CONFLICT TRENDS IN AFRICA, 1946-2004
A MACRO-COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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African Regional Trends in Warfare and Political Instability

The modern state system in Sub-Saharan African[1] (hereafter referred to simply as Africa) is relatively new; only Ethiopia, Liberia, and South Africa were recognized as independent states prior to 1950 and most states in the region only gained their independence since 1960. For the most part, the economies of the African states at the time of their ascensions to independent status were primarily extractive and mainly directed toward trade with the extra-regional system. There was little or no industrial or service economic capacities in place at independence, except in South Africa. Indeed, after three or more decades of independent public policy, the industrial and service sectors of most African countries remain severely underdeveloped, averaging about 15% of export earnings, and the value of formal inter-regional trade is only about one-fifth the value of trade with OECD countries.[2] In 2001, per capita income for the Africa region (US$318) was only about one-fourteenth of the global average (US$4,376).[3] Coincident with Africa's poor economic performance and severely low levels of infrastructural and industrial development in the contemporary era has been high levels of political instability and political violence. Indeed, Africa is an extremely weak and volatile regional sub-system in the globalizing world system; pervasive and persistent violence has confounded efforts to improve economic capacity and performance in the region. Eight macro-comparative perspectives on conflict trends in Africa are charted in order to establish a fairly comprehensive picture and understanding of the background of the situation in the region in mid-2005. Regional variations in three principal conflict trends are then presented for the Central, East, West, and Southern regions of Africa. The report concludes with discussions of three models that help to explain the conditions that undermine stability and limit the capacity of African states to better manage societal conflicts.

Trends in Armed Conflicts. Figure 1 provides a standard view of Africa regional trends in major armed conflict. The basic assumption underlying the methodology used to construct the warfare trends graph is that violent conflict stands as a measure of a fundamental disturbance in the "normal" social dynamics of state-societal systems, that is, warfare is symptomatic of the degree to which social conflict, coupled with ineffective conflict management, has transformed collective action from constructive to destructive modes of behavior. Much as the strength of storms and earthquakes can be measured independently from their largely circumstantial effects on affected systems, episodes of violent social conflict can be measured on a comparable magnitude scale that can be aggregated to chart general trends.[4] Figure 2 plots the annual

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[1] The Sub-Saharan Africa region, for the purposes of this study, include all independent countries on the African continent with total populations greater than 500,000 in 2005, except the northern tier states of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Additionally, the island states of Madagascar and the Comoros are included in the analyses. Thus defined, the region comprises forty-three states in mid-2005.

[2] Data on manufacturing exports comes from the World Bank's World Development Indicators and data on trade comes from the IMF Direction of Trade database.

[3] World Development Indicators, constant 1997 US$.

[4] Only countries with at least 500,000 total populations in 2004 are included in this study (43 total in 2004); interstate and societal wars must have reached a magnitude of over 500 directly-related deaths to be listed. The magnitude of each major armed conflict is evaluated according to its comprehensive effects on the state or states directly affected by the warfare, including numbers of combatants and casualties, size of the affected area and dislocated populations, and extent of infrastructure damage. It is then assigned a single score on a ten-point scale measuring the magnitude of its adverse effects on the affected society; this value is recorded for each year the war remains active. See Monty G. Marshall, "Measuring the Societal Effects of War," chapter 4 in Fen Osler Hampson and David Malone, eds., *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System* (Boulder, CO:

numbers of countries experiencing any magnitude event of each of three general types of armed conflict, as well as the annual number of countries experiencing any type or magnitude of armed conflict, for further reference.

The general trend line in figure 1 is charted in orange and shows a fairly constant increase in the magnitude of warfare in Africa during the Cold War/decolonization period, 1946-1989 (each of the trends graphs is marked with a vertical line at 1989 as a point of reference demarcating the end of the Cold War). The upward trend continued through the early years of the 1990s; over forty percent of the region's countries were experiencing wars at the peak in 1993. The upward trend is mainly attributable to the protracted duration of wars during the Cold War period; very few wars were ended by negotiated settlement during this period.[5] Since 1993 the trend has reversed and the general magnitude of war decreased to about half its peak value by 2004. That downward trend appears to be continuing in 2005.
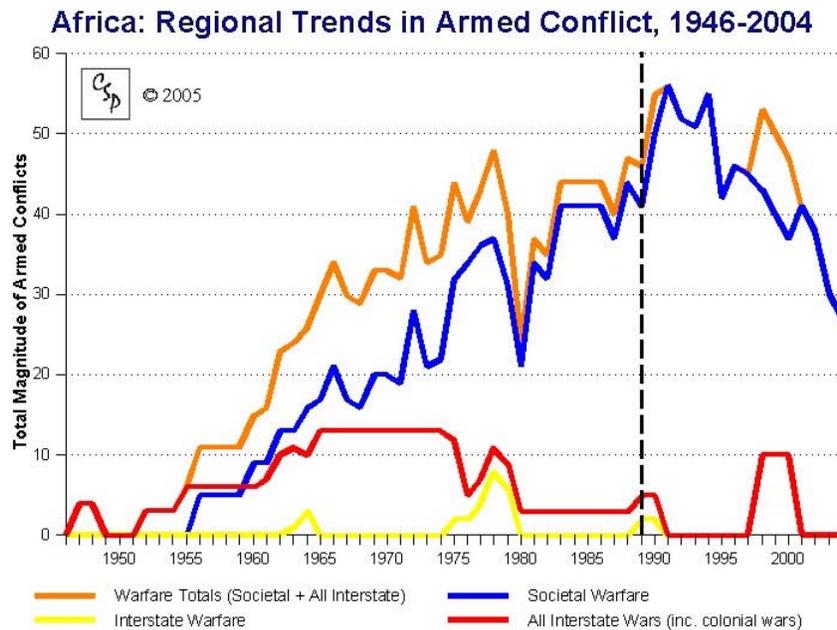

Figure 1

The majority of warfare during the period is comprised by the several variants of "societal war:" ethnic, revolutionary, inter-communal, and political mass murder. Interstate wars are largely comprised by wars of independence against European colonial administrations. Upon gaining independence, about half of the anti-colonial wars degenerated into civil wars. Interstate wars between African countries have been minor and brief, mainly concerning territorial or cross-border issues. During the contemporary era, there have been only two interstate wars that have risen above the minimum magnitude: the 1978-79 invasion of Uganda by Tanzanian troops that

Lynne Rienner, 2002) for a detailed explanation of the methodology used. A full list of major armed conflicts and the magnitude scores assigned to each is provided in Annex 1a, following.
[5] Negotiated settlements are listed in Annex 5: Africa Peace Agreements, following

ousted the Idi Amin regime in Uganda (magnitude 2) and a magnitude 5 war between Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1998 to 2000, a war strongly linked to the long and bitter separatist war that Eritreans fought in Ethiopia prior to gaining their independence in 1993. These examples are emblematic of the conflation of domestic and international conflict dynamics that has characterized armed conflicts in Africa during the contemporary period and obscured the traditional distinction between civil and interstate conflicts. Of greatest importance in this regard is the issue of transnational support for both government security forces and anti-state militants. Various forms of foreign support and, even, direct military intervention have increased the likelihood and scope of violence in many instances and seriously complicated efforts at conflict resolution; the provision of countervailing military assistance from rival Western and Socialist countries during the Cold War period in well known. Access to cross-border refuge can be a crucial factor in the ability of militant groups to sustain insurgency and active support of such groups has been a common component in regional rivalries. Since the end of the Cold War, there is some evidence that African states are becoming more "adventurous" with their armed forces operating across borders in neighboring countries. This has been particularly troublesome in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as Rwandan and Ugandan troops have used DRC territory as staging areas for battles against rebel groups driven from their own countries. Cross-border movement and operations by both rebel, state, and state-less armed forces is becoming increasing common in Africa. On the more positive side, multilateral engagement in peace negotiations and peacekeeping operations by African regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and a more activist African Union have been instrumental in the observed decline in armed conflict in recent years.
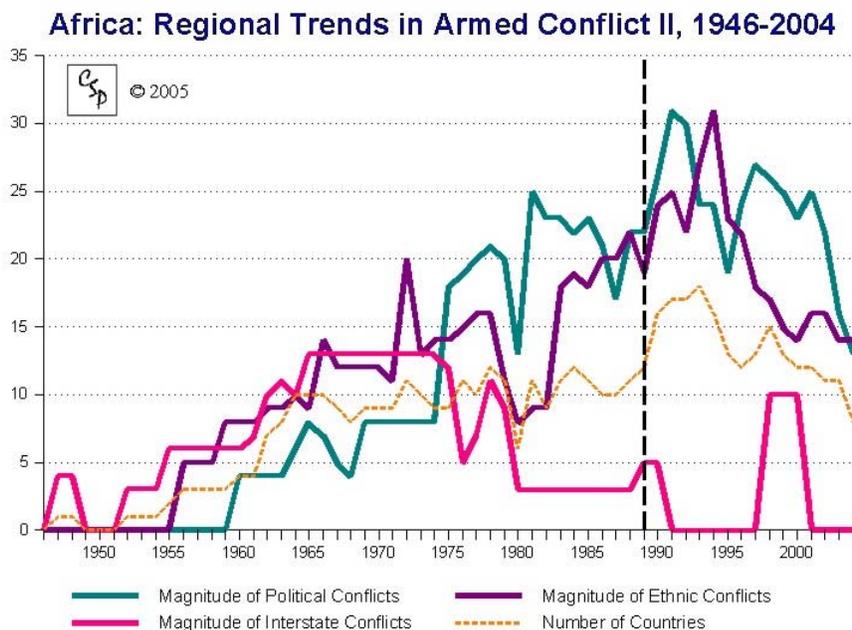

Figure 2

Figure 2 provides a slightly different aggregation of the trend in "societal wars" charted in figure 1, above. The category of "interstate wars" remains the same across the two figures and includes both classic interstate and "extrasystemic" (colonial) wars (the two types are not shown separately in figure 2). The category of societal wars is broken down according to whether the war was primarily mobilized along ethnic identity or political-ideological (revolutionary) perspectives. The main difference in these two classifications regards the composition and intent of rebel group challenges to state authority. The mobilization of ethnic violence is largely exclusive to a particular social identity group that desires to change its political status, either through greater autonomy or separatist goals or competition with another identity group, or groups, over capture and control of the central state apparatus. The mobilization of political violence and war may incorporate distinct identity groups as a supplementary organizational framework but the goals of the political group are more inclusive, appealing to members of more than one group, and more progressive. The trends indicate that Africans are not necessarily bound to local and parochial identities for the mobilization of political action. Broader, more inclusive agendas are similarly persuasive and may actually be formed in reaction to common perceptions of injustices or ineffectiveness of governance by more exclusive or restricted political or military states. In any case, both forms of societal warfare show marked decreases in recent years, although political wars have declined substantially only in the past few years. This may be due to the difficulty of negotiating terms in wars in which the opposing sides have broader and more complex political interests and agendas.

