Conflict and Militarization in Africa:
Past Trends and New Scenarios

by
Earl Conteh-Morgan

INTRODUCTION

International politics during the past four years has been characterized by such turbulence that a myriad of interrelated events — the demise of the Cold War and the Soviet Union, the democratization drive in many developing nations, and the growing emphasis on redefinition of security along economic lines, among others — are helping to shape a new world agenda. In Africa, the unfolding geopolitical fluidity and socio-economic effervescence is manifested especially in the emergence of a democratic revolution sweeping across many corners of the continent, a change in some previously intractable civil wars — Angola and Ethiopia—in particular, and a corresponding emphasis on economic efficiency manifested in the push towards privatization and IMF-type prescriptions.

Freed of the Cold War and South Africa's interventionist and destabilizing politics, conflict and militarization in Africa are undergoing substantial transformation from Algeria to Angola, and Somalia to South Africa. For roughly three decades African internal conflicts had been affected by a period of US-Soviet rivalry and now a post-Cold War era with emphasis on conflict and crisis management. In a way, the political resonances of Africa's decolonization and efforts at national-building are still being manifested in new and high levels of instability. New armed conflict situations (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, or Somalia), potential armed conflict situations (Mauritania versus Senegal, Mali versus Burkina Faso, or Kenya versus Uganda), and old armed conflict situations (Sudan, Mozambique, or South Africa) abound in the continent. While the Ethiopian conflict has subsided as a result of a decisive victory by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Force (EPRDF) and a US brokered peace deal, in Angola the probability of renewed civil war looms large in the aftermath of the country's first multiparty elections on 29-30 September 1992. In addition, instability resulting from economic crisis, structural adjustment programs, and the democratization process are increasingly becoming a part of the conflict process. Moreover, conflicts which erupt into crisis are an integral part of the structures of inequality, class, region, religion, ethnicity, and the like, on which power relations revolve in Africa.[1] The dynamics of such power relations also spillover into the interstate, regional, and international systemic levels, and are fought over positions in the power structure and over concerns with power balances. Over its brief history of independence, the African continent is littered with the debris of these armed conflicts, burdened with the cost of dependence on external military technology, and plagued by the refugee situations resulting from the numerous armed conflicts. The trend has become all too common with internal insecurity spilling across

national boundaries, and minor insurgencies escalating into full-scale wars complicated by external factors. Civil wars in particular have become a regular pattern of existence in many regions of Africa. The increase in regional tensions and feelings of insecurity further motivate regimes and challenging groups to seek to bolster their defense capabilities. In zones of civil wars like Ethiopia before May 1991, Sudan, Chad, and Mozambique, among others, national armies have been growing in size and costliness for many years. The Cold War has ended. Supposedly a "new world order" is emerging. What then are the new scenarios in conflict and militarization emerging in the African continent? This article will seek to explore the relationship between African conflicts and militarization (the procurement of very costly arms and fighting men); and examine the conflict-militarization nexus in the light of global changes and the end of the Cold War in the continent. For example, how is the virtual demise of the Cold War affecting conflicts and militarization in Africa? The focus will be on internal, interstate, regional, and external factors related to militarized conflicts and militarization. Three interrelated themes will be explored: first, the main features of the conflict-militarization nexus in relation to the internal characteristics of African conflicts; second, the effect of armed conflicts on intrastate, interstate, and regional stability; and finally, the impact on the conflict-militarization interface of the unfolding international structural changes involving the changing role of major powers in particular. While not ignoring the past trends in conflict, the analysis will have as its main thrust the new scenarios in conflict and militarization from roughly 1988 to the present, a period now commonly referred to as a "second African liberation," and also largely regarded as the end of the Cold War in Africa, which culminated in the US- and Soviet-brokered peace accord in the Namibian/Angolan Peace Accord of 1988.

DIMENSIONS OF AFRICAN CONFLICTS

The political orientation of Africa away from its previous indigenous African political systems as a result of European colonialism made the continent a mere overseas extension of European sovereignty. With independence the external European superimposition reinforced further external superimpositions and largely transformed the territories into technological dependencies — that is states dependent on foreign governments or private foreign firms for military, electronic, and other technologies. In military technology, the trend since independence has been a shift from dependence on a single arms supplier to diversified dependence in the process of militarization. Indeed, one of the key defining characteristics of politico-military relations between African states and industrialized powers has been their military dependence upon major powers, or upon their former colonizers — Britain, France, or Belgium, among others. This military technological linkage to external powers is especially manifest in African conflicts — that is, situations where regimes and challengers have access to imported weapons from external sources. Civil wars — large-scale organized domestic violence — like the Liberian, Chadian, Sudanese, or Somalian wars, revolve around processes of political change, and are comprised of state-building conflicts, and major power influence-building conflicts.[2] On the

one hand, these two types of conflict could, and sometimes did interact directly and/ or overlapped. On the other hand, they are structured by the intersection between domestic and external power political objectives. While external powers tried to establish new power political relations, nation-builders were caught between the two rivals, or wanted to steer an independent course.

As presented in Figure 1 African conflicts, especially during the Cold War, could be viewed as mutually reinforcing and multi-level due to the often strong interrelationship between domestic African characteristics and external factors. Accordingly, African conflicts could be subdivided into: militarized intra-state conflicts (Somalia, Liberia, etc.); militarized interstate conflicts (Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977); militarized regional conflicts (Namibian/Angolan/South African conflict before 1988); and internationalized armed conflicts (US, USSR, Cuba, South Africa, and Zaire in Angola in 1976). The Angolan civil war in its earlier years satisfied each of the four levels in terms of its scope or geographic ramifications. Internationalized armed conflicts are much wider in scope and emphasize the role of powers external to the continent; whereas militarized regional conflicts underscore the fact that conflicts in one country tend to spillover to neighboring states or affect a neighboring conflict because of proximity. There is no doubt a good deal of overlap exists between the third and fourth levels.

