western in that they are concerned with harnessing political, economic, and military elements to maximise their effectiveness against similarly trained and equipped militaries in a conventional war involving campaigns and battles. The analysis is built on an incomplete view of history that ignores parallel developments involving colonial conquest, insurgency, counter-insurgency, and asymmetrical warfare - all of which have been taking place for centuries. In addition it also ignores a significant amount of scholarship on the theory of warfare, including, for example, Jeremy Black, Geoffrey Parker, Colin Gray, and MacGregor Knox.<sup>8</sup> Even if we ignore the experience of the Romans in Germany, for example, predating the 'first' stage of warfare, after the formation of nation-states there are numerous examples of non-state warfare ranging from vast raiding wars of the European Dark Ages, through to Welsh and Scottish guerrilla tactics against English medieval armies, the Vendean revolts of the 1790s, the Risorgimento in Italy, and the series of wars across Europe that lasted from 1914 until 1945. The Spanish Civil War and the Second World War also included significant elements that speak to the overall 4GW approach, including the range of atrocities (the rape of Nanking), the targeting of civilians (the Holocaust, mass

bombing of cities), economic factors (oil in the Caucasus), and asymmetric warfare (Finland, Russian partisans).

Whilst the supposed 'generational shift' in warfare is open to question on virtually every level, theories defining the characteristics of 4GW have far more to offer in an African context. Hammes himself provides a useful outline of these characteristics as follows:

Fourth-generation war uses all available networks - political, economic, social, and military - to convince the enemy's political decision-makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit. It is rooted in the fundamental precept that superior political will, when properly employed, can defeat greater economic and military power. 4GW does not attempt to win by defeating the enemy's military forces. Instead, combining guerrilla tactics or civil disobedience with the soft networks of social and cultural and economic ties, disinformation campaigns and innovative political activity, it directly attacks the enemy's political will.<sup>9</sup>

More specifically then, 4GW is a way of explaining the success of asymmetric forces fighting against armies with an increased reliance on technology. Hammes himself takes issue with scholars and strategists engaged in the Revolution in Military Affairs, and more specifically, a series of American policy documents, including the US Navy's *Network Centric Warfare* and the Joint Chiefs' *Joint Vision 2020*.<sup>10</sup> He claims that all of these concepts envisage a future where technology dominates the battlefield while ignoring the possibility that an intelligent opponent could negate the technology.<sup>11</sup> Taking its inspiration from Mao and peasant warfare in China, the idea of 'people's war' - war waged by low-tech insurgents against high-tech formal militaries - has become a defining feature of the 1990s and the early part of the 21st century. At the same time, the development of non-military factors that had been obvious in the previous generations of warfare have again developed. In particular, 4GW relies on the use of political, social, economic, and military networks to maximise impact. In asymmetrical wars, for example, attacking the media and in particular political will, is an acceptable strategy that can defeat a militarily superior enemy.

In addition, 4GW does have a contribution to make in recognising that much contemporary conflict does have a 'cultural' element in terms of mobilisation, and in the accompanying strategy of 'hearts and minds'.<sup>12</sup> In Somalia, for example, several observers claim that the United States lost hearts and minds through winning a few key military battles but ignoring the wider, 4GW effects, allowing extremists to build up significant support based on the shared belief that the 'War on Terror' is in fact a 'War on Islam'.<sup>13</sup> The net result of this in Somalia was a Taliban-style regime that gained considerable popular support by enforcing laws against the warlords and 'protecting' Islam. Before its fall in early 2007, this regime survived on local popularity based on the idea that essentially it was not as bad as the previous American-backed warlord 'government'. Post-2007, the Islamic Front in Mogadishu is able to claim successfully that the Ethiopians were just following American orders - a claim unfortunately bolstered by the abortive attempt to bomb some of the Islamic Front leaders in the south of Somalia in January 2007 - and also that the Ugandan force, ostensibly supported by the African Union, is actually an American-backed intervention force. The consequences of this will be that the Ethiopians and Ugandans may

become bogged down in a counter-insurgency war across southern Somalia and into Mogadishu with an increasingly radicalised local population.<sup>14</sup>

4GW then, could offer a military theory that provides a better understanding of non-military aspects of conflict, political approaches, and cultural knowledge about the motivation of combatants. In the context of Africa, then, the concept of 4GW could provide a bridge between formal counter-insurgency approaches in the military establishment and approaches to the understanding of warfare in Africa such as those offered by the 'new wars' thesis and complex humanitarian emergencies approaches. It also provides a means of looking at the overall decline in the African 'trinitarian' forms of warfare, i.e., wars waged by states against states with a threefold division of labour between the government/state that directs and orders, the armed forces that do the fighting and dying, and the general population that pays and suffers. 4GW recognises the emergence of what Van Creveld terms, 'non-trinitarian' forms of warfare whereby war is not waged by states and uniformed militaries, but by 'completely different' organisations under a wide variety of labels.<sup>15</sup> Of course, in an African context, most wars are not actually waged by 'completely different' organisations but by a mixture of groups including state organisations and militaries as well as more informal groups ranging from organised revolutionary movements through to local cells of global insurgency movements all the way down to those who comprise little more than localised criminal gangs. What is also true is that many African wars employ a wide range of technology and are frequently more sophisticated than usually portrayed, particularly in terms of what Mark Duffield calls linking the 'local and the global'.<sup>16</sup>