An additional (orange-dotted) trend line in figure 2 charts the annual numbers of African countries that are experiencing any form or magnitude of major armed conflict in that year. The numbers of countries affected by war during the Cold War period hover around one-quarter of countries in the region (about 10 countries each year from the mid 1960s through the late 1980s), although the number of conflicts and the magnitudes of those conflicts tend to increase during the period. The number of states directly affected by serious armed conflicts increases sharply during the transition to a post-Cold War political environment (to a peak of 18 in 1993), giving some indication of the effects of dramatic changes taking place in the qualities of support and expectations of foreign donors and the global system and the transformation of many African regimes to more open systems. The number of countries affected by war declined to 8 by the end of 2004; this number is not substantially lower than the Cold War period annual rate of about 10 countries. The recent steep decline in war magnitude trends since the early 1990s indicates that some of Africa's most serious and protracted wars have been ended, such as the wars in Mozambique, Ethiopia (Eritrean separatism), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, and southern Sudan.

An important corollary to the recent decline in organized and sustained armed conflicts in many areas of Africa is an overabundance of unemployed, armed fighters in a region that offers limited opportunities for reintegration of former combatants into an peacetime economy. The life experiences, skill set, and "tool box" of ex-combatants provide powerful incentives for many to pursue post-war occupations in banditry, organized crime, mercenary activities, or "strongarm" politics. At least over the medium term (about 25 years on average), the pacification, transformation, and reintegration of former combatants, as well as populations traumatized by the violence and deprivation of war, will place enormous strains on local economies and political systems that have themselves been seriously weakened by the war experience.
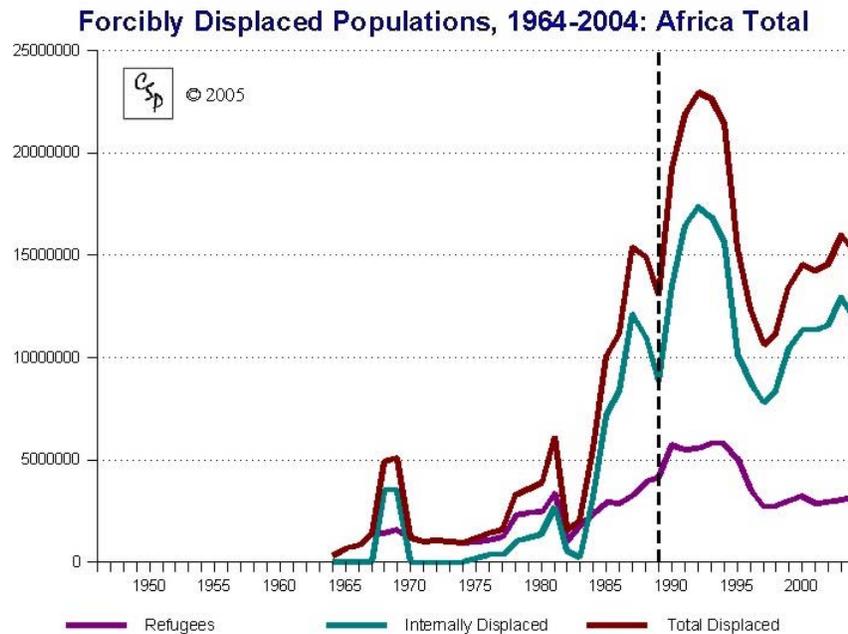
Figure 3

Trends in Forcibly Displaced Populations. Figure 3 charts trends in the numbers of "forcibly displaced populations" in African countries for the years 1964-2004, as reported by the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) in their annual report, *World Refugee Survey*. Forcibly displaced populations are fleeing serious deterioration in local security environments due to armed conflicts and include cross-border "refugees" and "internally displaced" persons, those who do not cross international borders (the two classifications are charted separately and summed in figure 3). As explained by the organization, "Refugee status precedes its recognition. Most of the world's refugees do not receive formal determinations of their status under the 1951 Convention. USCRI, therefore, not only counts those who are officially recognized as refugees (until a durable solution is available), but also asylum seekers awaiting determinations, beneficiaries of more general forms of protection granted for similar reasons, and others USCRI considers to be refugees." Internally displaced populations resemble the status and conditions of refugee populations in all ways except that they do not cross international borders and, so, do not enjoy special recognition and protections through international conventions. The enormous increase in the numbers of forcibly displaced populations since the mid-1980s is remarkable, particularly in the numbers of internally displaced people. This trend, in particular, may be controversial as the amount of attention and the quality of reporting in this region at the local, regional, and global levels has also increased dramatically over the same period, so, part of the documented increase may simply reflect changes in the way information is produced. However, the increase may reflect changes in the nature of local economies where once migratory populations have become increasing settled. It also surely reflects a long-term deterioration in conditions affecting already marginalized,

subsistence-level populations that lead increasingly and more immediately to humanitarian crises in armed conflict locations.

Trends in Political Instability. The fourth African trend graph, "Political Instability in Africa, 1946-2004" (figure 4), combines information on the onsets of regime and political violence events with annual trends in the numbers of unstable states to gain a more comprehensive picture of political instability in African states. "Political stability" here is defined by the absence of major armed conflict and lack of serious disruptions to the central regime's ability to make, implement, and administer public policy.[6] Corollary to these basic traits is the proposition that changes to the quality of government reform toward greater transparency, openness, inclusiveness, competitiveness, and accountability are more likely to occur during periods of political stability. Societal-system stabilization is a process that can only be considered successful, in these terms, when the state manages to avoid the occurrence of political violence or disruptive regime events for a period of ten years or more. Instability provides greater opportunities for both societal and elite challenges to the status quo. For analytic purposes, a period of instability for any given country begins with the onset of the first instability event and ends with the conclusion of the last instability event in a sequence of adverse events. Sequential instability events in African states occur fairly frequently with armed conflict often overlapping shorter or sudden regime instability events.

The green, dotted-line charts the aggregate number of states that are experiencing general instability in any given year. This trend line shows that the number of unstable states in Africa has remained fairly constant over the contemporary period, with peaks in the initial years of African independence and in the immediate post-Cold War period. These twin peaks belie two distinct phases of fundamental political adjustments in African regimes: the original formation of self-rule and the incorporation of more open, electoral regimes. These two distinct forms of instability are charted in figure 4: state formation instability (orange line; instability that disrupts the establishment of a viable state in a newly independent country) and post-formation instability (black line; instability that disrupts an established, stable state). A list of the periods of stability and instability for each country in Africa is provided in Annex 3 of this report.[7] It is very important to note that, while the shape of the state formation instability trend line is an authentic depiction of the historical record of a regional process that is nearing completion, the post-formation instability trend is historically authentic only through the late 1990s. As noted in the preceding paragraph, state-systemic stability can only be established empirically by the absence

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[6] Once a serious political violence or regime instability event occurs, the relative weakness of political institutions and disruptions of normal societal processes create opportunities for additional challenges to the status quo. As such, instability events very often happen concurrently, that is, the onset of one event coincides with or is followed by the onset of overlapping or sequential instability events. Periods of instability are often characterized by unique combinations of instability events and these "consolidated cases" of general political instability can thus be distinguished from periods of political stability. The approach used here builds on the approach originally developed by the US Government's State Failure Task Force but expands coverage to include three additional types of instability events: 1) successful coups d'etat, 2) attempted coups d'etat, and 3) serious episodes of inter-communal violence in which the state is not directly involved. Each of these several types of political instability events were plotted along a time-line for each of the forty-three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and clusters of events demarcated periods of general, political instability. Individual events are listed in Annexes to this report, as are periods of stability and instability for each country in Africa since 1946.
[7] Event plots for each of the fifty countries in Africa can be viewed on the Center for Systemic Peace Web site at http://members.aol.com/cspmgm/africa.

of armed conflict and regime instability events over a period of about ten years. Fifteen countries that are noted in Annex 3 as having (re)gained stability during the past ten years and, of these, nine have been free of instability events for five years or less.[8] The steep decline in the number of unstable states over the past ten years is based on a conditional assessment of the current situations in recently unstable states and a critical assumption of a continuation of current levels of international engagement and commitment to political stabilization in Africa.
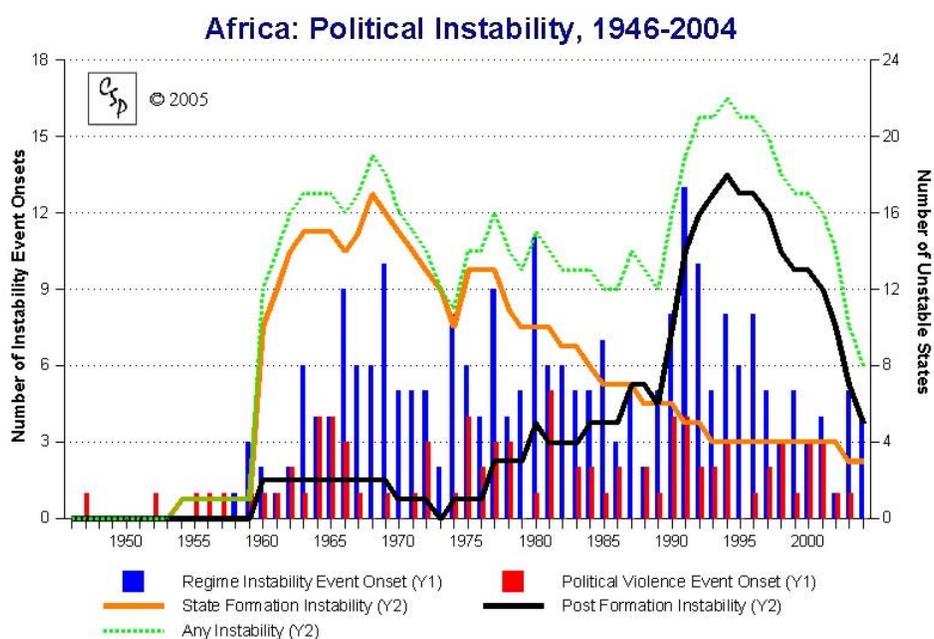

Figure 4

The chart in figure 4 shows that instability in African states has remained a fairly constant and serious problem since the decolonization period began in the 1960s. Stabilization of newly independent countries proved difficult as more than half of all countries (23 of 40) experienced a period of state formation instability immediately following independence (ranging from four to thirty-five years for the twenty countries that eventually gained stability; fourteen years on average). Of these, three countries have not yet achieved effective and comprehensive political stability: Nigeria, Sudan, and Uganda; a fourth country, Angola, appears to have finally gained systemic stability with the end of its protracted civil war with UNITA in 2002 (including the three cases that have not yet stabilized raises the average for state formation instability to over eighteen years). Ten countries experienced a second period of instability and one (Democratic Republic of Congo) has experienced two subsequent periods of instability. On the other hand, seventeen countries were able to establish stable states at the date of independence and, of these, ten have remained stable through mid-2005.