In this hierarchical structure, the apparent domestic origins of conflicts could spill over into broader geographic areas. For example, in the past there was a strong interactive element between the Angolan, South African, and Namibian conflicts. Similarly, for a long time an overlapping element underlay the Sudanese, Ethiopian, and Somalian conflicts, and the Chadian and Sudanese conflicts. While it can be claimed that the increase in the number of African conflicts in recent decades is caused directly by internal disagreements, nonetheless, recourse to armed conflicts as a means of resolving internal disputes has been possible only in the context of readily available supplies of weapons systems to warring factions, which internationalized the conflicts.

Africa's militarized conflictual behavior is at the stage where most conflicts are among proximate adversaries. This is due to a number of reasons: crises of legitimacy, ethnic rivalries, and irredentist movements, among others. The proximity factor is also consistent with Africa's low level of industrialization and its technological inability to project power across great territorial expanses as well as sustain long-range military confrontations. In domestic conflicts a primary factor is the extensiveness of interaction between actors related to their common geographic location. Interactions can have physical (locational), structural (institutionalized) and psychological (perceptions of threat) dimensions especially in relation to geographic proximity.[3] South Africa's interventionist and destabilizing role vis-a-vis neighboring countries during the Cold War could be explained in terms of its fear of both domestic and sub-regional opponents. The opposition to apartheid during the Cold War period led to the institutionalization of violence and conflict in the subregion, manifested in police and military violence against domestic and regional

opponents. Similarly, the Sudanese conflict, because of its active cleavage based largely on religion, has become institutionalized due to its long duration with perceptions of threat as a motivating factor to continue the war. Geographic proximity, though it may sound simplistic, is strongly related to either cooperative exchanges or militarized conflicts.

The proximity factor of African armed conflicts stands in stark contrast with, and is at the same time closely interrelated with their internationalized aspect. *Internationalization of a conflict refers to a level at which external actors become either directly or indirectly involved in an internal conflict*, sometimes in pursuit of their own interests or in more disinterested ways. Internationalization of conflicts could be further viewed in terms of the scope, directness of arms transfers, level of foreign troop deployments, and overall impact of external actors on an internal conflict. Figure 2 presents the active intersection of the primary (domestic) and secondary (external) levels in African conflicts. In the Angolan Civil War, for example, the scope of external involvement between 1975-77 was substantial as was manifested in the Soviet, Cuban, South African, Zairean, and United States interventions. The level of arms transfers to Angola was also very substantial. Between 1983 and 1986, the Angolan government reportedly received almost $2 billion in Soviet assistance. It received an additional $1 billion in 1987.[4]

Domestic mobilization and counter-mobilization by the parties in conflict easily escalate into serious violence which is further worsened by external intervention.[5] During the Cold War, to a large extent, the more direct the intervention the higher the level of conflict, the outcome of which was either short-lived or long-lasting. The scope of the conflict widens when, after mobilization and counter-mobilization by rival domestic groups, external powers intervene either through arms transfers or directly through deployment of troops. Across the continent, external actors have been inclined to directly intervene in some conflicts often at the invitation of the regime in power. France in Chad, Cuba in Angola and Ethiopia, France and Belgium in Zaire are the well-known examples. Direct military intervention by a single African state actor in the conflicts of other African states is rare, with the exception of South Africa's and Zaire's roles in the Angolan Civil War, or the role Morocco played in Zaire in the 1970s, or Tanzania in Uganda. More indirect interventions by African states are more common, such as official support for guerrillas or the regime under challenge, and harboring guerrillas.

The extent and type of internationalization in African militarized conflicts are based on a number of factors, and in turn depend largely on the nature of the conflict. First, external intervention can be expected to be high if the conflict revolves around the political, ideological preference of the state as in Angola especially before 1988. This pattern was more prevalent during the Cold War era. Second, if the conflict has implications for regional imbalance in relation to balance of power, then external involvement can be expected, such as the role of France in Chad, and France and Belgium in Zaire. Moreover, there is a strong likelihood of external African intervention when the internal conflict involves groups not

contained within the boundaries of the state. In the past, the widespread geographic location of the ANC was used largely as a pretext for South African intervention in Mozambique and Angola. South African destabilization efforts against neighboring countries were justified by the fact that the ANC guerrillas were operating from bases in neighboring states.

In addition, the possibilities of direct military intervention are stronger in conflicts where there has been long previous experience with intervening outside forces. In Zaire and Chad, for example, external military intervention is now deeply ingrained in the historical and/or political memory of these countries, and in fact helps to explain the territorial integrity of both nations.[6] In other words, external patrons have been critical in maintaining the status quo in regions of Africa. Libya's territorial ambitions on Chad have so far been staved off by timely and decisive French military intervention. In Zaire the Shaba crises of 1977 and 1978 led by former Katanga secessionists were neutralized by decisive and swift Belgian and French military interventions in support of the Mobutu regime. Similarly, the survival of the Ethiopian and Angolan regimes during the 1970s and 1980s was due largely to the role of Cuban forces.

Finally, external intervention may be predicated on a country being viewed by major powers as providing an alternative arena for competition. External rivalries become superimposed on prevailing domestic conflicts. In the Angolan conflict, for a long time, the internal differences became a microcosm of a larger conflict based on a US-Soviet test of mutual determination with the aim of scoring victories. The civil war intersected with the US-Soviet rivalry even though it was primarily an internal conflict. With the departure of the Portuguese colonial administration in 1975, mobilization and armed violence characterized the relationship between the three competing political movements — FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA. In order to invite external support to continue the civil war, UNITA claimed that the MPLA government was not only dominated by the Soviets and Cubans, but that the movement was run by *mesticos*, whites and Mbundus and other tribal groups were excluded.[7] The persistent ethnic, political, and ideological divisions within Angola largely explained the external direct and indirect interventionist efforts by the US and USSR in the past to transform an indigenous conflict into a larger, global conflict underpinned by their zero-sum competitive behavior.