The application of the theory of 4GW to Africa also fulfils an additional function of bringing the term 'war' back into the security discourse about Africa.<sup>17</sup> Almost all of the discourse about African security relates to descriptors other than 'war'. We have become used to using words like 'conflict', 'ethnic violence', 'warlordism', 'complex emergencies', and so on, but never 'war'. This relates to an inability on behalf of the academic security studies community to come to terms with African wars, which usually manifests itself in an argument that regards Africa as 'different' and unable to be included in 'proper' discourse related to the evolution of warfare. Clearly, Africa has taken a different trajectory to Europe in terms of the development of warfare, but 4GW is really about the adaptation of advanced militaries to warfare in complex situations that incorporate different experiences and approaches - like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

## **Fourth Generation Warfare in Africa**

A fully comprehensive analysis of every African war is beyond the scope of this paper. This section outlines the main characteristics of 4GW and looks at its applicability in an African context. In Africa, any discussion of 4GW has to be linked to what has come to be known as the 'New Wars' thesis; that is, qualitative changes have taken place in the nature of conflict in Africa and it is possible to discuss 'new wars' that are distinct from earlier forms of conflict.<sup>18</sup> An entire literature has also grown around the assertion that Africa is more prone to conflict than other continents and that African wars are driven by economic motivations.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, there have been several case studies of different guerrilla movements and cross-national analysis of the

organisation of rebellions.<sup>20</sup> However, there is a significant gap on the opposite side - that is on the analysis of the response of government forces to fighting African wars. There is, for example, no detailed study on counter-insurgency techniques used by the Ugandan military in the north.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, there is a significant gap in the literature in terms of contextualising African counter-insurgency operations and a more complete understanding of what Western or South African counter-insurgency experts actually taught movements like Renamo in Mozambique or the civil defence militia in West Africa.<sup>22</sup>

Given the prevalence of conflict on the continent, the lack of analysis of African military combat effectiveness may, perhaps, be surprising. However, the political history of the continent is very much one where the military has become increasingly politicised and involved in government. Separation of military and executive functions in African government have become the exception rather than the rule - a trend that started in the 1960s and accelerated during the 1970s to the extent that only really Botswana, out of all African countries, has escaped military intervention in government. Whilst literature is lacking in terms of combat effectiveness, there is a literature on the military and politics.<sup>23</sup>

## **From Inter-state to Intra-state**

It is a commonly cited truism that there has been an increase in intra-state wars as opposed to inter-state wars since the end of the Cold War, particularly in Africa.<sup>24</sup> It is certainly true that throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, civil wars have been more common than interstate war. At the same time, however, it is also true to say that the interstate wars have tended to change the balance of global power significantly and have been immensely destructive in terms of scale and scope. There is also no linear increase in intrastate conflict in parallel to a decrease in interstate wars for any of this period, including after the Cold War. In fact, what the statistics show is an overall decrease in wars since the Cold War, with a peak in the early 1990s, followed by a gradual decline.<sup>25</sup>

Statistics on conflict in Africa are open to question on several levels, and different analyses may produce different results. However, the overall picture does consistently show that there has been no linear surge in civil war since 1990 following the spike in the early 1990s, and the incidence has declined since around 1992. What we may be seeing here is a change in the characteristics of war as well as the means of measuring what is and what is not a war. What may be the case in Africa is a lower absolute number of intrastate wars, but a very persistent small number of chronic conflicts based on regions, rather than clear inter-state grievances. For example, the area around the northern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), southern Sudan, Rwanda, and northern Uganda may be counted as one conflict, but is actually a cluster of varying conflicts. Measurement of such a cluster is extremely difficult based on objective data.

Given the difficulty in measuring conflict clusters, or 'regional complexes' of civil war, the concept of differentiating between intra- and inter-state wars becomes analytically fragile. This is further complicated by the emphasis on globally traded commodities, including diamonds, oil, and guns. The link between the global nature of commodities and the local nature of conflict

means that conventional definitions and statistical categories may not be adequate to reflect contemporary conflicts accurately. African wars tend to be extremely 'messy', even if the modes of warfare are not. One of the central 'messy' features is that they tend not to follow formal national borders but geographical or economic features, such as impenetrable forest or control over diamond fields.

Border regions are central to the nature of conflict in Africa. Although most conflicts begin in a particular country, virtually all conflicts in Africa spill over at least one border and frequently more. In the case of many of the most intransigent conflicts, the border regions are instrumental in maintaining conflicts by providing an exit strategy for armed groups into space that is beyond the reach of conventional African security forces. In Central Africa, the collapse of Zaire has led to a vast area of the DRC effectively becoming lawless and supporting a bewildering array of armed groups taking part in conflict within the DRC itself, but also in Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. In West Africa, the Mano River region provides a similar haven for insurgents, gangs, and smugglers in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. Even in relatively calm countries such as Kenya, permeable border regions support violence amongst, for example, *karamajong* cattle-rustlers that inhabit the Uganda-Kenya border.<sup>26</sup>

## Globalisation and Networks

One of the defining features of African wars since the early 1990s is their internationalisation, and in particular, their links to global networks engaging in illegal trading activities, particularly drugs and arms, but also illegal trading in diamonds (Sierra Leone, Angola), uranium (Sudan), hardwoods (Liberia), and even people (Sudan, Liberia). Such illegal trading has given rise to a series of 'shadow states' that are able to become self-financing and to propagate war.<sup>27</sup> David Keen has even gone so far as to suggest that the logic of this approach leads to the conclusion that the continuation of war becomes a war aim in itself if that conflict creates the conditions to profit from 'grey trades'.<sup>28</sup>

The nature of grey trades and the spread of small arms illustrates a type of globalisation that is multi-layered and networked. Most descriptions of the arms and illicit trading networks illustrate that warlords may not necessarily have *direct* access to international markets, but they certainly do have *indirect* access via networks of agents, traders, and intermediaries. The global pressures placed upon insurgency movements are therefore mitigated and filtered through a variety of networks that may themselves be specific. Many trading networks in grey trades are, by necessity family or ethnically run, for example, the Lebanese trading networks across West Africa. The high-risk nature of the business is offset by the maximisation of trust within the distribution network.