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[8] The nine countries that have gained or regained stability in the past five years are Angola, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo-Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone. Of these, the situation in the Central African Republic is the most tenuous.

On average, over seven new instability events occurred annually and twenty-five to sixty-one percent of African states were experiencing a period of instability at any point from 1960 through 2002 (an estimated nineteen percent are unstable in early 2005). Although there is a much lower number of unstable states in between the peak in state formation instability in 1968 and the rapid onset of post-formation instability in the early 1990s (affecting about half of African countries), the scope and frequency of instability events in Africa only begins to decrease in the late 1990s. In the most recent year (2004), eight states are considered politically unstable. as already noted, the relatively low number of unstable countries in mid-2005 (the lowest percentage since 1953) is somewhat speculative as it is based on projections of continued stabilization in several countries (see, footnote 8). These countries are particularly vulnerable to new challenges and disruptions that would mark a continuation of the prior period of instability; proactive international engagement is particularly vital to ensure recovery in these situations. Countries with ongoing instability problems in early 2005 include Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda.

Trends in the General Quality of Governance. Figure 5, "Africa: Regimes by Type, 1946-2004," charts annual changes in the numbers of three basic types of political regimes: democracies, anocracies, and autocracies.[9] The chart presents a very distinct "signature" for institutional authority in African countries that was shaped largely by the period of European colonization. In 1950, there were only three independent states in Sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia, Liberia, and South Africa. The number increased to five by the end of the 1950s but jumped sharply as seventeen countries, mainly French colonial territories, gained independence in 1960. The number of states gradually rose to thirty-six by 1970. The last territory to leave European control was Djibouti (from France in 1977). More recently, two countries have emerged from control by other African countries: Namibia gained independence from South Africa in 1990 and Eritrea separated from Ethiopia in 1993.

The picture that emerges from the regime trends diagram is that experiments in democratic forms of governance in Africa were relatively rare and short-lived during the Cold War period. At the time of emergence as independent states, only nine countries were governed by democratic regimes, eighteen countries had autocratic regimes, eleven were anocracies, and one emerged without an effective central government (Zaire in 1960). Within ten years from their date of independence, six of the ten new African democracies had failed and those states seized were by autocratic rule: Lesotho, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. Only Botswana and Namibia have maintained democratic regimes since their inception; the democratic regime in The Gambia lasted nearly forty years before falling to autocratic rule in 1994.[10] All eleven countries that emerged from the period of colonial rule with mixed, or incoherent, forms of governance (i.e., anocracies) fell into autocratic rule within fifteen years. In the late 1980s, over eighty-five percent of African countries were governed by personalistic, bureaucratic, or military dictatorships. Only seven countries initiated democratic transitions during the Cold War era:

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[9] For a description of the Polity IV project and the regime coding scheme and data used in figure 5, see the Polity IV Web site at http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity. For a more detailed explanation of the three basic regime types charted in figure 5, see chapter 4 in Marshall and Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2005*, available from the Center for Global Policy Web site at http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu.

[10] The white-minority regimes in Apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) were nominally democratic but highly restricted, with the majority of the populations in these countries politically, economically, and culturally disenfranchised.

Sierra Leone and Sudan in the 1960s; Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana (twice), Nigeria, and Uganda in the 1970s; and Sudan, again, in the 1980s. None of these early attempts lasted more than five years before falling once again under autocratic rule.
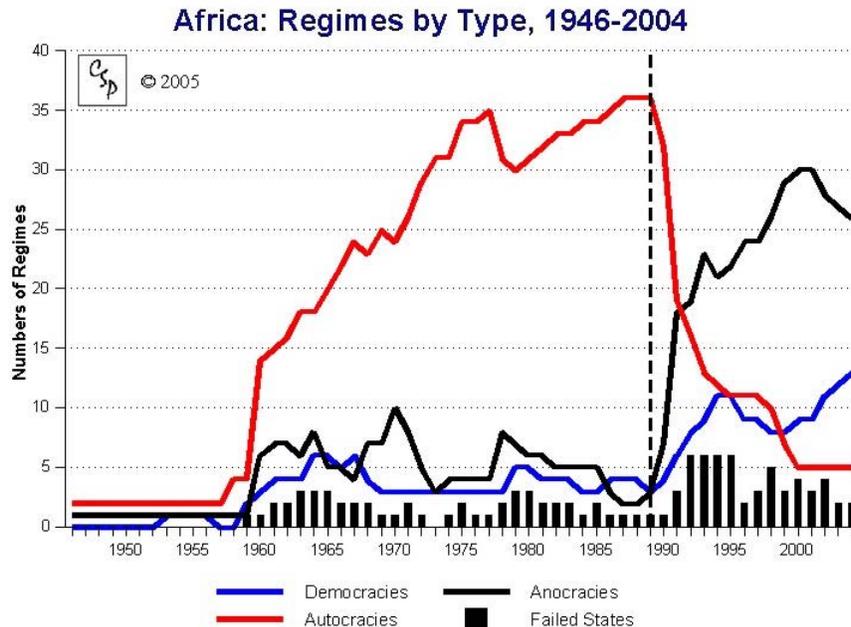

Figure 5

The end of the Cold War period triggered major changes in the prevalent forms of governance in Africa. By 1992, the number of autocracies in Africa had fallen by half and continued to decline through the 1990s, reaching a low of five in 2000. The number of democratic regimes, however, increased to just eleven by 1994 from three in 1989; there were thirteen democracies in Africa at the end of 2004. Nearly all African countries have experienced some improvement in the qualities of governance since 1990. However, many of the new democratizing regimes have faltered along the way and some, such as Congo (Brazzaville), Guinea-Bissau, and Ivory Coast, have failed. Two countries counter the generally positive trend by moving toward greater autocracy in the 1990s: The Gambia and Zimbabwe. The sudden shift away from autocratic forms of governance in post-Cold War Africa provides strong evidence of the negative link between political violence and democratization. The countries that made the most dramatic moves toward democracy were almost invariably those that had experienced no, or fairly minor or localized, armed conflict since 1946. Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, and Senegal have established democratic regimes in largely peaceful societies.[11] Bold moves toward democracy sometimes triggered armed conflicts in peaceful societies: regime transitions in

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[11] Low levels of violence are common in most African countries, as is the case generally in low income countries. Episodes of armed conflict are organized and sustained and are characterized by higher magnitudes of systematic violence. In this context, "peaceful" societies are not free from violence, they are free from serious armed conflicts. Democratization in Senegal occurred despite the onset of a low-intensity separatist war in the isolated Casamance region and in Mali despite a low-level rebellion by ethnic-Tuaregs in the north.

Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo (Brazzaville), Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Lesotho, Niger, and Sierra Leone have been complicated or compromised by serious armed violence. Three relatively peaceful countries, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, and Tanzania, have begun to liberalize their regimes at a more measured pace; others, such as Cameroon, Gabon, and Guinea have only modestly eased restrictions on political activity. Only Nigeria and Mozambique instituted major democratic changes following protracted experiences with civil or communal warfare. By and large, states with past, recent, or current experiences with major societal wars remain autocratic, are struggling to design or establish a power-sharing government to end civil wars and dampen intense factionalism, or have collapsed.

The greatest change in the governance profile of Africa has been a dramatic increase in the number of quasi-democratic, or anocratic, regimes. Sixty percent of African countries were governed by anocratic regimes in 2004 and, of these, half are characterized by highly factionalized political competition. General poverty, parochialism, and political factionalism have proven inimical to the persistence and consolidation of democratic forms of governance. During the Cold War period, anocratic regimes were highly prone to the onset of instability events; liberalizing regimes lasted less than four years on average and seldom lasted for more than ten years.[12] In the initial years of post-Cold War Africa, poor, anocratic regimes appear to be less prone to political crises; many have persisted for ten or more years without serious disruption or setback. Incomplete democratization and persistent poverty remain a potentially volatile mixture and a major concern for regional security and development prospects. Also of great concern is the occurrence of failed states where central authority breaks down and administrative and allocative functions and essential social services cease or are severely limited. The black bars in figure 5 mark the annual number of states in a condition of central governance failure. The numbers remain fairly constant through the Cold War era, fluctuating between one and three cases each year. The annual numbers of failed states has doubled in the post-Cold War period. Once states fall apart, it is very difficult to put them back together and, during the interim, violence and predation tend to predominate political interactions.

Political factionalism has been identified as one of the most important factors leading to the onset of political violence and regime instability events by the Political Instability Task Force.[13] Such factionalism has characterized the political processes in over half of African states since the general wave of political liberalization swept through Africa upon the end of the Cold War period (23 of 38). Additionally, four of the five states that remain tightly autocratic are masking highly factionalized societies: Mauritania, Sudan, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. Of course, in its most extreme forms, political factionalism leads to the onset of civil war or separatist rebellions and the collapse of civil order and the authority of the central state. In its most benign forms, factionalism creates legislative gridlock and undermines public confidence in deliberation, legislative process, and, ultimately, the legitimate rule of law. It also raises incentives for bureaucratic corruption, and public toleration of corruption, as "effective" ways to skirt

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[12] See, Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2003* (College Park, MD: CIDCM, 2003), figures 4.2 and 4.3; available on the Web at http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/peace_and_conflict.asp.

[13] The Political Instability Task Force is an assembly of leading academic experts sponsored by the US Government that has issued four, periodic "Phase" reports on its ongoing, active research agenda. Information on the Task Force, case selection criteria, and copies of the first three reports are available on the Task Force Web site at http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/stfail; the Phase IV report will be available soon. Phase V findings will be presented at the September 2005 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington, DC.

legislative deadlock and break through political impasse and intransigence. In almost every case of political factionalism in Africa, the precursors of factionalism in electoral and legislative politics can be found in the exclusionist politics of earlier, autocratic regimes.