THE STATE, MULTILEVEL CONFLICTS AND MILITARIZATION

In almost all African domestic armed conflicts coercive state power tends to be superior to the power of domestic challenging groups, a reflection of the Weberian notion of the state having monopoly on the use of force, as well as a reflection of the nature of the state as a set of coercive organizations that controls territory and population. The African state, despite its fragile nature, does not escape the fact that it is also "geared to maintain control of [its] home territories and population and to undertake actual or potential military competition with other states in the international system."[8] This observation by Theda Skocpol is also

relevant to domestic armed conflicts like Ethiopia and Angola during their civil wars, or Sudan and Mozambique currently, countries where the state is engaged in actual military rivalry with guerrilla organizations. In other words, the African state, like most states, could be viewed primarily as a politico-military organization within an international system that is also basically a politico-military conflict system.

In domestic conflicts African regimes fall into the conception of autonomous units whose interests are not completely compatible with the interests of any domestic groups, or transnational groups. They often compete with domestic groups as well as with other states in pursuit of their interests. At the same time, with domestic groups the state's role is cast into a dilemma: the state finds itself challenged over territory and population both of which are necessary for its survival. Successful competition by the state with other entities is dependent heavily on state authority over territory and population. Accordingly, in a framework of state interests and domestic needs, states acquire first and foremost military resources to contain threats and challenges from dissatisfied domestic groups and against other states.

Viewed from the level of internationalization, and especially during the Cold War, external powers are willing to transfer resources to help their clients against challengers as an integral part of a global strategy (counterinsurgency or containment) for which the cooperation of a particular client is considered a *sine qua non* to the success of the strategy and its related objectives. African combatants (the state and guerrilla groups) in varying degrees become susceptible to foreign influence as they become increasingly dependent on external actors to supply resources to continue the war effort. In addition, they also become especially vulnerable to military domination as the coercive resources transferred to them for the war effort increasingly enhances the military's power vis-a-vis other societal institutions. The consequence, whether short-term or long-term, is a progressively militarized society with low levels of political institutionalization and overwhelming dominance by the military. African zones of conflict — the Horn, Chad, or formerly Angola — manifest this type of military entrenchment based on external support. Where the contending parties rival each other on the quantity and quality of coercive resources, a state may be so plagued by this competitive militarization that "depopulation" and "scorched earth policies" are carried out at will, displacing, killing off and terrorizing the population.[9] The population in such zones of conflict is caught between state violence and terrorism on the one hand, and guerrilla group atrocities on the other. The civil wars in Liberia and Mozambique exemplify this pattern of armed conflict escalation, and in the past the Angolan and Ethiopian conflicts manifested a similar pattern.

The existence of plentiful weapons as a consequence of past wars is in turn a fact of externally-directed militarization manifested largely in arms transfers to most African nations.[10] Foreign governments and private foreign dealers have become the main sources of such weapons. Moreover, in the course of the various

battles that are part of these conflicts, weapons supplied to one party (for example the government) may wind up in the hands of guerrillas when government troops are over-run. The loss of a cache of arms to guerrillas often happened in the Ethiopian conflict. Government forces become susceptible to such losses in situations where militias are armed to defend against guerrillas or where government troops are poorly trained.

The linkage between conflicts and militarization is an established process in Africa. During the 1970s, arms importation by African countries grew faster than any other region in the world, doubling between 1970-77. With the beginning of the 1980s, this trend tailed off, due as much to the saturation of military inventories, as the continent-wide economic crisis. But in most African states, defense still consumes an excessive share of national budgets, easily outstripping social spending. Although the continent accounts for only two percent of global military expenditure, it still spends $14 billion a year on arms — equal to four times the expenditure on health, and spending on education — despite the economic crisis.[11] For example, in 1986 Angola spent 12 percent of its national income on the military and maintained 50,000 men under arms; in Chad it was 6 percent and 14,000 men; Ethiopia 8.6 percent and 27,000 men; Mozambique 7.0 percent and 16,000 men, Somalia 4.4 percent and 43,000 men; South Africa 3.9 percent and 106,000 men; and Sudan 5.9 percent and 57,000 men.[12] The situation in these zones of conflict is underpinned by the need to keep pace with the regional arms race as well as with the military's important role of suppressing popular unrest and containing the challenge of guerrillas movements. In other words, internal wars and their spillover into the regional level promote the need for militarization in which arms transfers and the build-up of armed forces figure in a significant way.

Another dimension of militarization in African conflicts is related to factors that encourage the increase and persistence of guerrilla movements. The very few opportunities for employment available to young men also helps explain recruitment into guerrilla movements. The guerrilla organization offers opportunities for rewards, survival, recognition and advancement not available to most civilians. Where the guerrilla movement is financially sound and internationally recognized some of its members could play the role of diplomats overseas to the point of being recognized as actors to reckon with in the international scene. This factor of the persistence of guerrilla movements has produced what could be referred to as the "institutionalization of the guerrilla mentality" in some of its members, such that some individuals become reluctant to give up the life of a guerrilla even after peace is negotiated to end the conflict. This possibility exists in countries long ravaged by guerrilla warfare (Angola, Ethiopia, Sudan in particular). The guerrilla factor is so pervasive in African conflicts as an aspect of militarization that UNITA had between 35-40,000 guerrillas; in Ethiopia, the EPLF had about 35,000; in Mozambique there are between 12-25,000; and in Sudan the SPLA has 12-25,000 as well.[13]

Closely related to the increase and persistence of guerrillas is the fact that neighboring states are willing to support them, or at least encourage their activities.

The physical fact of multiple borders makes them difficult to police effectively. Thus, the use of guerrillas to intervene in another state is a strong element in African conflicts and at times a preferred foreign policy tool. Providing arms to guerrillas, serving as conduits for weapons coming from outside, and providing bases and training facilities are the main·interventionist tactics used. They contribute to, and are an integral aspect of the regionalization of armed conflicts. Such interventionist behavior characterized the role of Ethiopia in the Sudanese conflict, Libya in Chad, Algeria in the Western Sahara conflicts, South Africa in Mozambique and Angola and Sudan in the Eritrean conflict, and Burkina Faso in the Liberian Civil War. The conflicts are of long duration partly because of these combined strategies and the fact that few African states are able to project military power and decisively retaliate against neighbors that provide such support. The overwhelming number of ongoing activities are significantly dependent on a neighboring state. The one possible exception has been Museveni's victorious National Resistance Army in Uganda.