At the same time as the pressures of globalisation are filtered, these networks allow access by warlords to international markets. In the case of diamonds, timber, and so on, these materials are filtered through the network of companies and organisations to allow eventual entry into legitimate global markets. In the case of, say, arms coming the other way, shipments begin as legitimate arms deals with end-user certificates and then are filtered through a series of

companies and government agencies, becoming illicit and then supplied to insurgency movements. The real value of the state in this scenario is that it controls the legitimisation of illicit trade operating on 'the periphery of the air cargo industry', to paraphrase the UN Security Council.<sup>29</sup> Regional allies within national governments are also valuable in terms of providing safe havens for weapons (e.g., Togo), or trans-shipments points with false end-user certificates (e.g., Burkina Faso). In other words, the grey areas around legitimate trade provide a useful avenue to enter international markets.

The importance of geographical space beyond national law and beyond the area over which post-colonial governments can project power is also critical here. The existence of warlord spaces allows the development of grey trades and linkages into the international markets. The development of trust networks within these spaces - based on ethnicity, religion or shared identity and usually enforced by violence - is the comparative advantage of these groups in the marketplace, to the extent that the benefits outweigh the costs, particularly in high-value markets.<sup>30</sup>

## **Greed versus grievance**

Clearly, many of the conflicts across Africa are entwined with economic networks, which is hardly surprising. One of the core theories applied to the explanation of African wars takes this as its starting point and develops the idea of 'greed' as the main motivating force behind African insurgencies generally. The 'greed versus grievance' debate rests on the core issue of the opportunity costs of mobilisation of youth labour in an environment where there are available lootable resources. Essentially, youth mobilises into violence if the benefits of mobilisation outweigh the costs of doing so.<sup>31</sup> The analysis places a number of different African conflicts on a scale between 'greed' and 'grievance' and concludes that most of the combatants in Africa's wars are motivated by greed, a finding backed by the presence of significant resources in conflict zones accompanied by the enrichment of warlords and other military leaders. However, the economic reductionism of the greed-versus-grievance debate rests on an a-historical analysis of most African conflicts and confusion between broad statistical approaches to conflicts with individual motivations for combatants. In particular, there are several analyses of contemporary conflicts that illustrate the deficiencies of the findings that greed is the main motivating factor, including Uganda (Jackson, Finnstrom), Guinea (Vigh), Vlassenroot (DRC), and Hoffman (Sierra Leone, Liberia).<sup>32</sup>

In African wars, politics and economics are frequently difficult to separate. There are a number of different reasons for this, not least that there is confusion over whether or not the desire to better oneself is tantamount to greed. Whilst there are a number of different drivers behind conflicts across the continent, economics does play some part in almost all African insurgencies. Resources, frequently in the form of tradeable goods and natural resources, such as oil and diamonds, have played a significant part in prolonging conflict in countries as diverse as Angola, Sierra Leone, and the DRC. Whether these resources were the main motivation for conflict remains questionable, but it is clear that conflict has been prolonged when, for example, a small rebel group gains control of a resource that is then used to fuel further conflict (Sierra Leone) or

where one side has control of a resource and the other, a different resource (Angola with oil and diamonds). This does not mean, of course, that the resource may necessarily have been a key motivation for starting a war as much as a means for continuing one. It is also not clear how far resources are a motivation for conflict in a case such as the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, which has access to no natural resources and yet has been fighting in various guises since 1986.[33](#)

It is also certainly true that the prevalence of loot plays an important part in the motivation of participants in violence across the continent. Consider the quote from a 19-year old former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel in Sierra Leone:

...while there (Liberia) I looted a vehicle and later sold it at the Sierra Leone/Liberian border for US\$600. Then two televisions, and lots of money from a safe I'd shot open in Monrovia. After returning to Sierra Leone, I helped out my family - I gave my brother money to do small business, I bought clothes and rice for me and my family. I didn't save anything because I don't have any place to hide it. ...I felt as if I did bad for the Liberian man I stole the car from. But you can't struggle all the time in a war and not come out with something. And he should be happy that I didn't kill him - I just took his car.[34](#)

This quote reveals some elements of the role of loot in motivation, but needs to be carefully contextualised. For a start, this is a 19-year old boy who fought in Sierra Leone, starting in around 2000, and was demobilised in 2005. He was therefore about 14 when he became a combatant. Secondly, if he is to be believed, he has not only fought in Sierra Leone, but also in Liberia - his combat experience is regional. Thirdly, when you look at his motivation, it can be broken down into a number of different elements. He clearly sees war as a means to achieve financial gain. He also appears to have killed before in order to exercise such a gain, although he does allow the Liberian to survive (but clearly feels that the Liberian should be grateful he wasn't killed). Since this boy was mobilised in 2000, he is not a core RUF rebel, but someone who joined up near the end of the war, when the RUF was more or less collapsing following the operations of South African mercenaries and strong UK-led intervention. At this time, several 'combatants' joined up as a means to either protect themselves or to 'demobilise' in order to gain the associated benefits. In this case, it is possible that he is actually a Liberian who may have been demobilised in Liberia, or he could have been a Sierra Leonean who joined up then crossed the border, fought in Monrovia, as he says, and was then demobilised in Sierra Leone.