Trends in Exclusionary Politics and Discrimination. The prevailing conditions and the rush to institute "modern" state structures in the immediate post-colonial states not only favored autocratic governance but also favored the creation or capture of the state by parochial social groups who often used state authority to enrich groups members and consolidate their group's domination of the political process. These groups used the state apparatus to further retard, restrict, and repress the normal mobilization of social forces so that these social forces could not mount a challenge to the wealth and privileges of the dominant group. The complex social integration that is the foundation of modern economies was severely hampered, or even thwarted, in the more immediate interests of preserving the relative power of the dominant group or groups. Competition between and among social groups was thus focused on control of the state and trust and cooperation was undermined by the instrumental methods used to secure political power and influence. Similarly, the more recent push to institute democratic reforms has often induced political leaders to court political support from loyal kin groups and broader ethnic support bases to help secure electoral victories, limit support for political rivals, and restrict the mobilization of potential challengers.
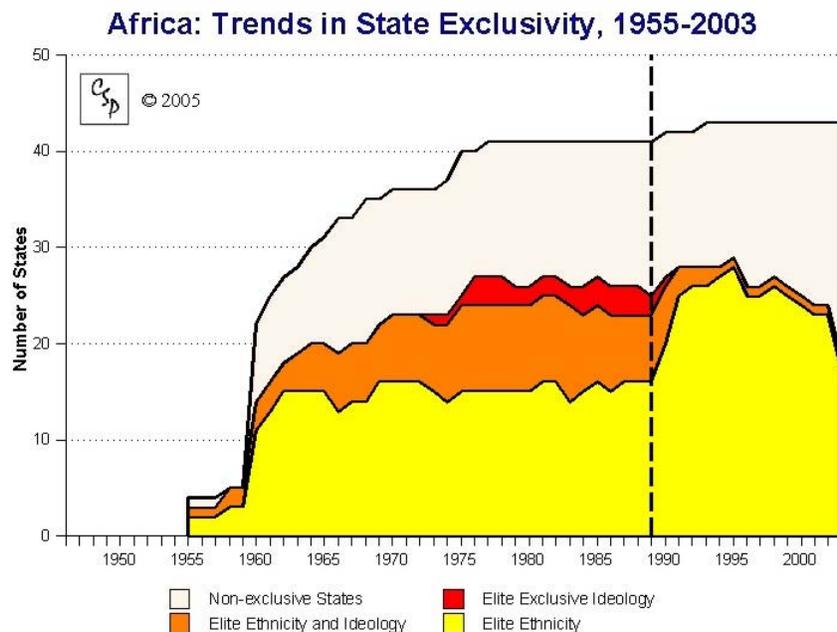

Figure 6

Figure 6 uses data on "elite characteristics" collected for the Political Instability Task Force to chart African trends in the salience of elite exclusionary ethnicity and/or ideology annually since 1955. The chart shows that well over half of African regimes have relied, and continue to rely, on exclusionary policies that favor distinct social identity support groups. This trend has only

begun to diminish in the last ten years as more states move to form broader support coalitions under the auspices of more open, electoral systems. The chart clearly illustrates the importance of ethnic identity in maintaining regime authority. Only during the Cold War was ideology a factor in ensuring the continuity of regimes and restricting access to political opportunities by marginalized outgroups and these ideologies were largely underwritten by ethnic constituencies. The ideological patina was almost completely overwritten by political ethnicity at the end of the Cold War.
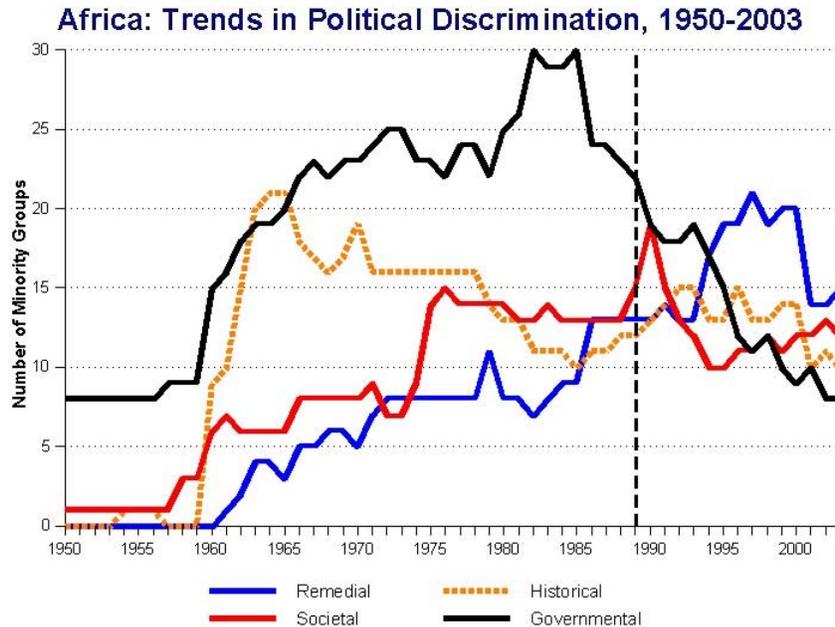

Figure 7

Figure 7, "Trends in Political Discrimination, 1950-2003," focuses on the other side of the political salience of ethnopolitical exclusivity, that is, discriminatory practices affecting social identity outgroups.[14] It is based on data collected by the Minorities at Risk (MAR) project.[15] Countries that comprise the Africa region strike a unique profile in the treatment of ethnic groups. The regional trend in governmental discrimination closely follows the regional trend in autocratic regimes (see figure 5, above) with a steep increase in the number of groups subject to official sanctions through the mid-1980s and falling sharply from the peak in 1985 (30 groups) through the most recent year recorded (8 in 2003). A similar trajectory is found for numbers of groups subject to societal discrimination; those numbers increase until they peak with nineteen in 1990. However, the numbers of groups facing social exclusion have not continued to fall but have, rather, leveled off in recent years. Another unique aspect of ethnic politics in Africa is the large number of historically disadvantaged groups that continue to subsist on the margins of

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[14] For a more detailed explanation of the discrimination data used and a broader analysis of global trends see, Victor Asal and Amy Pate, "The Decline of Ethnic Political Discrimination,1950-2003," chapter 6 in *Peace and Conflict 2005*.

[15] The data is available from the MAR project Web site at http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar.

states and societies in this relatively poor region. What is common between the African trends and the more general global trends is the steady and substantial increase in the number of ethnic groups benefiting from remedial policies. Most of the MAR groups in Africa are "communal contenders" for power. When one group gains hegemony it reduces political access for rival groups. When the latter gain power they redress the balance. This "taking turns" at the political table may explain some of the steep decline in levels of governmental political discrimination in the region since the mid-1980s. In turn, these improving trends must be contrasted to the persistence of elite ethnicity and exclusivity and the factionalism that characterizes electoral politics in many African countries. The interaction between ethnic ethnicity and group political discrimination can reinforce the politics of exclusivity and lead to protracted, deadly competition between rival groups and the most severe forms of discrimination and repression, as has the Hutu-Tutsi rivalry in the Great Lakes region.

Trends in Inter-Communal Group Conflict. The final perspective on general conflict trends in Africa presented in this report concerns an apparent upsurge in inter-communal violence in the region since the end of the Cold War. Using data on collected by the Minorities at Risk project, figure 8 charts decadal figures on inter-communal conflict for the study period (on the left side of the diagram) and annual figures beginning in 1990 (on the right side). Because information on non-state conflict situations in remote localities was often actively suppressed by governments and otherwise scarce prior to the end of the Cold War and the very recent advent of the information and communications "revolution," data on early inter-communal conflicts was recorded by the MAR project for ten year periods. The decadal records indicate the most intense level of conflict interaction that occurred between each of the politicized minority groups covered by the MAR project and any rival group. As the minimum threshold for inclusion by the MAR project is set at 100,000 group population or one percent of the country's total population and its coverage of groups is comprehensive, most significant communal conflict situations should be covered by the data. There is, of course, some unanswerable questions regarding the quality, accuracy, and reliability of reporting at the local level in poor and remote locations during these times. However, countering these questions is the knowledge that violence of any sort attracts media and/or scholar attention. In any case, the data can only be considered suggestive under these conditions. And, what the data suggests is an enormous increase in inter-communal conflict in the 1990s, both in the numbers of group-pairs involved and in the intensity of the conflict interactions in Africa.

Improvements in information and communication in the post-Cold War period have allowed the MAR project to collect annual information on inter-communal group conflict beginning in 1990. These annual figures are charted on the right side of figure 8. It is difficult to compare across the two sides of the graph, except to point out that the 1990s bar on the decadal side corresponds to, and subsumes, the information contained in the first ten bars on the right side of the figure (the years 1990-1999). The recent, annual data charts an apparent decline in inter-communal conflicts since the mid-1990s that appears to follow the general trends in other forms of social conflict noted in the trends graphs and discussed above. Of concern, are the red portions of the data bars that denote "communal warfare." These remain relatively high and require special attention; what appears to explain the recent downward trend is the near absence of "communal rioting" in the most recent 6-year period. It is rare, however, for inter-communal conflicts to escalate to high levels of violence or to affect large areas without drawing in state security forces and, thus,

transforming to civil warfare; communal conflicts are quite self-limiting in scope. Notable exceptions include the Christian-Muslim conflicts that have enveloped the central portion of Nigeria for many years and resulting in as many as 55,000 deaths over the past ten years and the much more limited, but no less brutal, violence between Hema and Lendu groups that has occurred recently in the lawless northeast region of the Democratic Republic of Congo.
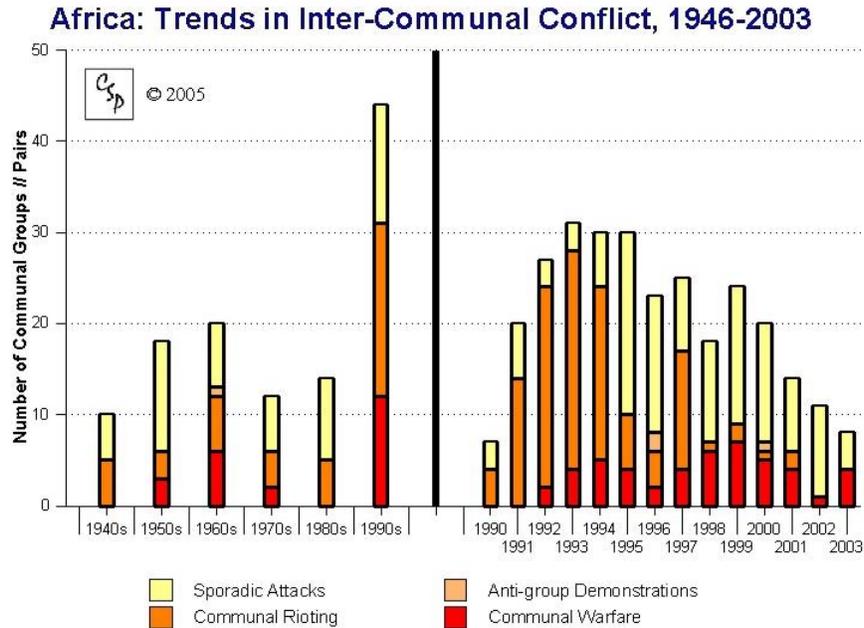