In fulfilling its functions of guardian of authority and legitimacy, the state attempts to accumulate enough instruments of coercion to deter potential domestic challengers and discourage external aggressors. It is typically the state that imports modern weapons systems, recruits people into the military, or builds military industrial systems through co-licensing with firms in developed countries.[14] The state, because of the military's salience to domestic stability and external security, often attempts to make the military more supportive by diverting funds from social services to the effective upkeep of the military. In Nigeria, for example, defense production occurs primarily in the public sector — that is, the state typically shoulders the cost of research and development and acquires the foreign military technology necessary for military industrialization. This means that even in Nigeria, among sub-Saharan African countries, excluding South Africa, militarization still has a significant element of external dependence. In conflict situations, while guerrillas would depend entirely on arms imports, the state could switch from importing arms to importing and assimilating the defense technology required to develop, assemble, and manufacture arms.

The military technological dimension means that the internal context of the African conflict *problematique* has been transformed since independence and has been increasingly globalized. Alliance shifts in the Horn during the Cold War, conflicts in Chad and the Western Sahara, Southern African conflicts and external power involvements, all underscore the unfolding of African political dialectics. These conflicts have basically persisted, subsided briefly but only to reappear, been reduced in scope and intensity, such that the combination of domestic African imperatives and extracontinental pressures have produced a growing tendency towards militarization of domestic relations: "the diversion of personnel and financial resources toward regime security and stability rather than national development."[15] In 1968 Africa was a moderately armed continent representing 4 percent of all developing countries' military imports. A decade later, this figure had risen to 32 percent. In terms of military spending as a percentage of GNP, in 1960 Africa spent .9 percent of its GNP, and in 1986 the figure had jumped to 3.6 percent

of GNP. Similarly, with armed forces numbering 199,000 in 1960, by 1986 the armed forces of Africa had skyrocketed to 1,363,000.[16]

One aspect of the internal-external conflict interface in Africa is found in institutionalized domestic repression and external support for such repression. The United Kingdom Committee on Poverty and the Arms Trade (COPAT) in 1981 vividly expressed this linkage between the repressive role of the state and external interests:

> The military hierarchy — is in a powerful position to pose as· the defender of the nation and insist that only the most vigorous repression of popular opposition will provide a solution. Repression requires further arms imports, and as the struggle becomes more violent pressure increases for both imports and even the local production of arms. The end result of this is the militarization of the whole political process. The consequent state of severe repression is ideal for the increased penetration of the economy by outside interests.[17]

Militarization in zones of conflict — the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, Chad, etc. — is dramatic as the armament culture (the proclivity for acquisition of weapons) intersects with military and state entities into a mutually reinforcing convergence of interests. The consequence is often a disproportionate armament cost for poor countries experiencing internal and regional conflicts. The Palme Report in 1982 strongly underscored this trend in the case of Ethiopia and Somalia:

> Ethiopia and Somalia spent more on arms imports in 1977-79 than did all the Nordic countries plus the Netherlands. Arms imports were worth less than 0.1 percent of the national income of the six European countries but about 14 percent of the national income of the two African countries. Their cost was equivalent to the income of 36,000 people in the European countries but of 5,000,000 people in the African countries.[18]

Internal conflicts, regional instability, and externally-directed militarization are all intertwined in zones of conflict in Africa.

In spite of the virtual end of the Cold War rivalry in Africa, the arms transfer trend will continue because an increasing number of countries have been active as arms exporters. According to the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency's data, there have been at least 30 exporters per year since 1972, and from 1976 to 1984 there have been 40 or more exporters per year. In 1982 and 1984, the number of arms exporting countries increased to 47.[19] This trend reflects a change in the market structure of arms transfers from market concentration to commercialization manifested in diversification and competition as a consequence of the increase in the number of suppliers. This means that the various parties in African conflicts can easily find new suppliers or switch suppliers as conflicts unfold. In the Angolan Civil War of 1975, for example, UNITA and FNLA received arms from the US and China, and South Africa. However, much of the supply to the Horn and other zones of conflict was on grant or easy credit basis. Without the imperative of political

ideological rivalry it is unlikely that suppliers will give away their weapons as they did during the Cold War.

A major possibility is an increase in the arms trade between African countries and the growing number of Third World arms exporting countries — Egypt, Brazil, Peru, India, Nigeria, and the like. The intense market competition, part of which comes from Third World suppliers, has prompted many industrialized suppliers — Britain, France, US, and Germany — to relax or overlook arms export restrictions. Michael Klare has noted that they are "placing far more emphasis on marketing and advertising, and are vigorously courting Third World buyers."[20] In addition, it has also motivated them to offer compensatory trade arrangements and attractive long-term financing arrangements; to export technologically sophisticated state-of-the-art equipment; and to develop products solely for the export market. In other words, the market for arms has been transformed from a seller's market to a buyers' market because of the adverse market conditions manifested in the increase in the number of suppliers, declining market concentration, increased competition and stagnating demand. The combined effect of this transformation coupled with the dynamics of the African conflicts-external intervention interface is bound to strengthen militarization as a factor in African zones of conflict.

NEW AND FUTURE SCENARIOS

African internal conflicts had been affected by a long period of US-Soviet rivalry and now a post-Cold War era and virtual military disengagement in the continent. Three decades after independence, Africa like many other regions of the world, is undergoing a deep transformation which is manifested in new scenarios in conflict and militarization. Four unfolding scenarios can be identified which impact, either directly or indirectly, on the scope, intensity, or duration of conflict in the continent. These new and future scenarios are: conflicts generated by the democratization drive sweeping across the continents; conflicts related to Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs); regional and/or external interventions on humanitarian grounds; and the emergence of regional hegemons (very influential regional powers) and their impact on the outcome of conflicts and militarization.