An additional point of interest is what he does with the money. He buys rice and clothes, and gives his brother some money to start a business. He has nowhere secure to keep it, so he has to spend it immediately. This is a classic survival strategy for someone living in poverty in an insecure environment. He may have been motivated by 'greed' in terms of going to war, but that greed was borne out of desperation to provide for himself and his family and was also fully acknowledged by commanders. As an officer with Liberia's elite counter-terrorist unit states:

There was a massive looting of Danane by Liberian soldiers; trucks, videos, cars, beds. People took from Danane whatever they needed in Liberia. There wasn't an order to loot, but it was understood. In fact, the hierarchy - Yeaten, Dolo, Gilbert Williams - encouraged it because they rewarded those who shared their loot with them.[35](#)

In other words, in the absence of pay systems, loot is the chief method of payment for fighting. However, whilst these two quotations do illustrate a number of different aspects of African war - loot, youth, regionalism - they are merely illustrative and need to be treated with some caution. Testimony from informants in war zones is frequently misleading, and whilst the looting of Danane, for example can be verified, the stories of demobilised combatants are influenced by who demobilised them, why, what inducements they were given, and through their own embellishment.

## **Non-political Politics**

One of the defining features of 4GW is its emphasis on politics. However, in African wars, politics and economics are usually impossible to separate and different motivations may coexist within the same combatant groups. In addition, much recent ethnography of war provides more subtle approaches to the analysis of combatant motivations. For example, work in Ituri province by Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers shows that much of the conflict in the region is the result of exploitation of agrarian social relations, land, economic opportunity, and, ultimately, political power.<sup>36</sup> Within this, Ituri also illustrates the formation of a political economy of military groups controlling non-territorial economic networks, cemented by the use of ethnicity as a motivating factor. At the same time, the DRC is also subject to the use of auxiliary groups, frequently employed to gain control over particular resources or to destabilise areas and escalate local political conflicts. In fact, the prevalence of these groups has led to accusations of Uganda and Sudan carrying out a proxy war in the DRC.<sup>37</sup> At a geopolitical level, therefore, there is a series of linkages between regional and local political actors that are currently engaged in warfare for reasons of political and economic power.

At the same time, the individual motivation of combatants can also be linked to these local political-economic conflicts. The conflict in Guinea-Bissau, for example, opened up spaces for young men to enter a socio-political network from which they were previously excluded from, in a similar way that youth in Sierra Leone felt excluded from political and economic networks controlled by a rural gerontocracy.<sup>38</sup> For young men engaged in conflict, the conflict itself provides an opportunity to overcome alienation, which implies more than, but could include, looting, self-respect, and empowerment as well as inclusion in socio-political networks via joining a faction.

The issue of factionalism and shifting political networks leads to an even more complex problem for analysts: how can you tell government forces apart from most insurgents? This seems simple at first. Governments have formal armies, whereas insurgents do not. In Africa, however, this is frequently not the case. Years of under-funding and lack of training and weaponry mean that many African militaries look very like their insurgent counterparts. During the Sierra Leone war, for example, some of the most effective troops deployed against the RUF were civil defence fighters that used similar tactics to RUF troops and indeed may have used amputation as a means of terrorising the RUF before the RUF themselves used the technique.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the network structure of many violent groups means that there is frequently competition over specific auxiliary groups, i.e., they may change sides, although this is more common in some conflicts

rather than others. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and along the Ugandan border there are a number of factions that remain constant: Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF); and some that change or shift alliances: Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), and National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU). The overall picture, then, is very much one of a series of concentric circles of loosely networked groups with core and periphery combatants and shifting alliances.[40](#)

## Culture and Symbolism

A key characteristic of African wars has been the extensive use of symbolism in terms of the adoption of 'traditional' symbols with modern twists.[41](#) In particular, the use of symbolism as a form of control over predominantly youthful followers has been a defining feature of most combat groups in the continent. Whilst leaders may be older, the majority of fighters are in their teens or twenties, having enlisted young. The LRA in northern Uganda has a deliberate policy of kidnapping children either just before or in their early teens, which allows a more complete indoctrination and control.[42](#) The use of traditional symbols and power through, for example, witchcraft, is an explicitly political act in many parts of Africa, rather than an arcane exercise in ritual. The importance of culture and the symbolism that accompanies it is outlined by Moran when she points out that, 'Violence can be enacted both materially and symbolically: in the outright killing and wounding of individuals or in causing their illness or death through sorcery.'[43](#) The idea of witchcraft is that it offers a secret means to gain political power. Coupled with the existence of secret societies, these 'symbols' offer a means to consolidate real political power through the exercise of secret control beyond the reach of those who are excluded from the specific network.

