



AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

Session 5: Violence and Conflict Trends in Africa

Mr. John Clifton
Dr. Paul Williams

Violence & Conflict Trends in Africa

Prof. Paul D. Williams
George Washington
University

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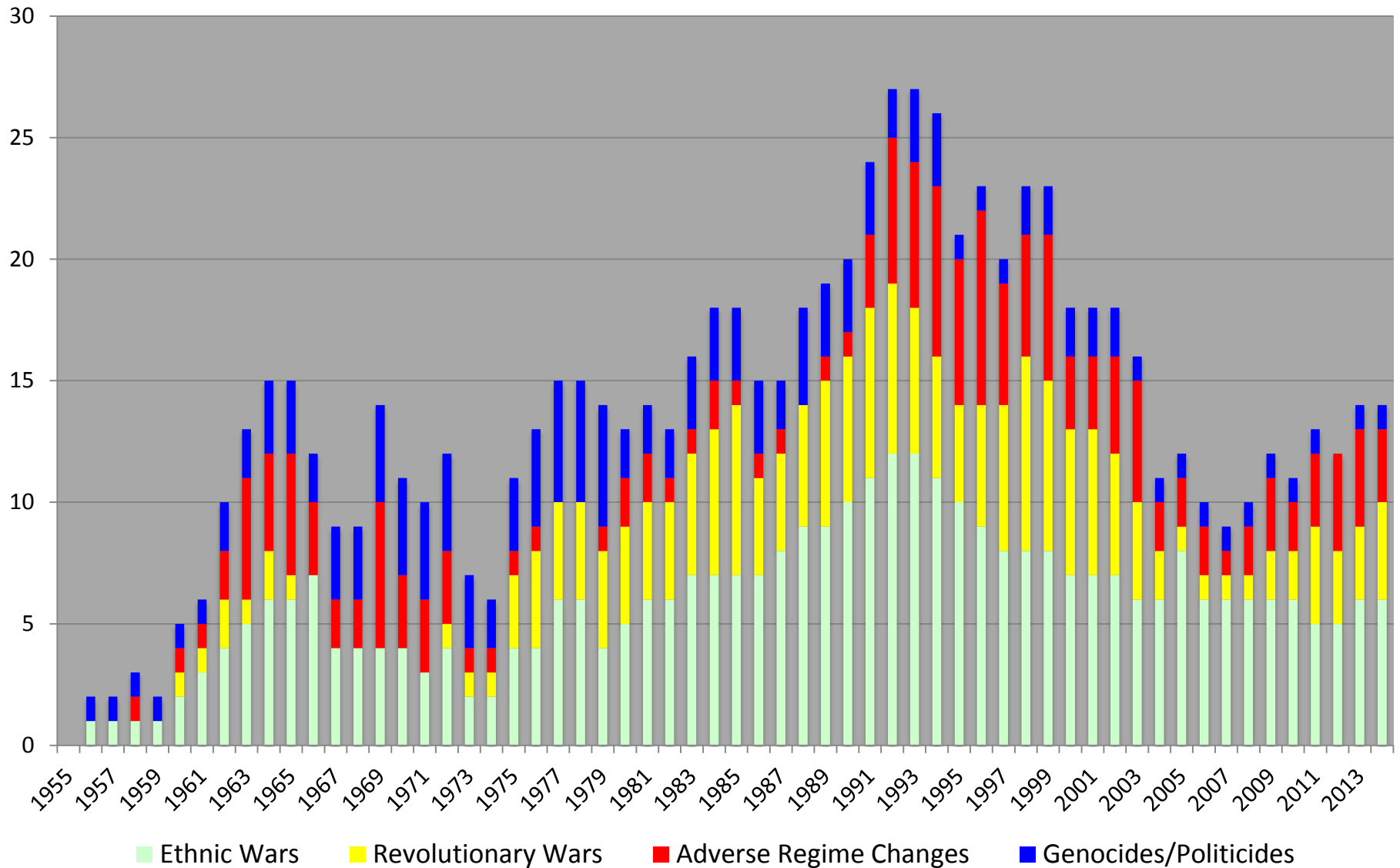
PAUL D. WILLIAMS