Conflicts and Democratization

Africa is undergoing a profound transformation from single-party autocracy to multiparty democracy. Amid the agonies of drought, famine, nepotism, corruption, rapid economic decline, and the like, there is the new and more hopeful trend of demands for democracy. Since the democracy wave swept into Africa in February 1990, with the national conference in Benin, the number of undisputed democratic regimes in Africa increased from three to nine: Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Gambia, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, and Zambia.[21] The recent democratization process in Angola, Ghana, Cameroon, and Kenya is shrouded in doubt because of allegations of vote rigging. The democratic drive in Africa has been labelled a "second African liberation" for the promise it carries of freeing

African peoples from tyranny and blatant mismanagement of government. How-ever, the democratic trend in Africa is threatening to resuscitate civil wars (as in Angola), or generate new ones (as in Kenya), or has caused scattered incidents of violence (as in Ghana), or has resulted in more repression by the incumbent regime (as in Cameroon).

The Angolan, Kenyan, Ghanian, and Cameroonian elections and the subse-quent violence they produced have raised some serious questions about the whole democracy movement in Africa and its future. This negative trend is caused by the partial commitment to democratization either by the regime in power or by insurgents. The consequence is usually a rigged election or a blatant refusal by opposition groups to accept victory by the incumbent regime. In addition, some incumbent regimes are only prepared to offer the form of democracy — elections — without the substantive elements (press freedom, rule of law, administrative autonomy, and the like) and procedural guarantees that would make the elections free, fair, and acceptable. The escalating violence between the MPLA and UNITA in the aftermath of elections in Angola is bound to raise fears of a recurrence of similar situations in other countries undergoing the transformation from autocracy to democracy. The consequence could be escalation of purely internal conflicts to involve neighboring countries. In the Angolan situation, for example, there have been allegations that the Namibian Defence Force supported the MPLA in its offensive against UNITA, whilst Pretoria intends to support UNITA.[22] In Cameroon, Kenya, and Ghana announcements of victory by the incumbent regimes were seriously sullied by claims of vote rigging.

The Challenge of Structural Adjustment Programs

Another trend in conflicts that have been ongoing since the early 1980s and are likely to increase in the 1990s, are conflicts between the African state and its citizens caused by the impact of austerity measures inherent in SAPs imposed by African governments whose economic policies are being determined by interna-tional agencies, in particular, the World Bank and IMF. The political-economic crises of the 1980s associated with the debt crisis as well as demands for democracy have found their answer in student and faculty discussions, debates, and demonstrations. In Zimbabwe, for example, university students and faculty in-volvement in an anti-corruption campaign and criticism of the government's economic policies in 1988 and 1989 led to police attacks on peaceful demonstra-tions, the summary expulsion of a Kenyan political exile, the arrest of four lecturers and dozens of students, and the closing of the University of Zimbabwe for six months.[23]

Similarly, in Tanzania, faculty and student demands for government and university accountability resulted in a response by the government to flood the campus with armed undercover agents, to arrest a number of students and faculty, and finally to punitively close the University of Dar es Salaam from May 1990 until January 1991. Later in February there were more confrontations between the

Tanzanian riot police and students on the university campus. On 8 February students confronted two strangers near the cafeteria. The strangers pulled out pistols and fired into the air. The students first dispersed and later went to the local police station to demand an explanation. While they gathered outside the police station, the Tanzanian elite riot police, the Field Force Unit (FFU), arrived and beat up many of the students and detained many others. From then on the FFU began to be stationed on campus and more than 300 students were dismissed or suspended in February 1991.[24] The situation was "stabilized" in late February 1991 by force of arms and arbitrary suspensions. In others words, the conflict and repression resulted from government reaction to faculty and students who criticized a policy imposed on the Tanzanian government by the World Bank and the IMF. These types of conflicts have become a trend in many parts of Africa — Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Egypt, and Tanzania, among others. At the root of the criticisms and violence has been the African government's implementation of SAPs demanded by the World Bank and IMF. These countries were not alone, of course; the majority of African states had one version or another of SAPs introduced and the consequences were similar throughout Africa: devaluation, decline in living standards, export-sector domination of the economy, increase in debt, and increasing economic hardship.

Intervention on Humanitarian Grounds

The intervention in the Liberian Civil War by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the UN/US operation in Somalia break ground in two senses. In the case of the former it constitutes a new phenomenon in conflict resolution in Africa, and in the case of the latter, it is the first time the UN has ever approved a military operation for purely humanitarian purposes. It also represents the first occasion on which the UN has actually intervened without having been invited. Even the Kuwait exercise involved a request for assistance from the Emir of Kuwait; but Somalia has no constituted authority to send such an invitation. In the case of ECOWAS in Liberia, for independent African states to organize a multinational force to intervene militarily in the affairs of another state is a rare phenomenon. The ECOWAS leaders in May 1990 decided to set up a standing mediation committee that would intervene promptly whenever a conflict threatened the stability of the region. Gambia, Ghana, Togo, Mali, and Nigeria were elected members of the committee. The involvement of the organization was prompted by four factors. First, the intense brutality and ethnic bloodletting of the civil war that had been going on for six months was appalling, and the country was sliding into a virtual state of anarchy. Second, the conflict was rapidly being regionalized with enormous numbers of refugees fleeing to neighboring countries, and the warfare spilling over into Sierra Leone. Third, no peace proposals or solutions came from the OAU or UN because they were prevented by their charters from intervening in situations of civil conflict. Fourth, the US, Liberia's historic ally, steadfastly maintained that it had no intention of intervening militarily to halt the continuing carnage despite requests from many quarters for US intervention.[25]

The US apparently viewed military intervention as a "no-win" proposition because it could be interpreted as support for one of the warring factions. Equally important is the fact that the end of the Cold War may have weakened the rationale earlier US administrations had used to intervene in African states.

The mandate of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was that of "keeping the peace, restoring law and order and ensuring that the ceasefire is respected." ECOMOG's strategy has oscillated between "passive resistance" and "limited offensive." Initially, it interpreted its mandate strictly, not waging any attacks and refusing to retaliate even when attacked by rebel forces. After September 1990, ECOMOG adopted a "limited offensive" strategy, prompted by the heavy shelling of the port area where ECOMOG was based by National Patriotic Front of Liberia's (NPFL) forces on 14 September 1990.