The existence of secret societies such as *poro* in West Africa is frequently commented upon but rarely articulated. In effect, *poro* is part of a dual system of power consisting of a political head (usually a chief) and with the *poro* elders tasked with maintaining social order. However, most of chiefs and other local powerful individuals are also high-ranking *poro* members and so the system may be better viewed as a spiritual/secret dimension of political power rather than a return to 'traditional' barbarism and tribalism.[44](#)

Given this political structure, and the desire of excluded youth to join factions and accompanying socio-political networks, it is perhaps hardly surprising that initiation techniques have become so prevalent. In a sense, initiation is a replacement for more 'normal' forms of social bonding, such as school, and there is also some evidence to suggest that violence could encourage bonding amongst groups of alienated young men. It should also be pointed out that to many, the life of a rebel is invariably more interesting and exciting than the frustrations of a peaceful life in rural Africa, and, in addition, promises a chance of betterment and power through wielding a gun. As Skelt points out, 'deceived by diamonds, bored by agriculture, and powerless against corrupt politicians and lack of opportunities' joining rebel movements was a positive move.[45](#)

The emphasis on atrocities also has a bonding effect. Returnees from the LRA frequently cite their fear of reprisals for their deeds - something that encourages the LRA to force their troops to

take part in atrocities as a means of encouraging loyalty.<sup>46</sup> One interesting feature of the post-war transformation of Liberian combatants has been the high numbers of born-again Christians as former fighters seek repentance and forgiveness.<sup>47</sup> This is also manifest in the idea that 'it was someone else who did those things and now I am back', an idea that Ellis and Ferme explore with the idea of fighters adopting metaphorical 'masks', an idea that is contested by some local writers, for example, Gberie.<sup>48</sup>

The mixture of this idea of the 'other', local spiritual beliefs and contemporary (mainly US) cultural influences leads to a militarization based on performance where the actual mode of behaviour on the battlefield is as much designed to instil fear as to gain tactical military superiority. The comic horror dress of many of the fighters was designed to protect and disguise the warrior and was in sharp contrast to the olive green fatigues of many regular soldiers. By extension, the bizarre assortment of costumes was designed to hark back to traditional African modes of warfare.<sup>49</sup> It is difficult to argue that a fighter dressed in a red Nike Tee shirt, some Kung Fu Kit, probably some women's clothing of some description, a 'Friday the 13th' horror mask and a Stars and Stripes plastic helmet is either reliving the role of a pre-colonial African warrior or engaged in developing a new generation of warfare. At the same time, the adoption of American rap artists like Tupac Shakur and 50 Cent provide role models that reveal a macho culture dominated by misogynistic bravado and a search for financial betterment.<sup>50</sup>

The culture of violence and mutated ideas of American 'youth culture' had led to the adoption of drugs and alcohol as a means of being reckless in action. In particular, the use of amphetamines, alcohol, marijuana, and local drugs such as *khat* is widespread. It should be noted that this is not confined to African fighters and is common internationally, even amongst some conventional armies. The 'youth culture' tag so infused the factions that it became noticeable, later in the war, that there was far less wearing of women's clothes or war paint, and far more aping of celluloid heroes through baseball caps turned backwards, imported tee-shirts, Bermuda shorts, flip-flops, bandanas, basketball boots, crew cuts, and even Mohican haircuts or braided hair. One item that continued to be worn was something for spiritual protection, providing an overall effect that mixed pre and post-modern fashion and belief systems.

One of the main elements in culture identified by 4GW and other theorists is religion, in the sense of formal religion. However, in most African wars, religion is strangely absent, which represents one of the most significant differences between 4GW as manifested in Africa and Iraq. The notable exception to this is, of course, Somalia, where the specific fall-out of the disastrous US intervention created a fundamentalist Islamic state that did not exist before, and where subsequent interventions following the removal of the ruling Islamic Front appear to be radicalising a traditionally moderate *sufi* population. Religion does play a role in cultural identity in several sub-Saharan African countries where Islam and Christianity (mainly) vie for superiority, such as the Sudan, Cote D'Ivoire or Nigeria. However, religion is rarely a driver of the conflict. Even in Sudan, the differences between an Arab north and African south are more frequently cited than religious differences. Religion is also absent from most of the testimonies of former combatants. Rarely, if ever, is religion mentioned, except in so far as a means of forgiveness for past actions.

This does not mean, of course, that religious extremism does not exist, and clearly there have been several incidents of Islamic terrorism in East Africa in particular. Having said that, religion does not tend to present simple dichotomies in Africa, and in fact exhibits a number of complex factors that interact with other social factors. Fundamentalists exist, but the majority of the population follow a mixture of Christianity or Islam and local traditions and beliefs. Witchcraft retains much power and several animist traditions remain, particularly in rural areas. The Acholi of northern Uganda would claim to be both Christian and 'traditional'. Religion in Africa is frequently flexible, making it extremely difficult to use as a cultural motivating factor in conducting a 4GW conflict.

## **Civilians and Terror**

One of the core elements of 4GW is the end of trinitarianism and the blurring of military and non-military participants in warfare. I have already argued that this is not new to military history, but certainly in an African context, it is explicitly used as a terror tactic as well as a set of strategic objectives for combatants.<sup>51</sup> The development of alter egos for commanders is frequently accompanied by the deliberate cultivation of horrific reputations, usually associated with some form of ritual. Consequently, there were several inventions of units with particularly bad reputations, including one in Liberia that was said to eat the hearts of their victims - in imitation of Charles Taylor's reputed action in eating the heart of his biggest rival. Once a local population heard that this unit was on the way, unsurprisingly they fled, instantly reducing any opposition. At the same time, civilians were targeted to prevent support for rival movements, but also because the difference between soldier and civilian is not always clear and civilians can be useful as workers.