Figure 8

Sub-regional Conflict and Governance Trends. There are important differences in conflict and governance trends in the four sub-regions of Africa: Central, East, Southern, and West. Three trends graphs are presented for each of these four sub-regions; these include trends in armed conflicts, forcibly displaced populations, and regimes by type.
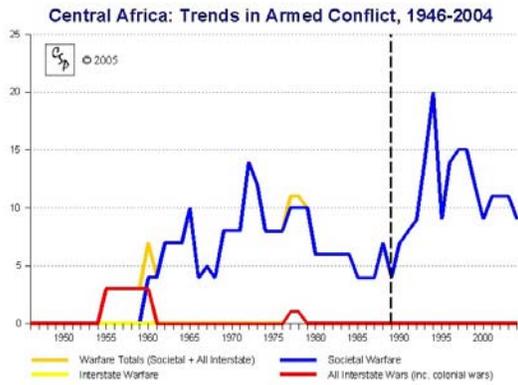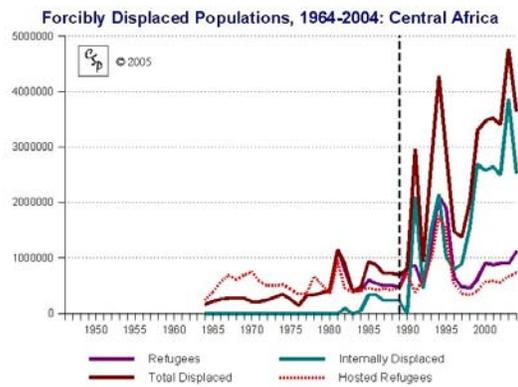
Central Africa

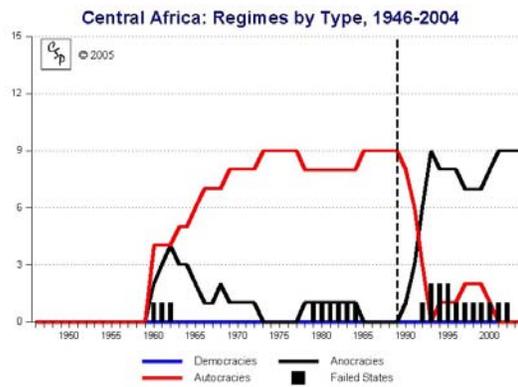**Figure 9a.**

Figure 9b.

Figure 9c.

The Central Africa region includes Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), DRCongo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Rwanda (9 countries).

Central Africa experienced an increase in armed conflicts in the immediate post-Cold War period, although the magnitude has declined from its peak in 1994. Nearly all armed conflict has been societal, however, foreign interventions in local conflicts or in cross-border pursuit of rebel groups have been common.

One particularly troubling charac-teristic of armed conflicts in the 1990s in the Central Africa region has been the massive dislocation of populations fleeing violence and predation by marauding rebel groups.

There have been no democratic regimes established in the Central Africa region; autocratic regimes that predominated during the post-independence period have given way to anocratic regimes in which participation is severely restricted.

There has been an attempt in the DRCongo to form a broad coalition as a way to re-form an effective central government following the failures of the Mobutu and Laurent Kabila regimes; it enjoys an uneasy peace as it tries to extend central government authority to outlying regions while guarding itself against political intrigues and coup attempts at the center. Burundi continues to forge a power-sharing coalition government between former warring Hutu and Tutsi groups. Recent progress in reducing armed conflicts in the Great Lakes countries is partly due to the "export" of rebel groups to "ungoverned" areas of the DRCongo; as central authority is reestablished in those regions, armed rebel groups may return to their home countries.
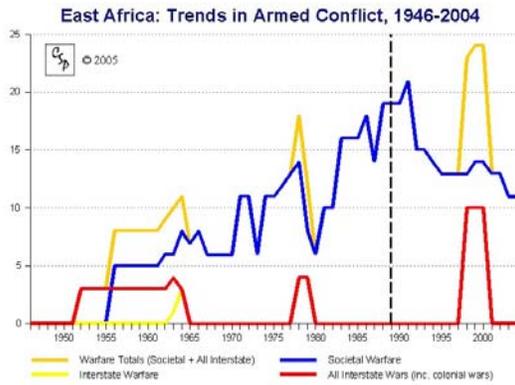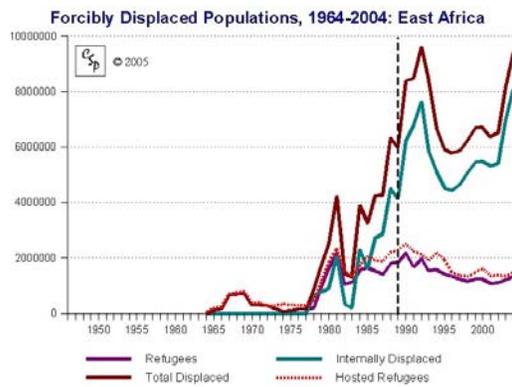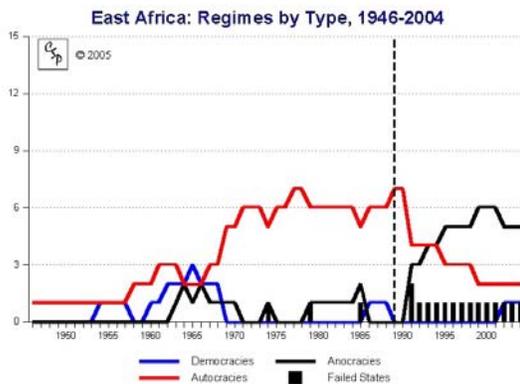
Figure 10a.

Figure 10b.

Figure 10c.

The Horn and East Africa region includes Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda (8 countries).

Horn and East Africa

There is a long and pervasive trend of severe armed conflicts in the East Africa region. The magnitude of violence is the highest of all African regions and has remained particularly strong in the post-Cold War period. There is some evidence that armed conflict is decreasing in recent years, except for the spike that denotes the Ethiopia-Eritrea border war, 1998-2000. Conflicts in this region may be more difficult to resolve and recover due to their social complexity, protractedness, and high levels of violence; this coupled with general poverty and long-term degradation of local environments and social systems.

Population displacements, mainly internally displaced, have been extremely high in this region since the mid 1980s, doubling the numbers that have occurred in the Central region. Following a peak in the early 1990s, the numbers fell briefly but have risen sharply again with the outbreak of serious violence in the Darfur region of Sudan in 2003. The peace agreement with rebel groups in southern Sudan is an essential component in any improvement in regional trends, particularly as the continental interior area spanning from Chad and the CAR in the west to Ethiopia in the east and the DRCongo in the south has been a staging area and refuge for rebel groups from the several concurrent armed conflicts that have plagued the region.

The quality of governance in the countries of this region has been generally poor and highly restricted.
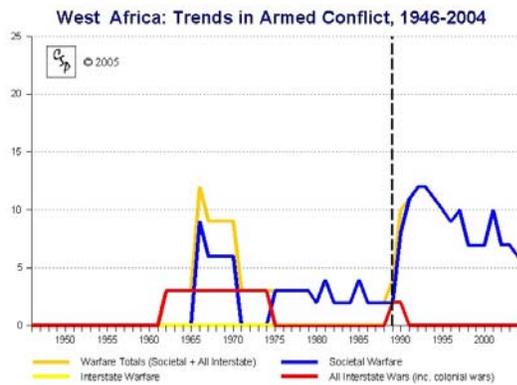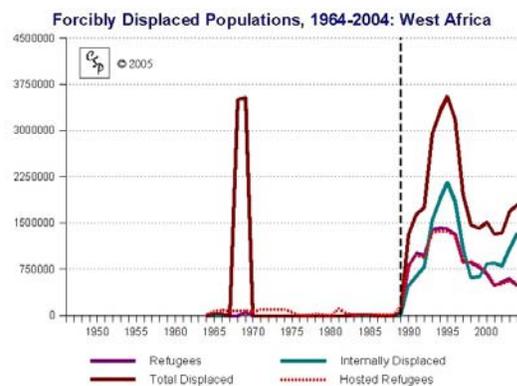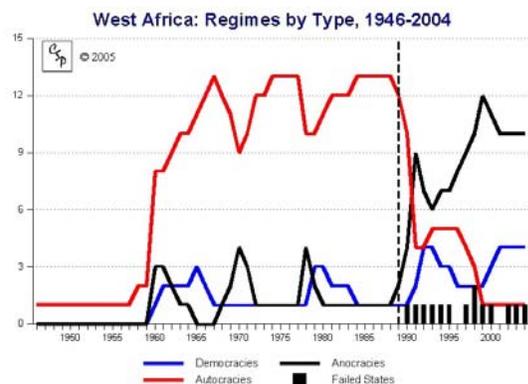
Figure 11a.

Figure 11b.

Figure 11c.

The West Africa region includes Benin, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo (15 countries).

West Africa

The West Africa region comprises a number of relatively small and less populated states, with the notable exception of Nigeria, and this "compartmentalization" has contri-buted to the much lower general levels of violence in contemporary period. However, there has a dramatic increase in the levels of violence and numbers of episodes in the 1990s, beginning with the collapse of civility and authority in Liberia in 1989. Violence has since spread across the region surrounding Liberia. Nigeria has played a key role in helping to stabilize the region, despite its own difficulties in establishing civilian government and managing communal and separatist conflicts among its diverse population. Active international en-gagement in this region has led to notable improvements in the shared security environment and continuing engagement is crucial in supporting regional stabilization. The extent of the war damage, though quite severe in some locations, is relatively limited compared to the Central and East regions.