The current situation in the Liberian Civil War is a stalemate. After two years, the conflict is still not fully resolved. The possibility of a full-scale military offensive led by ECOMOG forces, which now number between 8,000 and 10,000, has been raised. The conflict has already spilled over into Sierra Leone in the form of attacks into Sierra Leone territory by Liberian rebel forces and Sierra Leonean dissidents. However, the new experiment in conflict resolution as reflected in the ECOMOG direct military intervention is undergoing a severe test as part of a new scenario in African conflict.

External assessments of this ECOWAS attempt at collective security differ among observers of African politics and society. In the case of some, like Claude E. Welch Jr., "The states of West Africa have accomplished what states of the entire continent have not: acceptance of a mutual security agreement."[26] According to others, like John Ravenhill:

> ECOWAS leaders have unnecessarily complicated their task by adopting the politically sensitive protocol on Defense. Why this should be part of the baggage of an economic organization which has no commitment towards political integration is unclear, except as a means of appeasing the long-standing ambitions of certain heads of state.[27]

Whether negative or positive, the fact remains that the trend of conflict and militarization in the continent is changing as manifested in the actions of the UN and ECOWAS.

An Expanded Role for Regional Influentials

In the Liberian conflict, it was Nigeria that went on the diplomatic offensive seeking support for the deployment of a monitoring force in the international arena. The manner in which Prince Johnson killed Samuel Doe forced Nigeria to re-appraise the ECOMOG intervention and its role in it. On this occasion, Nigeria took unilateral action. For once it was willing to lead and act unilaterally without consultation, let alone engage in consensus building. On 23 September 1990, Babangida, President of Nigeria, formally placed ECOMOG under Nigerian

command and control.[28] He unilaterally reassigned the Ghanian Commander, General Arnold Quainoo, to a face saving administrative post in Freetown, and in his place Babangida appointed a Nigerian, General Joshua Dogonyaro. As a result, ECOMOG's operation changed from "passive peacekeeping" to "peace enforcement." In other words, ECOMOG would now "impose" a ceasefire. This meant doing battle with rebel forces, if need be. This formalized the current policy of Nigerian command of ECOMOG.

In its hegemonic role Nigeria worked tirelessly to re-orient Côte d'ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo, Mali, and Senegal away from Charles Taylor in support of ECOMOG. Regarding Nigeria's evolving role in Africa and in West Africa in particular *Africa Confidential* recorded:

> The involvement of the Nigerian military in Liberia — has demonstrated quite clearly that it now has greater confidence in its ability to influence events outside Nigeria's borders. Given Nigeria's aspirations for regional power, this is of significance.
>
> The dispatch of a peacekeeping force by the ECOWAS set several precedents. The concept of a peace enforcement mission was already a major departure from previous techniques used by the OAU and other regional bodies in response to conflicts.[29]

The imperatives for change and adaptation, and the fact of great-power non-intervention in the Liberian conflict brought out the leadership capabilities of Nigeria. The success of the ECOWAS undertaking in Liberia will especially boost the morale of Nigeria to continue to play the essential role of a regional hegemon in West Africa. A future scenario could even be that of a collective hegemonic leadership in conflict management for the entire continent made up of Nigeria, a reformed South Africa, and a democratic Zaire, among other regional influentials.

THE MILITARIZATION DIMENSION

In the area of arms acquisition, it is possible that African countries will strive to substitute indigenously produced arms for imported weapons. Nigeria in sub-Saharan Africa is already well under way in doing this. According to SIPRI data, the trend has already taken root in a number of developing countries. For example, the value of aircraft, armored vehicles, missiles, and naval vessels produced by Third World countries reached $274 million in 1970, whereas in 1960 it was a mere $11 million. By 1980 it amounted to $980 million, and in 1984 it jumped to $1.1 billion. Between 1950 and 1984 developing countries produced $12.7 billion worth of major conventional weapons. Ranked according to value of production, the leading producers from 1950 to 1984, in order, were: India, Israel, South Africa, Brazil, Taiwan, North Korea, Argentina, South Korea, and Egypt.[30] Nigeria, among sub-Saharan African countries (South Africa excluded) is already engaged in co-licensing with foreign firms. It is possible that many African countries will follow the co-licensing strategy in the future. At present, there is hardly any African country (except South Africa) with an across-the-board military industrial capabil-

ity. They are all, like most developing countries, still incapable of completely nationalizing the defense acquisition process.

The West's insistence on human rights observation in Africa could affect the level of bilateral arms exports to the continent. Instead of an increase in military assistance to African countries, a new trend in arms smuggling by private Western citizens to African states could become the trend. In mid-December 1992, Libya and Uganda, for example, were alleged to be co-conspirators in an arms smuggling case that would have involved the shipping of 400 anti-tank missiles and 34 missile launchers worth $19 million from the US to Uganda; and the shipping of $15 million in US Army helicopter parts to Libya.[31] Uganda's army has been accused of human rights abuses, whereas the US has no diplomatic relations with Libya, which is one of six countries US officials say support terrorism.

The changing character of international relations among the Great Powers is increasingly emphasizing an economic imperative in foreign policy rather than an ideological one. The new world politics for the Great Powers is increasingly based on demilitarized interstate relations, and a foreign policy of negotiations and peacemaking; and a withdrawal from the significant military and economic costs of supporting the various regional conflicts that were part of the Cold War era. There is no doubt that the end of the Cold War has had an impact on US attitudes towards conflicts and human rights issues. For example, the Soviet withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and Eastern Europe seemed to have motivated the US to reassess its policy toward African (and other Third World) countries considered to be of strategic importance. Consequently, the internal conflicts in Somalia aggravated by the human rights abuses of the Siad Barre regime resulted in severe censure by the US Congress. In addition, the perception of less danger from the then Soviet Union led a US embassy official to downgrade the strategic importance of the base at Berbera calling it a mere "contingency facility."[32] Accordingly, Congress for the first time since 1978 suspended $2.5 million in military aid to Somalia to register its disapproval of the Somali human rights record and to underscore the reduced geostratetgic importance of Somalia. The consequence of curtailed military aid was the overthrow of the Barre regime followed by total anarchy that has forced a UN/ US intervention on humanitarian grounds.