The reference to 'heart men', along with cannibalism, is a common feature of writing on West Africa. Whilst it is invariably impossible to prove one way or another that the phenomenon is real or just a popular response to the acquisition of political power, even Moran, who regards it as the latter, documents several episodes of bodies being found that had been subject to ritual murder and the ensuing moral panic. In many ways, it does not matter whether or not Taylor's acquisition of 'heart man' status was real or a reference to political power, local people clearly believed it and Taylor was prepared to make an effort to acquire it as a means of showing his powers, magical or otherwise. Such use of cannibalism, or perceptions of cannibalism, are frequently cited in a variety of conflicts as a means of increasing mysticism and 'power' as well as providing strategic advantage.<sup>52</sup>

The strategic targeting of civilians and the use of terror as a mode of warfare is frequently reported across African conflicts. However, the use of terror is not just strategic, but is also used by groups like the LRA to maintain discipline. The development of mysticism surrounding individuals or groups of individuals at the top of organisations has also been used in creating cult-like organisations. Joseph Kony and the LRA are probably the closest to this model, with Kony's (and his family's) creation of a detailed cosmology surrounding himself as a spiritual leader, along with his frequent attempts to deliberately confuse his followers or those who seek to contact him. Kony's use of paranoid cosmology and terror tactics, coupled with his extensive

use of child soldiers, has created a hard core of LRA troops and an atmosphere of terror and respect amongst the Acholi in northern Uganda.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusions

It is important to point out that African conflicts are heterogeneous. Africa is frequently incorporated into international relations discourse as a single entity and on the margin, whereas the level of variety is enormous across the continent and many actors are involved in some of the critical areas of global trade. Some analysts, for example, Shaw, see heterogeneity as implying a need for a regional approach to the analysis of African conflict rather than a continent-wide approach.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, there are significant variations within regions drawing on, for example, widely differing colonial experiences. Shaw divides these usefully into three main groups: orthodox inter-state/regime conflicts and responses (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda); semi-orthodox, semi-state conflicts (Angola, DRC and Sudan); and, non-orthodox, mainly non-state conflicts and responses (Somalia and West Africa). Semantics notwithstanding, this is a useful typology for illustrating the sliding scale from formal war through to what is effectively conflict between gangs. Each African country is on a different point on this scale and each has a different mix of combatant groups. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' theory to encompass this complexity. Warfare may be evolutionary in Africa, but there may be a variety of different evolutionary trajectories.

Across this spectrum, different conflicts have different characteristics, or more accurately, balances of characteristics. In particular, African wars all exhibit sets of characteristics that are broadly similar, even if they have localised differences. This group includes the use of terror and civilian targets, extensive use of cultural and symbolic motivational factors, non-political politics, economic networks, globalized links into international networks, 'grey' trade, and a breakdown in the state that provides opportunities for conflict. All of these wars exhibit characteristics that would seem to fit 4GW theory, including chaotic modes of warfare, looting, atrocities against civilians, and cultural approaches to power. However, there is significant evidence that African wars follow pre-colonial patterns of warfare, not new patterns, and that conflict in Africa has taken on a number of additional, modern characteristics including the use of modern weaponry and media and communications. At the same time, it is easy to concentrate on the new weaponry and ignore the fact that the vast number of casualties are caused by what amounts to hand-to-hand fighting, especially the use of bladed instruments like the *machete* or the *panga*.

4GW does provide a framework that encompasses a wide variety of factors in the analysis of African warfare. The idea that African wars should be treated as wars is also an important point, at least in part because it sheds some light on policy approaches to conflict resolution. Historically, conflict has been seen as an aberration in an overall picture of peace. However, a considerable body of work shows that conflict is actually a normal set of processes within most societies, whereas the escalation into war may be a result of different processes. For example, Moran's work on the place of violence in Glebo culture in Liberia shows that traditional forms of organisation have partly evolved as a result of internal conflicts.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, it is also clear

that whereas violence has always been part of society in many parts of Africa, the type of violence perpetrated by different state formations has been markedly different from traditional approaches that included rules of war, non-targeting of civilians, and recognition of strict codes of conduct.[56](#)

In terms of policy, what an application of 4GW to Africa shows is that any approach to conflict resolution must be far broader than a military approach, and must take into account cultural and socio-political approaches. If young men go to war to take advantage of pathways into political or economic networks, then any policy aimed at stabilising African states must provide alternative pathways to radicalised violence. One security-focused approach that is currently being implemented by some donors is the idea of security sector reform, whereby the definition of 'security' is taken to encompass not only conventional security services, but also intelligence services, non-state actors, private security providers, the judicial system, and the police.[57](#) The emphasis on human security over the more traditional approaches to state security also contains implications for donors in creating conflict through economic approaches and reconstruction of outmoded political structures that create the opportunity for radicalised violence.[58](#) At the same time, the idea of boundaries and regions in African wars is critical to the understanding of the geographically fluid nature of many wars. One cannot fully understand the wars in Sierra Leone, for example, without taking into account the rest of the Mano River region of West Africa. From a policy point of view, coping with the boundaries set by formal states remains a critical issue since so many African states are unable to project their own power up to their own state borders. Regional solutions to cross-border warfare remain the only way forward in coping with on-going security problems. A vivid example of this is the experience of DDR programmes across many parts of Africa, which have not been entirely successful at least partly because of the 'regional warrior' phenomenon and the ability of young men firstly to sign up to violent movements with the express aim of being paid to demobilise, and secondly, to be demobilised more than once, frequently in different countries.