The West region has had some success with democratic governance and the prospects for increasing liberalization are good, despite pervasive poverty. Special attention must be paid to the fact that the region remains 'under-mobilized"; many social groups remain non-integrated in the formal economy and the central governance systems. Greater political openness will bring additional groups with new demands upon the region's poor economies and governments. The "Ivorite" issue in Ivory Coast is emblematic of the factionalism that has stalled creation of a common "national" agenda.
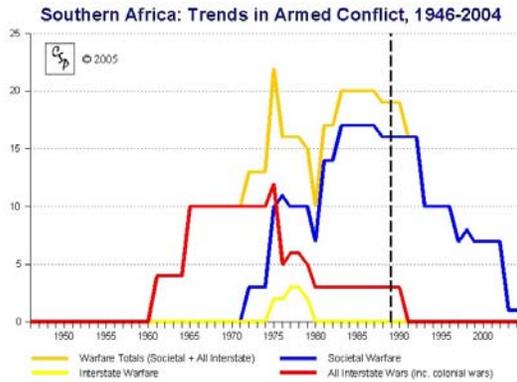
Southern Africa: Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946-2004
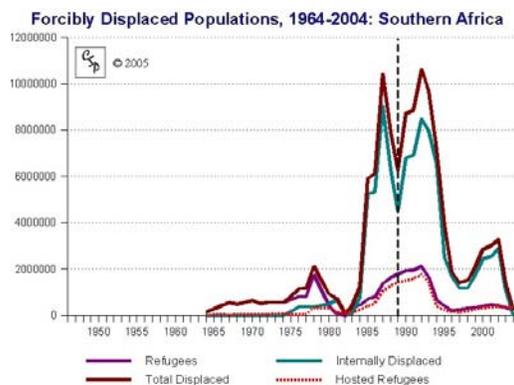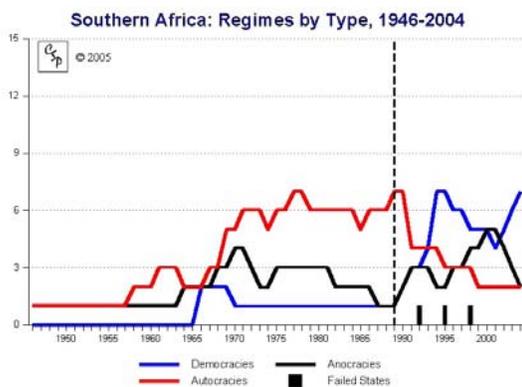

Figure 12a.

Figure 12b.

Figure 12c.

The Southern Africa region includes Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozam-bique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (11 countries).

Southern Africa

The conflict profile for Southern Africa shows remarkable improve-ment since the early 1990s. During the Cold War period, this region experienced the highest levels of violence in Africa, due in large part to the Apartheid policies of white- rule and the strength of Cold War rivalries and involvements.

With the end of open hostilities, the extremely large numbers of displaced people have also dissipated, resettled, or returned to their homes. Although some tensions remain and disagree-ments are common, there appear to be few incentives for returning to armed conflict to settle those disputes. Zimbabwe has become a regional pariah but its aging leader will soon pass away and the situation there will change. Too much pressure could further radicalize the situation and lead to unnecessary suffering and disruptive influences in the region. Tensions regarding former white-rule and continuing white ownership of valuable lands and resources are the most volatile issues facing the increasing democratic regimes of the Southern region. Like Nigeria in the West, post-Apartheid South Africa has acted as a stabilizing influence in the region. Prospects for this region improved even more with the reconciliation between the MPLA and UNITA in Angola, following Jonas Savimbi's death.

The Southern Africa region has the largest number of democratic regimes in Africa (7 in 2004); only Botswana democratized prior to 1990. The peaceful transformation of Africa's wealthiest country from an Apartheid state to an inclusive democracy has been instrumental in fostering open regimes in the region.

Summary of Conflict Trends. During the main part of the African decolonization period (1960-1975), interstate and societal wars were roughly comparable in annual magnitude. As political agendas transformed from establishing the general facts of local sovereignty to designing and administering the details of public policies, societal warfare in African countries jumped sharply and increased steadily through the remaining years of the Cold War period; finally peaking in 1991 and accounting for about one-third the global total. Since 1991, annual warfare totals in Africa have diminished by half; most of the decrease has occurred in the past five years.[16] Except for the fairly brief, but intense, border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998-2000 (which was, in many ways, simply a resurgence of their bitter civil war), interstate war has not been a major factor in African armed conflict. This simple observation, however, obscures the importance of cross-border support for rebel groups and periodic raids against rebel refuge bases in neighboring states. The difficulties that poor and developing states have in defending their borders, territory, resources, and populations from external intervention has been quite vividly illustrated by the complexities and intrigues that have beset the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire) since 1996, as five neighboring countries, Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, openly committed armed forces to combat in Congo's civil war. Gurr and Marshall have found that support from foreign states is a crucial element in the decision of ethnic groups to wage and sustain war against the state; support from kindred groups in neighboring countries and remittances from abroad can also be important.[17]

Two factors help to explain the great disparity between the expected low levels of political violence in the generally poor and poorly integrated and mobilized countries of Africa and the observed high levels of violence and warfare. Perhaps the most important factor is the economic and political **marginalization** of the majority of the populations of many African countries. The formal economies in most African countries are heavily dependent on extra-regional trade in primary commodities. The value of trade with OECD countries in the most recent years is five times greater than trade with all other African countries and ten times greater than the value of trade with neighboring countries. Government revenues are less often based on taxation of exchange transactions, incomes, or commercial activities and more likely derived from state-ownership or control of principle commodities, collection of export duties, and receipt of foreign assistance. Commercial cross-border trade among African countries is almost non-existent; most local trade, including cross-border trade in consumer goods, is conducted through the informal economy or "black markets." Vast populations are neither integrated into formal national economies nor organized in productive endeavors and information/exchange networks (i.e., they remain non-organized, non-politicized, and non-mobilized in reference to the national economy and political system). They have little or no personal stake in the existing system nor, in all likelihood, in any alternative system other than traditional social groups. They remain both vulnerable and undervalued populations and, in times of war, they are often treated as expendable or exploitable populations, both by government authorities and rebel challengers.

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[16] The historical record is crucial in fixing the end of wars and periods of political instability; endings of wars and periods of instability can only be objectively demarcated by the absence of political instability events over a period of five or more years. Recent trends are the result of expert assessments of current situations; there is a risk that some wars will experience a resurgence of hostilities or that a new instability event will occur, however, such resurgence has been rare in the post-Cold War era. In general, a war is considered to have ended with an effective cease-fire and agreement on, or a commitment by warring parties to actively and faithfully negotiate, a peace accord.
[17] Ted Robert Gurr and Monty G. Marshall, "Assessing the Risks of Future Ethnic Wars," chapter 7 in T. R. Gurr, *Peoples versus States* (Washington, DC: United Stated Institute of Peace Press, 2000).

The voices of marginalized populations remain silenced when politics are debated or peace is negotiated. Very often during wars, marginalized civilian populations are neither provided basic services nor protected from assaults or confiscation by the armed forces or criminal elements. Even the most essential services may be neglected, destroyed, or consciously withdrawn. During times of war, their main form of protection is to abandon their land and livelihood and flee. They become the wards of foreign states, catered by NGOs, and, sometimes, protected by international organizations. Far more people die in African wars as a result of disruptions in essential production, exchanges, and health services and at the hands of armed marauders than die "honorably" on the battlefields. Small wars tend to create enormous humanitarian disasters.

How do wars persist under conditions of poverty and the systematic victimization of marginalized populations? Without an economically viable and defensible support base, the attrition of warfare should work to end wars rather quickly or, at least, reduce them to a sustainably low level of activity. The second most important factor in explaining the anomaly of large wars in poor societies is **external involvement**. Whereas, local populations have little stake in the outcomes of national politics and national politics has little stake in local populations, foreign actors may feel they have high stakes in the outcomes of local competition and control of commodity production. War efforts in Africa are largely sustained through external exchange and supply with foreign agents, whether through direct military assistance, informal trade in small arms and contraband, or formal exchange of raw materials for security goods. During the Cold War period, the "superpower rivalry" largely accounts for the protractedness of wars, as well as their escalation. Since the end of the Cold War, large wars have almost disappeared from Africa. Yet, large populations remain vulnerable and large groups continue to be "armed and dangerous"; the legacies of war carry the plague of personal violence and organized crime. This is the cultural foundation of the modern, African state: a culture of violence and marginalization. And this is the climate in which democracy is expected to blossom and endure.

Drivers of Conflict and Instability in Africa. In order to better understand the related problems of conflict and instability in African states, we must first examine the process of state formation. As mentioned above, transitions from European colonial to local administration were successful in establishing a stable state system in only fifteen of thirty-eight colonial territories. Two states that emerged more recently from control by other African states, Namibia from South Africa in 1990 and Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1993, also successfully established stable states. Eight African countries gained self-rule following wars of independence; of these, four wars ended with independence (Cameroon, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, and Namibia) and four independence wars transformed to civil wars (Algeria, Angola, Kenya, and Mozambique). France and Great Britain were the main colonial powers in Africa and these two powers administered their respective colonial territories in different ways. The British were far more likely to foster open, electoral systems of governance in their territories, going so far as to establish "self-governing" territories in selected cases, whereas the French were more likely to establish autocratic administrations. In all, eight former-British territories were ruled by democratic regimes at the date of independence but, of these, only two democratic systems survived for more than seven years: Botswana and The Gambia (The Gambia fell to autocratic rule in 1994). Two former-British colonies succeeded in establishing stable, autocratic regimes: Malawi and Tanganyika (now Tanzania). In all, four (of fourteen) former-British colonies established stable states upon gaining independence (Cameroon may be counted as a fifth, as it emerged as a union of British and

French territories). The French territories favored autocratic (11) or restricted anocratic regimes (7) at independence and these fared somewhat better than the former-British territories in establishing stable systems of governance: ten of eighteen (eleven if one includes Cameroon). Five of these stable states, however, later lapsed into instability, whereas only one of the five, former-British, stable states lapsed into instability. Former-British colonies were somewhat more likely than the French to have established democratic or partly democratic systems by the end of 2004: ten of fifteen compared to nine of eighteen (Cameroon is partly autocratic). No significant differences, other than the differences in forms of government described above, that can be attributed to colonial heritage have been identified in extensive data analyses of instability in Africa.

