Chapter 4: Conflict and Post-Conflict

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in *Africa: Diversity and Development* on November 2023, available online:

Full Citation details:

Chapter 4

CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT

4.1 Introduction

On 25th May 2013 governments of the African Union adopted the '50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration' that conveyed '*Our determination to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality for all our people and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters and violent conflicts, and to prevent genocide'* (AU, 2013). The declaration went on to '*… pledge not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africa and undertake to end all wars in Africa by 2020'*, and within the subsequently agreed framework of Agenda 2063 that laid out a pathway to Africa's future prosperity, the aim of 'silencing the guns' by 2020 was further reaffirmed as a critical stepping-stone to this prosperity and the achievement of the SDGs (African Union, 2015). Yet, as 2020 came and went, there was relatively little to celebrate despite the early optimism and the many actions instigated by these declarations. Indeed, 2019 alone was a record year for conflict in Africa, with 14 internationalised civil wars, 13 territorial conflicts, as well as 9 countries mired in conflict with Islamic State (Palik *et al.*, 2020).

The impacts of war and conflict throughout Africa have been staggering. Between 2000 and 2020 alone, 39 African countries have been engaged in armed conflict in one form or another resulting in almost 370,000 fatalities (UCDP, 2021a; 2021b). Looking beyond the tragedy of battle-related deaths, however, the implications of conflict for development are far reaching, and as Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, stated in 2010, '*the costs of war in Africa have cancelled out the potential impact of 15 years of development aid'* (UN, 2010b: 1). Conflict has resulted in the collapse of economic systems, state infrastructure and effective governance, and more people die from disease and starvation due to the loss of essential services than from the direct impacts of military action. Those who manage to survive through conflict situations may face numerous development challenges, ranging from displacement and livelihood insecurity to being orphaned, infected with HIV, or co-opted as a child soldier. The persistence of poverty and under-development is inextricably linked with the persistence of armed conflict, and it has been argued that the disappointing

progress of the MDGs in Africa between 2000 and 2015 is evidence of this relationship (Ayoyo *et al.,* 2017). Post-2015, African governments have shown a renewed commitment to addressing the conflict-poverty nexus through championing SDG 16 'Peace, Justice and strong institutions' (UNDPb, 2019; Mickler and Wachira, 2020).

This relationship between poverty and conflict, however, is extremely complex. Among the diverse (and often contested) causes of conflict in Africa, which include colonial legacies, ethnic and religious divisions, economic inequality, natural resource distribution, and increasingly the implications of climate change, is poverty and underdevelopment itself. Indeed, as is discussed in this chapter, poverty has been regarded as a key driver of conflict as well as a ubiquitous consequence and, as recognised in the aforementioned Agenda 2063, breaking this mutually reinforcing relationship remains both a challenge and priority in periods of peace and conflict. The first half of this chapter examines the nature of conflict in Africa, its geographical scope and complex interrelated causes, and, critically, how it has affected the population and hindered development efforts. The second half discusses the ways in which development has approached conflict in terms of instituting mechanisms for resolution and prevention and planning for post-conflict reconstruction.

4.2 The scope of conflict in Africa

4.2.1 *What do we mean by 'conflict'?*
It is perhaps useful to start by considering what precisely is meant by 'conflict', although it is difficult to provide a universal definition. As Unwin (2002) points out, 'conflict' is a term that is used synonymously with 'war', which usually implies armed conflict, driven by a struggle for power, which results in a specific number of deaths per year. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) defines state-based armed conflict as: 'a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a single calendar year' (Wallensteen and Sollenberg, 2001: 643). Similarly, 'major armed conflict', which is also classed as 'war', constitutes at least 1000 battle-related deaths per year (Gleditsch *et al*., 2002). The UCDP also uses a typology of conflicts, which includes:

- Inter-state conflict, which occurs between two or more governments.
- Intra-state conflict, which occurs between a government and a non-governmental party,

with no interference from other countries.

- Intra-state conflict with foreign involvement, occurring between a government and a non-government party where the government side, the opposing side, or both sides, receive troop support from other governments that actively participate in the conflict.
- Non-state conflict, which is the use of armed force between two organised armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state.
- One-sided violence, which is the deliberate use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organised group against civilians.