The 4GW theoretical model of the evolution of warfare may not be applicable to Africa in the same way that it may or may not be applicable to Europe, but it does highlight the idea that African wars are exhibiting similar processes to those currently seen in different asymmetric wars. It is also possible that in many parts of Africa, the 'trinitarian' structures of war have either never existed or were always weak in terms of maintaining the boundaries between the three core elements, e.g., in terms of differentiating politics from the uniformed military, and the military from other, internal security actors. This is not to suggest a linear model of African warfare, but rather to subscribe to Moran's view that African history tends to be cyclical, following Kopytoff's conceptual picture of African societies perpetuating groups of 'frontiersmen' and these loser groups then establishing their own polities at the periphery and contributing to further conflict cycles.[59](#)

What is perhaps different about recent African wars is the external influences over these largely internal cycles of violence. In particular, the layered structure of most African wars from individual combatants through to specific armed groups and from localised conflicts through to regional and international links, has transformed traditional forms of violence into African wars that fuse modern technology and networks with aspects of tradition and ritual. Contemporary analysis of many African conflicts in many ways confirms aspects of 4GW as an approach,

particularly the emphasis on the importance of culture, narratives, and history in defining the internal logic of groups engaged in African wars. At the same time, whereas 4GW is certainly not new, it may point to a transformation of African wars from one dominated by states to one dominated by control of economic and political networks comprising both state and non-state groups. This mode of warfare is one without clear boundaries between military and non-military, civilian and soldier, and battlefield and non-battlefield. In other words: pre-colonial patterns of warfare with new characteristics.

## Notes

1. Lord Kitchener to St John Broderick in 1901. PRO 30/57/22/Y62. St John Broderick was Kitchener's immediate political master as Secretary of State for War.
2. Thomas Hammes, 'War Evolves into the Fourth Generation', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (August 2005), pp. 279-85. See also replies by Evans, Van Creveld, Wirtz, Echevarria, Ferris, Sorenson, and Thornton included in the special issue.
3. See, for example, P. Paterson (Lieutenant Commander, US Navy), 'Into Africa: A new frontier on the war on terror', *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, Vol. 132, No. 5 (2006), pp. 32-8. The point about the views of the Islamists about Ugandan troops is reinforced by the author's own conversations with a colleague who was still writing the African Union terms of deployment as the Ugandans deployed in Somalia. Unsurprisingly, local Islamist elements gained significant political capital (and recruitment) from identifying these troops as another way in which the US is fighting a 'war on Islam' rather than a 'war on terror'. In a sense it does not matter if this is true or not - the perception remains important.
4. Robert Tomes, 'Schlock and Blah: Counter-insurgency Realities in a Rapid Dominance Era', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 37-56. See also Mark T. Berger and Douglas A. Borer, 'The Long War: insurgency, counterinsurgency and collapsing states', special issue of *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2007), where Berger and Borer describe the idea of 'The Long War' as a 'new' era in warfare and US geopolitics. Interestingly, none of the 17 articles included goes beyond mentioning Africa in passing.
5. Martin Van Creveld, 'It will continue to conquer and spread', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (August 2005), pp. 229-32
6. Hammes, 'War Evolves into the Fourth Generation' (note 2).
7. The special issue of *Contemporary Security Policy* (note 2) on 4GW includes both of these views.
8. Jeremy Black, *War: Past, Present and Future* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton, 2000); Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Colin Gray, *Strategy for Chaos: Revolution in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History* (London, Frank Cass, 2002); MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray

(eds) *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001).

9. Quoted on p. 257 of Lawrence Freedman, 'War Evolves into the Fourth Generation: A comment on Thomas X. Hammes', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (August 2005), pp. 254-63.

10. Navy Network-Centric Warfare Concept: Key Programs and Issues for Congress, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, May 2005, available at <[http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/navy\\_network.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/navy_network.htm)> and the US Joint Vision 2020 document available at <<http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision/jvpub2.htm>>.

11. Hammes, 'War Evolves into the Fourth Generation' (note 2).

12. In many ways, this phrase 'hearts and minds' is a signal of 4GW's US parochialism, since the phrase has been used, for example, by the British Army since its involvement in Northern Ireland during the 1970s, an experience that became obvious during the recent operation in Iraq and the difference in approaches taken by the UK forces. See David Tucker, *Confronting the Unconventional: Innovation and Transformation in Military Affairs*, Strategic Studies Institute Working Paper, October 2006.

13. See, for example, *Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?*, Crisis Group Africa Report No. 95, 11 July 2005. In fact, whilst Mogadishu has certainly calmed down, Islamic rule has involved a number of different elements including external funding to train Islamic fighters and street-corner executions. At the same time, people on the streets were generally pushed towards the Islamists because of the poor history of international involvement and the current 'security' agenda, which is perceived as being inherently biased against Muslims, and thus creating conditions for radicalisation and recruitment.

14. This situation is currently developing on the ground as this article is written. Much of the information here is from the author's direct contacts with people on the ground engaged in the policy process in Addis Ababa and Mogadishu.

15. Van Creveld, 'It will continue to conquer and spread' (note 5).

16. Mark Duffield, 'Globalisation and War Economies: Promoting order or the Return of History?', *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 19-36.

17. I am grateful to the editors for raising this point with me in their communications.

18. See, for example, Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), which takes the former Yugoslavia as a model that is then extrapolated.

19. See, for example, P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, 'On the Economic Causes of Civil War', *Oxford Economic Papers* Vol. 50, No. 4 (1988), pp. 563-73, and P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, 'On the

incidence of Civil War in Africa', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (2002), pp. 13-28.

20. C. Clapham, *African Guerrillas* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998); J. Herbst, 'Economic Incentives, Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa', *Journal of African Economies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2002), pp. 270-94.

21. An exception to this is J. Herbst, 'African Militaries and Rebellion: The Political Economy of Threat and Combat Effectiveness', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2004), pp. 357-69, which tries to relate combat effectiveness with mobilisation during conflicts.