Political instability in African states has resulted from two, quite distinct social conflict scenarios: instability associated with the original formation of self-governance and instability in established governmental structures. In order to better understand the roots of instability in newly independent African countries, that is, *state formation instability*, a binary logistic regression analysis was conducted. Two factors were identified by the analysis that distinguish the seventeen stable from twenty-three unstable states:

- **Political Factionalism**, distinct political and/or social identity groups polarize and promote incompatible or uncompromising political platforms prioritizing parochial interests and creating a contentious atmosphere in which negotiated solutions to policy differences are difficult to achieve; political deadlock, coercive practices, and inequitable policy outcomes are common under such circumstances (in more democratic systems), and
- **Elite Ethnicity, or Ethnic Group Capture of the State**, ethnicity is politically salient among ruling elites and members of the ruling ethnic group(s) are strongly favored in the distribution of political positions and, especially, in command positions in the military, often including restrictions on political access and activities of other constituent ethnic groups (in more autocratic systems).[18]

These two factors alone correctly distinguish eighty percent of the cases. In short, new states had great difficulty in establishing social bases of support for central authority and managing contention among competing, politicized social groups over control of the political agenda and public policies. Local or parochial interests, including identification with and loyalty to traditional social systems, tended to outweigh common interests and overpower the central state's nascent conflict management capabilities. Stabilization was most often accomplished through autocratic force rather than broad-based coalitions and negotiated accords among competing groups. Countries almost invariably emerged from periods of state formation instability with strongly, autocratic governments of one type or another; the only exceptions are Chad, which only established reasonable stability in 1995, and Mozambique, which ended its

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[18] "Political factionalism" and "elite ethnicity" are very closely related problems in newly independent states where political parties and professional associations are weak or absent and local patronage or ethnic affiliations are the main bases of support for political action. The two problems diverge as political opportunities and social networks diversify and institutions are established. As measures of political interaction, "factionalism" can only occur where there is open (democratic) competition; factionalism is repressed under autocratic rule. On the other hand, elite ethnicity is most likely to occur when leaders rely on ethnic group loyalties for support in establishing and maintaining (autocratic) control of the state; securing loyalty and support often requires leaders to favor their ethnic group and exclude rival groups, especially, in regard to the military.

long civil war and established a stable system in 1993; these two countries emerged with anocratic regimes. As mentioned, three countries have not yet managed to establish a reasonably stable state system: Nigeria, Sudan, and Uganda; a fourth country, Angola, appears to be entering a period of stability with the end of its civil war against UNITA rebels in 2002 and its effective repression of Cabindan separatists.

Further tests were conducted in order to gain greater understanding of the dynamics of state formation. Stable state formation tended to occur in countries with smaller, non-mobilized and non-politicized populations at the time of independence. Unstable states tended to have large, diverse, and urbanized populations, lending further credence to the difficulties of manageability and group integration in larger, more complex social systems. Factors that correlate strongly with measures of the intensity and duration of state formation instability include ethno-linguistic fractionalization, large populations, large urbanized populations, and regional insecurity (armed conflicts in neighboring countries). In addition, higher energy imports and energy consumption, indicating a more modernized economic sector, correlated with greater intensity of state formation instability.

In brief, problems of system manageability and contending social identities presented enormous challenges to efforts by indigenous, modernizing political elites in establishing and administering a modern state structure in newly independent African states. These challenges were substantially muted in countries where large segments of the population were not politically mobilized. Lack of politicization and mobilization continue to characterize political dynamics in many African countries and these are strongly associated with issues of marginalization and other impediments to progressive social integration and societal development, that is, the progressive development of a civil society. The most serious impact of marginalization for conventional political processes is its attendant lack of collective pressure for accountability in ruling elites and transparency in political processes. Corruption and coercion tend to thrive in such an environment. It appears that differences in state formation experiences have not, by themselves, affected the likelihood of a state falling into a period of post-formation instability. Evidence does show that subsequent lapses back into periods of instability were much more likely to involve outbreaks of armed conflict than initial lapses into instability.

In order to gain better understanding of *post-formation instability* in African states, a second series of models were developed to distinguish between conditions characterizing periods of stability from conditions associated with periods of political instability, particularly the onset of instability. After demarcating periods of instability for all countries in Africa (see Annex 3), the two years just prior to the year of onset of instability were tagged as the target set. Five year periods just prior to the target set years were designated as leading years and the five years immediately following the end of a period of instability were designated as recovery years. Stability years were thus defined as all years more than five years after the end of a period of instability (including wars for independence) and more than seven years prior to the onset of a period of instability. Bivariate correlations were run on various instability measures using over one thousand possible explanatory variables to verify known correlates of conflict and instability (identified in theoretical literature and research findings) and to identify new candidate

variables.[19] Patterns of association emerged from initial tests and promising variables were used in the development of regression models. Binary logistic regression models were developed to distinguish between the stability/pre-instability dichotomy and multiple regression models were developed to test ordered progressions in affective conditions for various system phases: stability, leading years to instability, years immediately preceding instability, years of instability, and recovery years. The indicators used in the final version of the model were selected because they are well-grounded in conflict theory and prior research and remained robust across various formulations of the dependent variable, different methodologies, and model designs. The research modeling provides the basis for the Africa Instability Ledger (Annex 6).[20] Key factors identified with the onset of post-formation instability include the following:

- **Dependency**, governments that are overly dependent on foreign aid and foreign trade for operating revenues (foreign aid as a percent of gross capital formation; foreign aid per capita; trade openness; high export duties, low government revenues, low investment);
- **Polarization**, societies that have politicized and mobilized social identity constituencies through inequitable use of public policies, particularly in regard to ethnic differences (official policies of political discrimination or repression of constituent ethnic groups; ethnic group capture of the state; political factionalism);
- **Unmanageability**, countries that must manage large territories, particularly those with substantial forested regions; concentrated, high density, populations; or contentious social divisions institutionalized during conflicts over the original terms of state formation (state formation instability; high population density; large land area; high percentage of forest cover);
- **Leadership Succession**, states where the political process is overly dependent on key personalities are highly susceptible to succession struggles, leading to instability (top ranking political leader in power for twenty years or more);
- **Neighborhood Effects**, weak states not only have trouble managing internal political dynamics, they are highly vulnerable to negative external influences from repressive or unstable neighboring countries (less democratic neighbors; societal war in at least one neighboring country); and
- **Islamic Countries** (countries with Muslim populations comprising forty or more percent of the country's population), only one-third of Islamic countries in Africa experienced state formation instability but seventy percent have experienced post-formation instability; on the other hand, sixty-four percent of non-Islamic countries experienced state formation instability with only one-third experiencing post-formation instability.[21]

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[19] The Political Instability Task Force (PITF) global database was used for the tests (version 15v1; data covers all countries over the period 1955-2002). The PITF global, annual time-series database has been compiled and developed by the Task Force since 1994; it integrates data from all major data sources that have reasonably broad country and temporal coverage.

[20] For more detailed explanation of the instability models, see chapter 7 and Appendix 4 in *Peace and Conflict 2005*.

[21] Seventeen countries are denoted as "Islamic countries" in the study. The source is the PITF data on religious groups compiled by Mark Woodward, Arizona State University (see fn16). According to the PITF data, eleven countries had Muslim confessional group populations with greater than 50% of the total population in the most recent year coded (2000); these countries are Chad, Comoros, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan. In addition, six countries had Muslim group populations greater than 40% but less than a majority in 2000; these countries are Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria,

Peace-Building Capacity. Another important consideration in assessing the risks of future armed conflict and political instability is a country's "peace-building capacity," that is, it's established and institutionalized capabilities that enable the state to perform its crucial conflict management function when faced with serious and contentious societal challenges or crises. The Peace and Conflict Ledger published biennially in the *Peace and Conflict* report series rates the African countries according to their scores on seven indicators of capacity for peace-building in early 2005. It rates a country's peace-building capacity high insofar as it has managed to:

- avoid outbreaks of **armed conflicts** while providing
- reasonable levels of **human security**,
- shows no active policies of political or economic **discrimination** against minorities,
- successfully managed movements for **self-determination**,
- maintained stable and durable (democratic) **governance** institutions,
- attained substantial **human and material resources**, and is
- free of serious **threats from its neighboring countries**.

Countries are evaluated and placed into three ordered categories of peace-building capacity: red, yellow, and green. Red-flagged countries are considered to be at the greatest risk of neglecting or mismanaging emerging societal crises such that these conflicts escalate to serious violence and/or government instability; green-flagged countries enjoy the strongest prospects for successful management of new challenges. Annex 7 lists peace-building ratings for each of the forty-three African countries. These rankings do not necessarily indicate impending risks of armed conflict or instability in the red or yellow flagged states, only that these states are vulnerable to such challenges. The Ledger is designed to complement "early warning" or "risk" models such as the instability models discussed above. Actual risk factors for individual states must be informed by current situations and qualities of societal conflict dynamics at any particular point in time

African countries have generally low capacity for conflict management and continue to face serious and complex challenges to peace and stability in 2005. However, important progress has been made in increasing regional capacity and there are important differences within the region. In the region of Sub-Saharan Africa, there are seventeen red-flagged countries (down from twenty-five in the 2003 Ledger) and nineteen yellow-flagged countries (there were thirteen listed in 2003). These vulnerable countries are contrasted with only eight green-flagged countries (Benin, Botswana, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe). Almost every country across the broad middle belt of Africa—from Somalia in the east to Sierra Leone in the west, and from Sudan in the north to Angola in the south—has a volatile mix of poor human security, unstable and inequitable political institutions, limited resources, and, inevitably, a "bad neighborhood" of similar crisis-ridden states. Further complicating prospects for stabilization in the African crisis zone are some of the more pervasive consequences of long-term poverty and warfare: deteriorating sanitation and health and, especially, the related AIDS

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and Sierra Leone. The post-Cold War increase in political instability in Islamic countries is not specific to African countries; increased instability has also been observed in non-African Islamic countries.

pandemic; widespread and recurring famine; and large numbers of refugee, displaced, and otherwise marginalized populations.