Clearly, these definitions consider conflict occurring at different geographic scales, for primarily political reasons, but conflict can exist in a much broader sense: it can involve exclusively civilians or military personnel, and it can be characterized by lingering violence that does not necessarily produce battle-deaths. Brzoska (2007) suggested that economically motivated conflict between non-state actors and violence against unarmed civilians has become increasingly common, and arguably more significant than armed conflict involving military personnel. Recent data seems to evidence this trend; between 2011 and 2020 there were 381 recorded non-state conflicts and 200 one-sided violent conflicts in Africa, representing a 68% and 32% increase respectively from the previous decade (UCDP, 2021c, 2021d).

4.2.2 The geography of armed conflict

As shown in Table 4.1, since 1950, 42 out of Africa's 54 countries have experienced armed conflict where at least one party is the government of a state, and in many cases this conflict can be attributed to a history of long and protracted civil wars. Of particular note here are the cases of Angola, Sudan and Ethiopia, where conflict between 1950 and 2020 occurred for 60, 55 and 49 years respectively – the highest incidences of conflict within the continent over this 70-year period. Further analysis of the most recent data from UCDP (see Palik *et al.,* 2020) also suggests the following trends over the last decade:

- An increase in both the number of countries experiencing conflict and the number of conflicts occurring, suggesting a trend towards countries hosting more than one conflict simultaneously (such as the case of the Somali government engaging in conflict with both Islamic State and Al-Shabaab).
- An increase in the proportion of armed conflicts with an international dimension (i.e., with

at least one state actor receiving support from an external state) from 4 internationalised conflicts in 2010 to 17 by 2020. This is illustrated again by the case of Somalia, in which 10 external states have supported its engagement with IS, Al-Shabaab and other non-state groups.

- The continued rarity of inter-state war (only 7 in total since 1990) with the most recent being the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2016.

- As such, the majority of conflicts continue to occur for political reasons and governmental change, rather than over territory (as was more frequent up until 1980).

Table 4.1 Armed conflict in Africa (1950-2020) where at least one party is the government of a state

Country	Dates (1950-2020)	Total number of years in which conflict occurred
Algeria	1954-1962, 1991-2020	39 years
Angola	1961-1974, 1975-2020	60 years
Burkina Faso	1985, 1987, 2018 - 2020	5 years
Burundi	1965, 1991-1992, 1994-2006, 2008, 2014-2015, 2019-2020	21 years
Cameroon	1957-1961, 1984, 1996, 2015 - 2020	13 years
Central African Republic	2001 - 2002, 2006, 2009 - 2013, 2018 - 2020	11 years
Chad	1966-1972, 1976-1984, 1986-1987, 1989-1994, 1997-2003, 2005 - 2010, 2015, 2017-2020	42 years
Comoros	1989, 1987	2 years
Congo, Republic	1993-1994, 1997-1999, 2002, 2016	7 years
Côte d'Ivoire	2002-2004, 2011	4 years
Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire)	1960-1962, 1964-1967, 1977-1978, 1996-2001, 2005-2008, 2011-2014, 2016-2020	27 years
Djibouti	1991-1994, 1999, 2008	6 years
Egypt	1951-1952, 1956, 1967, 1969-1970, 1973, 1993-1998, 2014-2020	19 years
Equatorial Guinea	1979	1 year
Eritrea	1997-2000, 2003, 2016	5 years
Ethiopia	1960, 1964-2016, 2019-2020	55 years
Gabon	1964	1 year
Gambia	1981	1 year
Ghana	1966, 1981, 1983	3 years
Guinea	2000-2001	2 years
Guinea-Bissau	1963-1973, 1998-1999	13 years
Kenya	1952-1956, 1982, 2015-2020	12 years
Lesotho	1998	1 year
Liberia	1980, 1989-2003	15 years
Libya	2011 - 2020	10 years
Madagascar	1971	1 year
Mali	1990-1991, 1994, 2007-2009, 2012-2020	15 years
Mauritania	1957-1958, 1975-1978, 2010	7 years
Morocco	1953-1958, 1971, 1975-1989	22 years
Mozambique	1964-1974, 1977-1992, 2013-2016, 2018-2020	34 years

Niger	1991-1992, 1994-1997, 2007-2008, 2015-2020	14 years
Nigeria	1966-1970, 2004, 2009, 2011-2020	17 years
Rwanda	1990-2002, 2009-2012, 2016, 2018-2020	21 years
Senegal	1990-1993, 1995, 1997-1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2011	11 years
Sierra Leone	1991-2001	11 years
Somalia	1978, 1982-1996, 2001-2002, 2006-2020	32 years
South Africa	1966-1988	23 years
South Sudan	2011-2020	10 years
Sudan	1955-1972, 1976, 1983-2020	57 years
Tanzania	1978	1 year
Togo	1986	1 year
Tunisia	1953-1956, 1961, 1980	6 years
Uganda	1971-1972, 1974, 1978-1992, 1994-2011, 2013-2019	43 years
Zimbabwe	1967-1968, 1973-1979	9 years

Source: UCDP, 2021a.