The reevaluation of countries previously considered strategic has led to a US retrenchment in these areas, and the pattern could serve as the precursor of a new American policy in Africa based on decreased militarization and emphasis on human rights and development issues. The US no longer has a direct stake in the outcome of every Third World conflict. In particular, the demise of the Soviet Union renders obsolete their former policy of carving up spheres of influence for an impending East-West military confrontation. The inherent linkage between de-militarization in Africa and retrenchment could in the case of the US in particular, lessen the importance of low-intensity conflicts.

Even if African conflicts persist their external interventionist dimension may be diminished as a result of the demise of the US-USSR geostrategic competition.

This reasoning follows from an examination of patterns of superpower involvement in the Third World during the Cold War. Some conflicts had an American-Soviet polarization because they were structured by the capitalist-democratic versus communist-authoritarian divide. Other Third World conflicts had no extensive US or Soviet support because of the absence of an ideological element in them. In Africa, the Angolan, Mozambiquan, and Ethiopian conflicts had extensive East-West support; whereas those in Uganda, Somalia and Sudan have been almost neglected.

In the past, geopolitical considerations eclipsed development and human rights concerns, but the end of the Cold War makes the rationale for US intervention look outdated and unnecessary. Similarly, certain African leaders' anti-communist credentials have been rendered anachronistic and therefore far less convincing as a justification for US military assistance.

The end of the Cold War in Africa could mean a decline in US willingness to shape and direct events in zones of conflict. But it could also mean more constructive domestic and regional initiatives for conflict resolution and transformation as the parties in disputes come to recognize the limited utility of violence. For the US and USSR this recognition of the limited utility of military power had already come. It is partly a consequence of first hand experience in Vietnam and Afghanistan directly, and more indirectly in Angola, and other terrain foreign to their own in both natural and socio-political terms. They virtually came to realize how nearly impossible it is to maintain lasting geopolitical victories through military might. The hope is that African countries in conflict will also come to realize the counterproductivity of excessive militarization. In reality, two paradoxical facts emerge from arms transfers. First, they do not guarantee lasting geopolitical victories. And second, most countries — Angola, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and the like — that have received large amounts of military assistance are still among the least secure and conflict-ridden in the Third World.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this article paper was to examine the relationship between African conflicts and militarization by especially focusing on how armed conflicts spawn external interventions, at times in the forms of direct troop movements; how conflicts that are ostensibly internal widen in scope and spill over into interstate, regional and even global struggles; and the impact of some aspects of the US-Soviet neo-detente and demise of the Soviet Union and its related changes on the conflict-militarization interface in Africa.

The African state is basically a politico-military organization within a regional and international system that is also basically a politico-military conflict system. It is characterized by internal mobilization and counter-mobilization behavior on the part of the state and guerrilla groups, often escalating into the outbreak of active armed conflicts which invite the external competitive pressures of interested external parties. This combination of domestic African imperatives
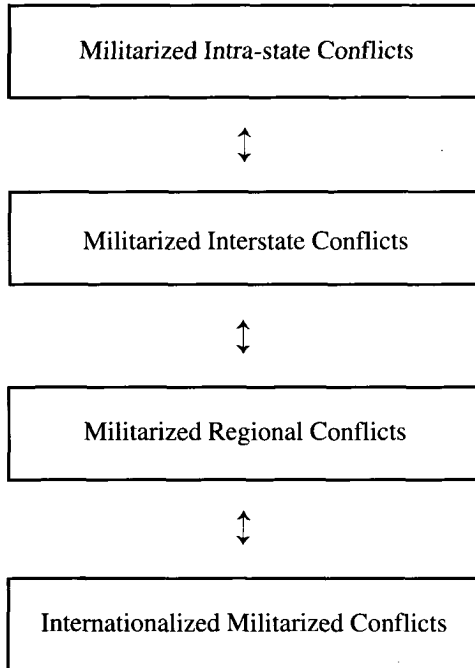
and extra continental pressures have produced a growing tendency towards militarization of domestic and international relations — that is a diversion of financial resources towards arms imports, security and stability, as well as the diversion of personnel resources towards regime stability and containment of guerrillas forces. A key outcome is institutionalized domestic repression and external support for such repression. African combatants become especially susceptible to foreign influence as they become increasingly dependent on external actors to supply resources to continue the war effort. The primary focus on coercive resources creates progressively militarized societies with low levels of political institutionalization and overwhelming dominance of the military.

Various African conflicts, some of which have evolved from decolonization struggles to nation-building and major-power influence building conflicts are often interactive in nature. For example, linkages exist between the Sudanese-Ethiopian-Somalian conflicts, between the Chadian-Sudanese conflicts, and between the Angolan-Zairean-South African conflicts. In this sense, the physical fact of multiple borders serves as conduits for weapons, bases, training facilities, and sources of intervention.

Finally, the end of the Cold War, characterized by an emphasis on demilitarized interstate relations in foreign policy seems to have had an impact on African conflicts and militarization. Militarization in African conflicts has been affected by previous mutual US-USSR efforts to try to end conflict in Southern Africa by acting as active interlocutors in negotiations for ceasefires and troop withdrawals; putting diplomatic pressure on clients to make concessions and cooperate to resolve differences; and more recently, reevaluating the strategic importance of allies and emphasizing human rights instead of security considerations in decisions to extend military aid.

In terms of global changes, the future scenarios of African conflicts and militarization seem to be a continuation of arms transfers as a form of intervention, although such transfers would come largely from non-superpower arms suppliers; in the long-run the substitution of indigenously produced for imported weapons through co-licensing with foreign firms; a broader and more profound internal reflection of issues aimed at reforming African societies through multipartyism, negotiations among warring parties, all aimed at resolving conflicts; and the continued downgrading of African countries once considered strategic — Zaire, Somalia, Ethiopia and so forth — will be a trend in major power-African relations.