WAR & CONFLICT IN AFRICA

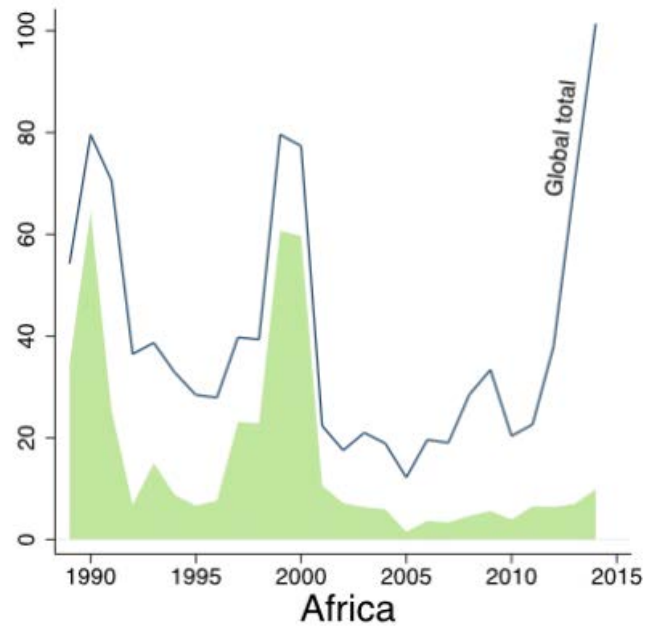
SECOND EDITION FULLY REVISED & UPDATED

State Failure Events in Africa, 1955-2014

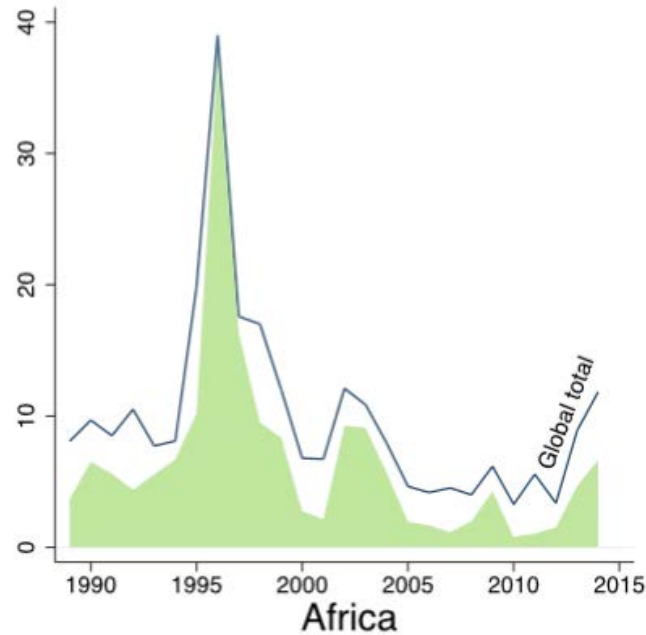
Source: PITF <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/PITF%20Consolidated%20Case%20List%202014.pdf>