Concurrently, there has also been a marked increase in non-state conflict, from 14 reported conflicts in 2010 to a record 48 in 2020 (Figure 4.1), the vast majority of which have been classed as 'communal' and which include the mobilisation of informally organised groups that are often based on ethnic, religious or tribal identities. In 2020 alone, for example, Nigeria reported eight on-going political and territory motivated conflicts between different ethnic groups including the Fulani, Irigwe, Hausa, Chabo and Kadara peoples, and which resulted in over 400 fatalities (UCDP, 2021b). As highlighted in Figure 4.1, the proportion of one-sided violent conflict against civilians is similarly on an upward trend, having gone from 8 incidents in 2010 to 30 in 2020. The majority of this has been carried out by non-state actors often identified as terrorist groups, as exemplified by Boko Haram's actions in Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad which claimed the lives of over 10,000 civilians between 2010 and 2020.
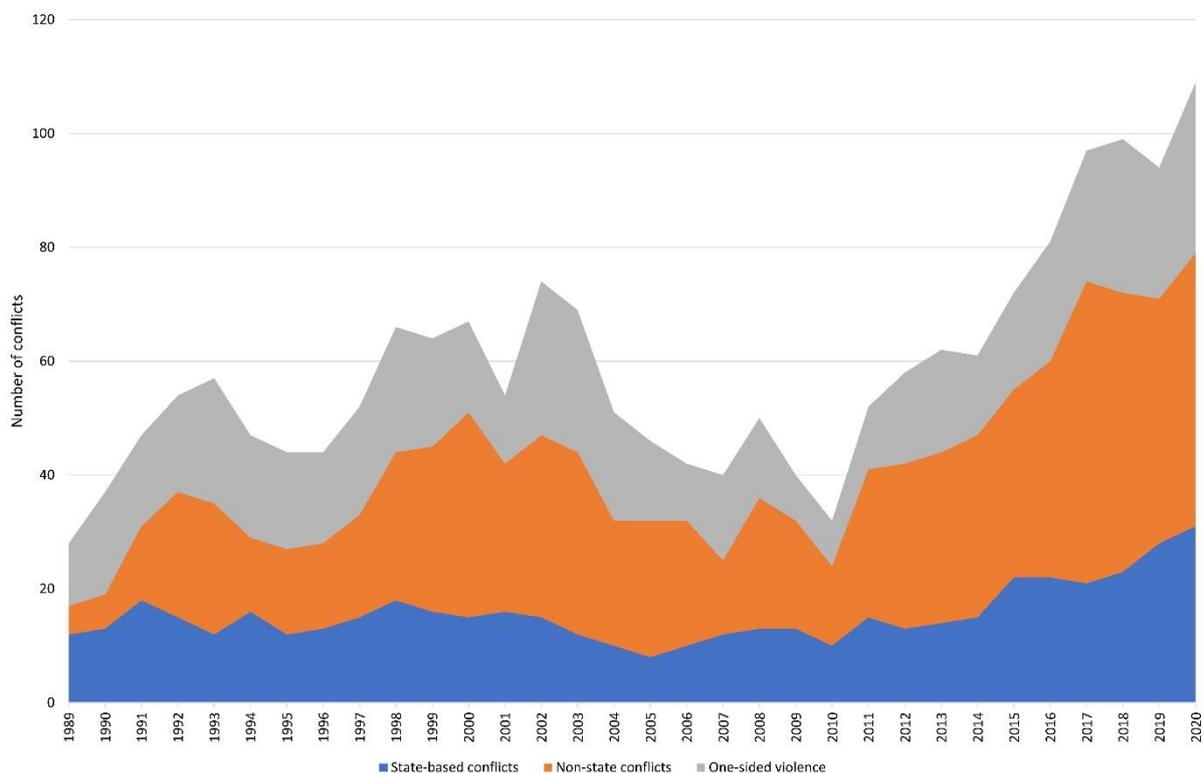
Figure 4.1. Trends in the number of state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-side violence, 1989 – 2020 (Source: UCDP, 2021a; 2021c; 2021d)