FIGURE 1:

INTERACTIVE LEVELS OF AFRICAN CONFLICTS

Militarized Intra-state Conflicts

$\updownarrow$

Militarized Interstate Conflicts

$\updownarrow$

Militarized Regional Conflicts

$\updownarrow$

Internationalized Militarized Conflicts

FIGURE 2:

**DOMESTIC-EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS
OF AFRICAN CONFLICTS**

	Internal Level	**External Level**
Low Conflict Intensity	Mobilization Countermobilization	Indirect intervention (arms transfers etc.)
High Conflict Intensity	Short-lived Conflict Enduring conflict	Direct intervention (troops, mercenaries, etc.)

Endnotes

1. A distinction could be made between a conflict and a crisis. The former refers to underlying factors in disputes between parties based on political units having incompatible goals, whereas the latter refers to the eruption of armed hostilities between the contending parties. In other words, conflicts could escalate into a crisis situation, or into armed conflicts.

2. In some African states these two categories of conflicts were preceded by decolonization conflicts (for example, Angola and Mozambique); they all involve major processes of political change. Angola, for example, has experienced all three: a decolonization war prior to 1975, and a nation-building and superpower empire-building conflict especially between 1975 and 1988.

3. While entities in many African states engage in cooperative interactions, at the same time there are states (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Sudan, etc.) where interactions are conflictual and based on perceived threats, and where initial conflicts have spilled over into the whole region. For details on geographic proximity and conflicts, see, David Pepper and Alan Jenkins, eds., *The Geography of Peace and War* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

4. "Country Profile: Angola," *Defense Diplomacy*, 7 (1989), pp. 46-57.

5. Interventions refer to the extension by external actors of economic or military aid to parties in conflict, or direct military participation in such a conflict with the objective of influencing the outcome of events.

6. African conflicts are among conflicts that have spawned the most interventions. According to the preliminary edition of the Data Development for International Research (DDIR) Project developed by Frederic Pearson and Robert Bauman in 1989, Angola, Zaire/Shaba, Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda Tanzania, among others, not only attract outside interveners, but also became regionalized by spilling across boundaries, which led to skirmishes and pre-emptive attacks on third parties.

7. For further details on the political economy of the Angolan Civil War, see, for example, John A. Marcum, "The People's Republic of Angola: A Radical Vision Frustrated," in Edmond J. Keller and Donald Rothchild, *Afro-Marxist Regimes, Ideology and Public Policy* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987) pp. 67-84; and Keith Sommerville, *Angola: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Frances Pinter, 1986).

8. Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 22.

9. For a discussion of wars, refugees, and scorched earth policies, see, for example, CLIMADE, INODEP, MINK, *Africa's Refugee Crisis, What's to be Done* (London: Zed Books, 1986).

10. Facts and figures on arms transfers and defense spending are found in Ruth Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures* (Washington D.C.: World Priorities, 1989); and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1988-1989* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1988).

11. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1988-1989*; and *Africa Confidential Reports*, (1988).

12. "The Arms Burden," *West Africa*, 3-9 April, 1989, pp. 508-9.

13. Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1989*, p. 49.

14. See, for example, Michael Brzoska and Thomas Ohlson, eds., *Arms Production in the Third World* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1986).

15. Timothy Shaw, "Africa and the Great Powers at the End of the Twentieth Century," in Olajide Aluko, ed., *Africa and the Great Powers in the 1980s* (New York: University Press of America, 1987), Foreword p. x.

16. Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1989*, p.49.

17. COPAT (UK Committee on Poverty and the Arms Trade), *Bombs for Breakfast* (London: Committee on Poverty and the Arms Trade, 1981).

18. Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, *Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament* (The Palme Report) (London: Pan Books, 1982) pp. 89-90.

19. See, US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency series on *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*, various issues.

20. Michael T. Klare, "The Arms Trade: Changing Patterns in the 1980s," *Third World Quarterly*, 9, no. 4 (October 1987), p. 1275.

21. For a detailed analysis of Africa's democratization drive, see, Larry Diamond, "The Second Liberation," *Africa Report,* November/December 1992, pp. 38-41.

22. "Angola: Fighting taken over," *West Africa*, 9-15 December, 1992, p. 1918.

23. For further details, see, CAFA, "The World Bank and Education in Africa," in *CAFA Newsletter #2*, New York: Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa, May 1990.

24. See, for example, Abdul Sheriff, "Disruption of Higher Education in Tanzania," *CAFA Newsletter #3*, New York: Committee for Academic Freedom, June 1991.

25. For a detailed analysis of the Liberian conflict, see Abiodun Williams, "Regional Peacemaking: ECOWAS and the Liberian Civil War," in David D. Newsom, ed., *The Diplomatic Record 1990-1991* (Boulder: Westview, 1991), pp. 213-31.

26. Claude E. Welch, Jr., "The Military Factor in West Africa: Leadership or Regional Development," in Julius E. Okolo and Stephen Wrights, eds., *West African Regional Cooperation and Development* (Boulder: Westview, 1990), p. 174.

27. As quoted in E. John Inegbedion, "Nigeria in Post-Cold War Africa: Continental Leadership or Meddling in Liberia?" paper presented at the 33rd Annual Convention, International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April 1992, p. 7.

28. Nigeria, *This Week* (Lagos), 1 October 1990, p. 12. For similar coverage, see the summary of sources in *Africa Research Bulletin,* 1-30 September 1990, p. 9842.

29. "Nigeria: A Strategy for the 90s," *Africa Confidential*, 32, no. 4 (22 February 1991), p. 5.

30. See Brzoska and Ohlson, eds., *Arms Production in the Third World*, pp. 8 and 10.

31. "Arms case may involve Gadhafi," *Tampa Tribune*, 18 December 1992, p. 4.

32. See, "Congress Blocking Aid to Somalia," *Washington Post*, 26 October 1988.