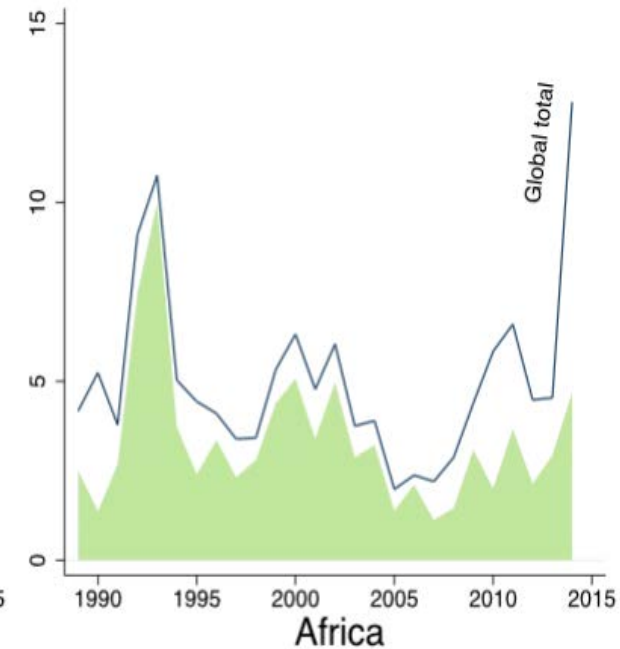
Violent Deaths in Africa compared to Global Total, 1989-2014