Whilst such statistics paint a somewhat bleak picture of conflict trends in Africa overall, it is important to consider how the aggregated data often masks more nuanced geographies of conflict in which events tend to be concentrated in specific regions within countries (Figure 4.2). This has been particularly evident in Sudan, where the long-running civil war was confined to the southern half of the country that gained independence as South Sudan in 2011, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the internationalized internal conflict continues to be highly concentrated around the eastern border with the Great Lakes region (Box 4.1). More recently, the IS-backed Ansar al-Sunnah insurgency in Mozambique has been located almost exclusively in the far north-eastern province of Cabo Delgado. In contrast, the conflict in Mozambique and Somalia during the 1980s and 1990s enveloped the whole of these countries. Obviously, the geographical extent of the conflict influences the magnitude of direct and indirect causalities, although, as Luckham *et al*. (2001) point out, larger impacts are felt when conflict occurs in core regions that are centres of governance and economic productivity, rather than in peripheral areas.
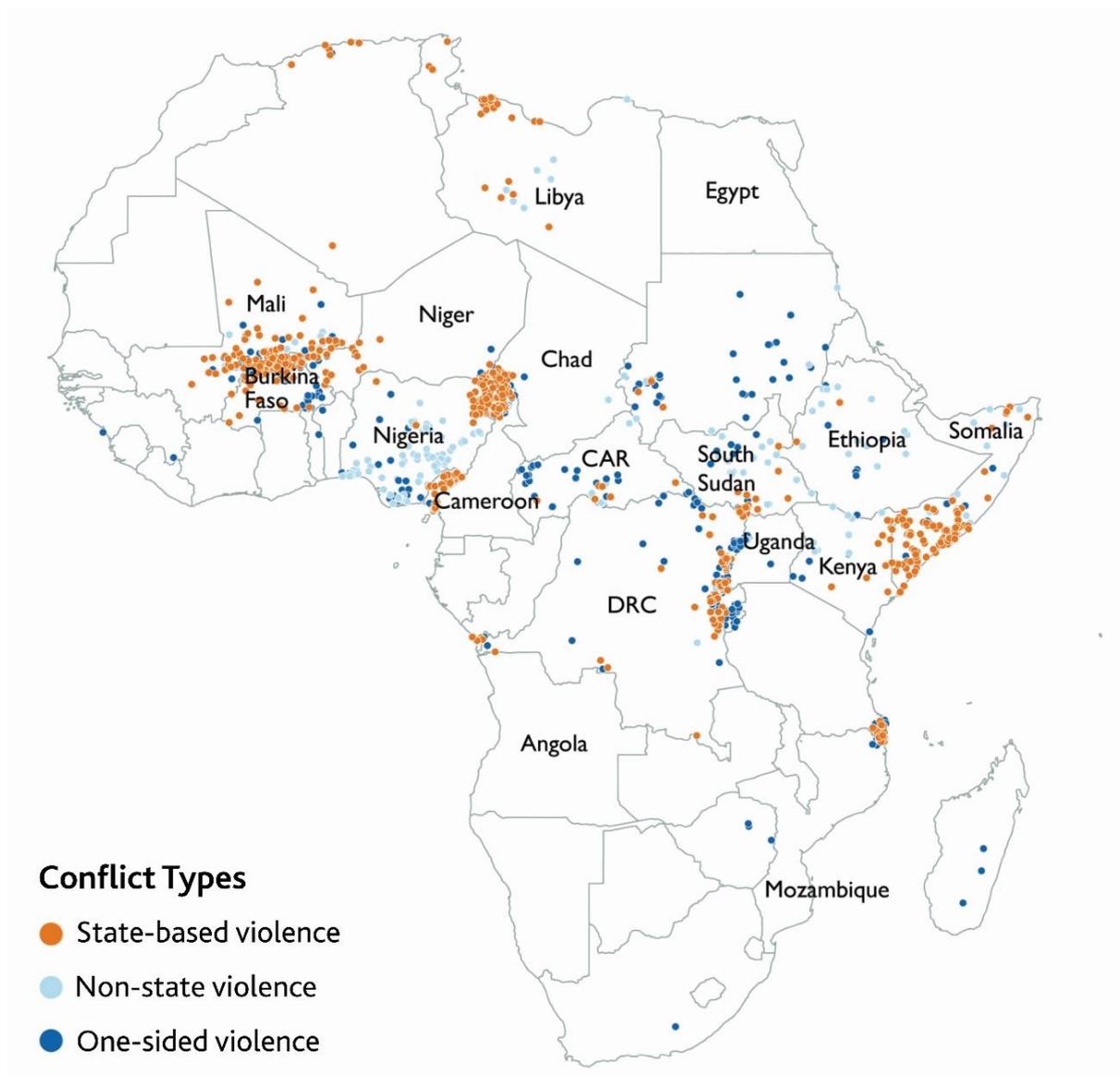
Figure 4.2. State-based conflict, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence events in 2019 (Source: adapted from Palik et al, 2020).