Model Application: The Case of Darfur in Sudan. The most important element in analyzing the onset of armed conflict in poor and underdeveloped countries is the recognition that military action, while ostensibly hierarchical in organizational structure, reflects the general organizational capacities of the society as a whole. Issues of command, discipline, and loyalty are best viewed at the local level and coordination across localities is largely a fiction of unreasonable expectations. Societal wars are not, in most cases, "launched" by respected leaders in the rational pursuit of identified political goals; they erupt rather chaotically from a general deterioration in local economic, social, and security environments. Violence becomes the currency by which societal transactions are conducted. The precursors of serious armed conflicts can be found in the qualities of general and more specific local conditions.

The models of conflict drivers in Africa and general peace-building capacities presented above have painted a fairly bleak picture of the prospects for conflict management and mitigation in Sudan. Sudan was flagged "red" on each of three essential qualities: peace-building capacity, actual instability, and predicted instability prior to the onset of serious armed conflict in the Darfur region of western Sudan in early 2003. In the general terms of the models, the likelihood of serious challenges to central authority in Sudan was high, the capacity of the central government to manage emerging conflicts was very low, and the society was already organized on a war footing with the protracted armed conflict in southern Sudan exacting an enormous toll on the societal system since 1983. The ongoing war in the south both diverted resources from regional development, obscurred local dynamics, and distracted attention from the deteriorating conditions and rising tensions in the west.

The models point to several, specific systemic weaknesses and conditions that help to explain the rising probability of serious armed conflict in the Darfur region and the government's failure to prevent the onset of organized and sustained violence or dampen escalation of the violence. Sudan is the largest country in Africa and comprises three major social identities: Arab Muslim, non-Arab Muslim, and non-Arab non-Muslim. Although Sudan began modern statehood with a democratic government in 1954, politics were riven with factionalism and a military coup ended the democratic experiment shortly thereafter, in 1958. Two subsequent attempts to democratize were similarly riven by factionalism and fell to military coups within five years (in 1969 and 1989). Sudan has experienced, in all, three adverse regime changes and twenty-five coup events during its fifty uears of statehood, more than any other state in Africa. The government has been dominated by the Arab Muslim group and has instituted policies of discrimination against non-Arab groups. Prior to the recent power-sharing peace agreement with the non-Arab separatists in the south in early 2005, Sudan had no history of accommodation with self-determination movements. Human security has been very poor and societal (resource) capacity has been very limited, although recent discoveries of oil have altered that basic limitation by increasing government revenues, lending it institutional stability that is largely independent from bases of popular support. This artificial institutional stability is further augmented by al-Bashir's consolidation of instrumental (autocratic) authority. Sudan is situated in a "bad neighborhood" characterized by intense and protracted armed conflicts, autocratic governments, and very large forcibly dislocated populations.

The region comprising North, South, and West Darfur in western Sudan has been the site of deteriorating local conditions since, at least, the mid-1980s. The region hosted a very large refugee population (mainly from Chad) in the 1980s and large internally displaced populations (from the south) beginning in the 1980s and continuing through the 1990s. The western area was a refuge and staging area for rebel fighters from neighboring Chad until Déby-led forces succeeded in toppling the Habré regime in Chad in 1990. Arab Muslim group militias in Darfur were formed and armed by the Sudan government in the 1980s for use as an auxiliary defense force to help contain and control southern rebel force movements in the area. Existing tensions between non-Arab agriculturalists and Arab pastoralist groups were further exacerbated by the influxes of dislocated and vulnerable peoples and the general impunity granted to the Arab militias. The first report of serious fighting in the Darfur region was in May 1985; this situation led to an emergency meeting of the Sudan National Defence Council. A massacre of up to a thousand non-Arab Dinkas was reported in March 1987. Weapons flowed into the region across borders with Chad and Central African Republic. General lawlessness and armed banditry by both Arab and non-Arab militias prevailed in the region through the 1990s, until an outbreak of heavy fighting in July 1998 led to the imposition of a State of Emergency that has continued through the present. The violence in Darfur escalated dramatically in early 2003.

Some Observations on Instability, and Systemic Development, in Africa. In reviewing the contemporary trends in political violence and instability in Africa, the first consideration must be of the enormous human and material losses, costs, and consequences of such widespread and persistent turmoil. African states have been and remain generally poor, underdeveloped, and overly dependent on export trade in primary commodities with OECD countries. Evidence suggests that, during the Cold War period, countries that continued to concentrate export trade with one country, usually the former-colonial power, enjoyed a lesser risk of instability. This may be explained by the foreign power's vested interest in supporting stability in their client state. On the other hand, countries that had substantial trade with one of the superpowers had relatively high incidence and intensity of instability, suggesting that the strategic rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union may have exacerbated, or at least capitalized on, conflict dynamics in developing states in Africa. Supply of armaments to client states surely helps to explain the intensity and longevity of many of these conflicts. The increasing globalization of trade becomes evident in Africa during the 1980s as diversification of trading partners becomes increasingly common. Globalization adds powerful, new dynamics to politics in weak African states that are not fully understood but almost entirely unregulated.

What can be said is that, since 1990, per capita incomes have fallen substantially in one-third of African countries and remained stagnant in another one-quarter. Of those that have made gains, the majority has experienced little or no civil warfare since independence. Four others that have made gains, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mozambique, and Uganda, emerged from devastating civil wars in the late 1980s and early 1990s and their economies are better considered to be rebounding rather than expanding (the first three remain among the poorest countries in Africa). Sudan stands as an anomaly as it has managed to wage deadly wars through the 1990s and still increase its income,

mainly due to the recent discovery of oil.[22] What seems clear is that, in countries that are heavily dependent on primary commodity trade, entrepreneurial incentives to gain and maintain control of the state are extremely powerful. Established, well-organized, social identity groups enjoy crucial advantages in the competition to gain control of the state and gaining control of the state may enable these groups to increase their advantages over contending groups. This, of course, assumes that acquired capital gains are re-invested in local enterprises and not transferred out of the country. Only as the foundation of the economy moves from primary commodities to commercial enterprises would co-optation of a rising commercial class and the formation of a broader-based support coalition among political elites be necessary. Given the general weakness of the commercial sector and civil society in many African countries, the recent shift toward the democratization of central government will be difficult to sustain.

In the absence of the conflict mitigating effects of a broad-based, proactive civil society with substantial stakes and personal interests in maintaining the system, elite rivalry, outgroup resistance, and entrepreneurial violence can be expected to further complicate the inherent problems of manageability in African societies. Under these circumstances, it can be expected that both deprivational and aspirational grievances among marginalized populations and disadvantaged outgroups would be similarly intense counterparts to the elite struggle for control of the state in defining the character and quality of political dynamics in the societal development process. As such, both "greed" and "grievance" should be expected to provide strong motivations to challenge and change the status quo, or, in the worst case, to simply undo it.[23] The probability of instability under these conditions is high and the actual occurrence of instability events, then, depends largely on circumstantial opportunities.[24] Things can fall apart very quickly in weak countries and, once they have fallen apart, it can be extremely difficult to put things back together. In particular, evidence suggests that capital and investment flows shift significantly away from countries in the years immediately preceding their lapse into instability and this shift may further increase system destabilization and undercut the potential for managing the crisis and for post-crisis recovery. Needless to say, countries experiencing instability do not attract favorable capital and investment flows, making stability even more difficult to regain.

Yet, given the propensity for instability in African states, the substantial decreases in armed conflict, autocratic regimes, and political instability charted since 1991 are encouraging. Ideologies of political confrontation and struggle that dominated Cold War politics have given way to the rhetoric of engagement and accommodation. The numbers of humanitarian and other non-governmental organizations have increased thirty-fold. Important gains have been made but

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[22] The greatest gain has been in Equatorial Guinea, where the discovery of oil has increased per capita income by over 700% since 1990. The autocratic regime in this country has a long history of severe repression of oppositional groups.

[23] The "greed" versus "grievance" debate concerning alternative motivations driving civil wars in developing countries is most closely associated with Paul Collier's work at the World Bank; see Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56.4 (2004): 563-595.

[24] These findings and claims are largely consistent with those presented in Fearon and Laitin's recent study of civil wars, in which they argue that "The factors that explain which countries have been at risk for civil war…the conditions that favor insurgency. These include poverty, political [regime] instability, rough terrain, and large populations." James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, 97.1: 75-90.

the continuation and consolidation of those gains remains in jeopardy. Wars may end but the complex consequences and legacies of war will continue to resonate for many years to come. Research provides strong evidence that political instability in African states, and particularly serious and protracted armed conflicts, create long-term impediments and complex challenges to societal development processes. While the majority of countries in Africa enjoy more open political processes since the 1990s, many others remain deeply-divided societies with failed or failing states and limited alternatives for transforming divergent images of the past and present to convergent images of the future. The most invidious consequences of past wars and instability are the abundance of unemployed fighters, the proliferation of weapons, and unregulated markets. Organized crime thrives under such conditions.

Proactive international engagement, particularly by governments, is and will remain crucial over the medium term (ten to twenty-five years) in helping countries to manage social tensions and stimulate the development of self-regulating civil societies. While non-governmental organizations may be able to respond to situations more quickly than government agencies and may enjoy greater access and flexibility, they lack the capacity to provide the broad structural support necessary in overcoming local conflict dynamics and development shortfalls; their efforts are also more greatly hampered by coordination and security problems. A focus on humanitarian assistance, conflict mediation, and security guarantees in the short term should give way to an emphasis on transparency and accountability guarantees over the longer term. Corruption is generally recognized as one of the most serious impediments to the development of civil society. Whereas petty corruption is a general nuisance that requires the complicity of state authority, grand corruption is, perhaps, the greatest threat to security and development in Africa and this plague requires mobility, liquidity, and a sophisticated network of global accomplices. In the new world order, corruption and insecurity are transnational issues that require multilateral solutions. Compensating for in-country security and accountability deficits can best, and may only, be accomplished through regulatory procedures instituted and administered by the larger, established, global and regional legal systems. Transparency is the key to a self-regulating society and investments in communication technologies are as critical in the era of democratization and globalization as electrification has been to the era of industrialization.

Our evidence suggests that political instability in African countries is strongly, negatively correlated with general issues of human security; provision of education, health, and basic social services; investments in commercial infrastructure; and expansion of modern, communications and information technologies. This is the essence of a conflict-poverty trap. If the new democracies of Africa are going to foster these freedoms and tap human potential to lead the way out of the current cycle of poverty and violence, voice and visibility will have to improve until responsiveness by African governments becomes routine. Citizens must feel they have a stake in the system and that they share a common cause in a promising future, not only in regard to competing interests and constituencies within their society but with the world around them.