22. My thanks to Paul Richards for this specific point.

23. See, for example, Herbst, 'African Militaries' (note 19).

24. See for example, Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars* (note 16).

25. Edward Newman, 'The "New Wars" Debate: A Historical Perspective is Needed', *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2004), pp. 173-89.

26. For an interesting view of this conflict see C. Young, M Mirzeler, 'Pastoral politics in the northeast periphery in Uganda: AK47 as a Change Agent', *Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. 38 (2000), pp. 407-30.

27. W. Reno, *Warlord politics and African states* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

28. D. Keen, 'The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars', Adelphi Paper 320 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998).

29. See the UN Security Council's Report on the Diamond and Arms Trade in Sierra Leone, December 2000, available at <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/sierra/report/001220.htm>>.

30. This could of course be because warlords are clear about what they get out of it, i.e., corruption is explicit, not implicit as it is in dealing with formal government.

31. Collier and Hoeffler, 'On the Economic Causes of Civil War' (note 17).

32. Paul Jackson, 'The March of the Lord's Resistance Army: Greed or Grievance in Northern Uganda?', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2002), pp. 29-52; Henrik Vigh, *Navigating Terrains of war: Youth and soldiering in Guinea-Bissau* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2006); Sverker Finnstrom, *Living with bad surroundings: War and uncertainty in northern Uganda*, Working Papers in Cultural Anthropology, Uppsala University, 1999; Danny Hoffman, 'The civilian target in Sierra Leone and Liberia: Political power, military strategy and humanitarian intervention', *African Affairs*, Vol. 103, No. 411, pp. 211-26; Koen Vlassenroot and Timothy

Raeymaekers, 'The politics of rebellion and intervention in Ituri: The emergence of a new political complex?', *African Affairs*, Vol. 103, No. 412, pp. 413-430.

33. Jackson, 'The March of the Lord's Resistance Army' (note 29); Finnstrom, *Living with Bad Surroundings* (note 29).

34. Quoted in *Human Rights Watch*, 'Youth, Poverty and Blood: the lethal legacy of West Africa's regional warriors', Vol. 17, No. 5 (March 2005), p. 22.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers, 'The politics of rebellion' (note 29).

37. See, G. Prunier, 'Rebel movements and proxy warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986-99)' *African Affairs*, Vol. 103, No. 412 (2004), pp. 359-84.

38. Vigh, *Navigating Terrains of War* (note 29); Paul Jackson, 'Reshuffling an Old Deck of Cards: the Politics of Decentralisation in Sierra Leone', *African Affairs*, Vol. 106, Jan. 2007, pp. 95-111.

39. And, notably, turned the RUF's ultra-violent tactics back on to them. In one meeting in Bo Town in Sierra Leone, a former combatant told me that they regularly executed RUF infiltrators and either sent them back in pieces to the rebels or divided them up between the different commands to encourage teamwork!

40. This raises an interesting issue from the point of view of 4GW in that it no longer becomes an asymmetrical conflict, but rather a conflict of equals.

41. Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy* (note 38); Jackson, 'Greed or Grievance in Northern Uganda' (note 29); Finnstrom, *Living with bad surroundings* (note 29).

42. See Jackson, 'Greed or Grievance in Northern Uganda' (note 29) for a more detailed discussion of the importance of youth in recruitment and indoctrination

43. Mary Moran, *Liberia: the violence of democracy* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 37.

44. Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy* (note 38) and Moran, *ibid.*, disagree over some of this, with Ellis taking the interpretation more literally as an ontological reality, which remains a contested view.

45. Joanna Skelt, *Rethinking Peace Education in War-Torn Societies: A theoretical and empirical investigation with special reference to Sierra Leone*, International Extension College, Cambridge (unpublished paper).

46. Jackson, 'Greed or Grievance in Northern Uganda' (note 29).

47. Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy* (note 38).

48. *Ibid.* The idea of a 'mask' was reinforced by the adoption of new names for many of the combatants, the most common in West Africa being 'Rambo'; Marianne Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005).

49. Yet was actually represented by that most post-modern of American materials - plastic.

50. In Freetown, just after the war, the most common song playing on the radio was by 50 Cent, who had just released an album called *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, a sentiment taken somewhat literally on the streets.

51. Danny Hoffman, 'The civilian target in Sierra Leone and Liberia' (note 29).

52. Cannibalism is frequently cited in media reports of conflicts in the DRC, but there has been little evidence of this.

53. See, for example, Jackson, 'Greed or Grievance in Northern Uganda' (note 29) and Finnstrom, *Living with bad surroundings* (note 29) for more detail on this. Certainly the current (2007) peace discussions with the LRA are extremely difficult for a number of reasons, not least because there are International Criminal Court warrants for Kony, Otti, and other leaders who constitute what is effectively a cult.

54. T. Shaw, 'Regional Dimensions of Conflict and Peace-Building in Contemporary Africa', *Journal of International Development* Vol. 15 (2003), pp. 487-498.

55. Moran, *Liberia: the violence of democracy* (note 40).

56. See Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005). Leopold suggests that analysts should not use the same words to describe such different social processes.

57. See, for example, the OECD or the UK's approaches to security sector reform. These can be accessed at <[www.ssrnetwork.net](http://www.ssrnetwork.net)>.

58. See Christopher Cramer, *Civil War is Not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for violence in developing countries* (London: Hurst, 2006).

59. Moran, *Liberia: the violence of democracy* (note 40).