Box 4.1 Conflict in the Great Lakes region

The conflict that spread throughout the Great Lakes region during the 1990s and 2000s was also known as 'Africa's World War' because it eventually involved the armed forces of eight different countries and cost the lives of over 5 million people. The conflict provides a good illustration of how conflict can be driven and reproduced by a range of complex interrelated factors, such as poverty, inequality, ethnicity, resource endowment, colonial history and geography.

The Rwandan Civil War and genocide of 1994 is usually cited as the origin of the modern-day conflict in the Great Lakes region, although this itself was a product of colonial and post-colonial policies that resulted in ethnic inequalities. The overthrow of the Hutu Rwandan government by the Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) in April 1994 resulted in the dispersal of thousands of Tutsi and Hutu refugees in neighbouring Tanzania, Burundi and eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC- then Zaire). Subsequently, within the DRC, the fleeing Hutu perpetrators of the genocide (the *interahamwe* militia groups) were able to capitalize on the poor security situation in the country and reorganize themselves to lead incursions into Rwanda, taking revenge on the post-genocide RPF government and the Tutsi population. The spill-over of the conflict into the DRC was soon consolidated when Hutu militia also began targeting the country's ethnic Tutsi population, the Banyamulenge, with support from Zairian (DRC) government forces and President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Increasing violence and persecution of the Banyamulenge throughout 1996 ultimately led to an exchange of fire between Rwandan and Zairian troops, and the emergence of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Zaire (AFDL), which formed from several opposition groups and was headed by Laurent-Désiré Kabila. The AFDL received substantial support from both Rwandan and Ugandan forces, and between October and November 1996 they engaged in the systematic destruction of the large Hutu refugee camps along the Zaire–Rwanda border, forcing many Hutus to flee back into Rwanda. Six months later, Kabila was installed as President of the renamed DRC, having achieved a victory over government forces across the country. This first period of conflict would become known as the First Congo War. The Second Congo War began just a few months later, and this would ultimately cost the lives of over 5 million people.

Once in power, Kabila sought to centralize control over the country and suppress minority groups seeking democratic reform and decentralization. Meanwhile, it became increasingly clear that the Rwandan and Ugandan troops remaining in the eastern part of the country, purportedly for security reasons, were actually there to exploit the region's natural resources and mineral deposits. Kabila's reaction to their reluctance to leave was to expel all Rwandan and Ugandan officials from the DRC. In response, the Rwandan and Ugandan governments backed Banyamulenge rebels, creating the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), which consolidated territorial gains in the eastern provinces. At the same time, the Ugandan

government helped establish the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), consolidating its exclusive influence in the north-eastern region. In 1998, however, Angolan, Zimbabwean and Namibian troops entered the conflict in support of Kabila's forces (although Angola used the opportunity to attack UNITA rebels in its own province of Cabinda). Despite all the parties signing the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in 1999, sporadic conflict continued across the country, and notably around the city of Kisangani, where Rwandan and Ugandan troops engaged in open combat for the first time. In 2001, Laurent-Désiré Kabila died following an assassination attempt and was replaced as President by his twenty-nine-year-old son, Joseph Kabila. After several high-profile meetings with the Uganda and Rwandan governments, both agreed to pull back their forces, and in 2002 peace deals were signed, leading to the withdrawal of foreign troops from the DRC. A transitional government was established in 2003 and elections held in 2006, which saw Joseph Kabila returned to power in a fragile peace.