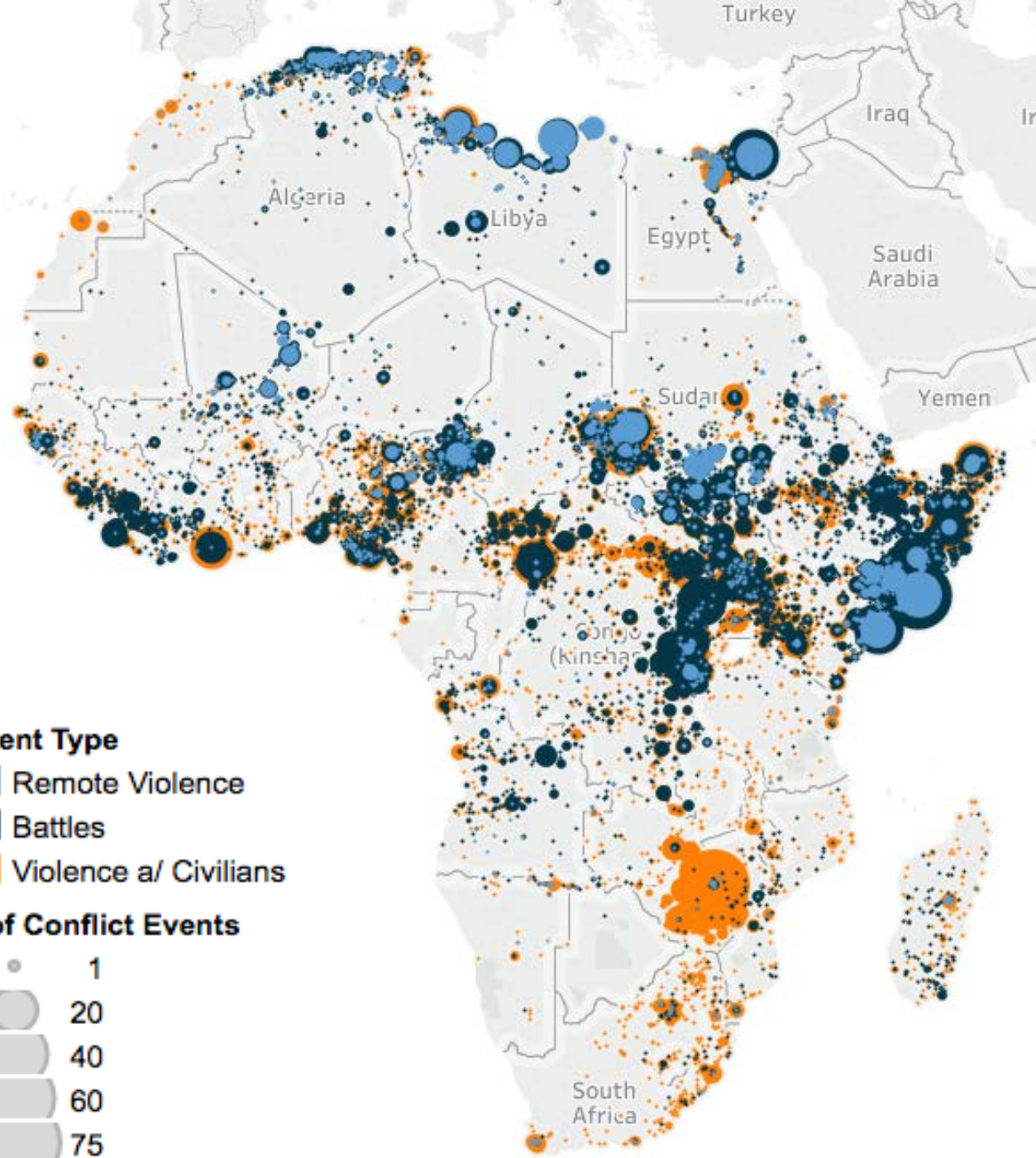
State-based
Battle-Related
Deaths



One-Sided
Violence Deaths
*Excluding Rwanda genocide



Non-State
Deaths



Armed Conflict Location & Event Database (ACLED)

Political Conflict in Africa, 2000-2016

<http://www.acleddata.com/visuals/maps/dynamic-maps/>

Context

1. Our collective data & knowledge about armed conflicts in Africa is not perfect.
2. Two distinct “worlds” of Africa’s armed conflict: those rooted in the African state system and those that occur on the margins or outside of the society of states.
3. Prevalence of incoherent conflict parties: lack a single, unified chain of command & hence operate as relatively decentralized entities + lack or fail to articulate clear & coherent political agendas.
4. Regression of various forms of governance indicators across parts of the continent.
5. Increased willingness of the UN and Africa’s regional organizations to engage in more robust and militarized forms of peace operations.



African Heads
of State +18yrs
in power at
start of 2017.

Continuity

1. Most of Africa's recent state-based armed conflicts are "repeat civil wars." B.F. Walter: "old wars restarted by the same rebels after a period of peace."
2. Importance of contested government transitions stemming from problems of democratic deficits and often the dynamics of minority rule.
3. Remains misleading to view most of Africa's state-based armed conflicts as "internal." All influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, by dynamics and processes at the local, national, regional, and global levels.
4. Nonstate armed conflicts remain a prevalent feature of the contemporary landscape, especially in DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, & the Sudans.

Change

1. Having declined considerably from the early 1990s until 2010, the number of state-based armed conflicts in Africa has recently increased (+ an upsurge in the deliberate targeting of civilians by multiple belligerents, including governments).
2. Large spike in popular protests across Africa since 2010. Not new per se many more since the mid-2000s and especially after the Arab Uprising (2011).
3. Increased number & intensity conflicts influenced by environmental change. What S. Straus called “livelihood” struggles, most of which are connected to issues of access to water and land.
4. Growing significance of religious factors in the dynamics of state-based armed conflicts, especially groups espousing a warped version of Islamic theology to justify their militancy.
5. Increasing use of “remote violence” in some of Africa’s armed conflicts, especially IEDs and suicide bombers in Libya, Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia.

So what? (1) Peacemaking

- Orthodox approach since 1990 is power-sharing: transitional GNUs until a new constitutional order can be agreed.
- But model challenged by:
 1. Unwillingness to share power;
 2. Extremist groups.
- Sorely testing Africa's stated preference for inclusive forms of peacemaking.
- African organizations are now more likely to refuse negotiation with these groups and authorize sanctions and/or enforcement missions to defeat them.
- Governance holds the key to stopping wars. Demilitarizing governance structures is key.

So what? (2) Peace Operations

- Tough mandates including warfighting, COIN, stabilization, & even counterterrorism.
- Require specialist capabilities; cost more money; raise big doctrinal questions; & likely to be more deadly.
- Challenges:
 - No peace to keep stretches impartiality.
 - Without viable peacemaking state-building & civilian protection mandates offer no quick exit strategy.
 - Must get better at dealing with local level dynamics. Probably police!
 - Unable to tackle transnational dimensions of war e.g. organized crime.



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