Although the DRC has not erupted into full-scale civil war, many of the underlying causes of tension remain, and conflict has persisted in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu provinces. Hutu militia groups retain a presence in these areas and, according to Rwanda, continue to threaten ethnic Tutsis along the border. In 2008 Rwanda was accused of covertly supporting Laurent Nkunda, the leader of a rebel Tutsi group that has been fighting both DRC government forces and Hutu militia groups. Nkunda received international condemnation for his human rights abuses, including the recruitment of child soldiers, indiscriminate use of violence against civilians, and rape, all of which led to a growing humanitarian crisis. He was arrested in 2009 as part of a deal between the DRC and the Rwandan government, which allowed Rwandan forces into Kivu to pursue *interahamwe* militia in return for Rwanda's cooperation in Nkunda's capture.

Conflict in the region has continued throughout the 2010s and has been driven by further social, political and ethnic unrest. In 2012, for examples, the breakaway 'M23' Tutsi-dominated militia group commenced fighting in North Kivu, creating a refugee crisis for neighbouring Uganda. Joseph Kabila's cling to power until 2019 resulted in widespread political violence, while peace has so far evaded his successor, Felix Tshisekedi, who in 2021 imposed military rule in North Kivu and Itiri provinces. Together with Ugandan troops DRC forces have been fighting an Islamist armed group known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), in a conflict that cost the lives of over 1600 people in 2021 alone.

The impact of conflict on development in the Great Lakes has been catastrophic. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from their land and livelihoods, children have been denied education and have been forced to fight, women have been victims of sex crimes, and HIV/AIDS infection rates have increased. Despite various ceasefires and the best efforts of peacekeeping initiatives, the situation in the DRC remains fragile as various groups continue to seek control of mineral resources and exploit ethnic tensions along the eastern border.

Sources: Ewald *et al*. (2004); Lun (2006); Turner (2007); HRW (2021).

It is interesting to note that writing in the First Edition of this book a decade ago we suggested that conflict may actually have peaked in the late 1990s, since the 2000s were characterised by a marked decline in conflict alongside a range of seemingly successful peacebuilding and reconciliation measures. The challenge then, we wrote, was to ensure that those countries in a post-conflict state do not fall back into conflict, since, as is discussed in the following section, past conflict is a good predictor of future conflict. Unfortunately, as illustrated above, the optimism of a decade ago has not been realised and in many instances the causes of conflict in previous decades have been able to reproduce and evolve.

4.3 The causes of conflict and violence

It is extremely difficult to establish the exact causes of Africa's many complex and interrelated conflicts. Much research has sought to identify risk factors – the specific underlying social, cultural, economic, political and environmental conditions which predispose a country or a region to conflict. The presence of certain conditions, however, does not necessarily guarantee that conflict will occur. In fact, conflict is often triggered by sudden change or a specific event. One example is the Rwandan genocide in which a reported 800,000 people were killed between April and July 1994. The cause of the conflict has been attributed to the underlying inequalities between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups which had existed and been reproduced in Rwandan society for generations. Indeed, the roots of the conflict can be traced back to the ethnic segregation and political manipulation of the Belgian colonial government during the 1920s. However, it was the shooting down of President Habyarimana's plane on 6 April 1994 that triggered the mass killings and, some would argue, the subsequent years of conflict throughout the Great Lakes region (see Box 4.1).

Compounding the causal relationship between conflict and specific risks and triggers is the fact that these can change over time; the factors that sustain a conflict are not necessarily those that caused it. Conflict itself can lead to political, economic and social transformations, which in turn create the conditions for further conflict. In this way, conflict can be seen as reproducing itself, and in some cases it becomes embedded in society and effectively is a 'way of life'. Luckham *et al*. (2001) and Gilpin (2016) suggest that twentieth-century conflict in Africa can be viewed as occurring in several historical stages, during which some causes and drivers of conflicts have become more significant than others. First, conflict occurring as part of a process of liberation against colonial powers was largely endemic throughout Africa during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (e.g. the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya during the 1950s, and the Mozambique War of Independence, 1964–1974). Second, the first post-colonial conflicts were motivated by the need to redefine national identities and colonial boundaries – as, for example, occurred in the Nigerian Civil War between 1967 and 1970. Third, conflict was fuelled by rivalries during the Cold War, when states and rebel groups aligned themselves politically and economically with either the US or the USSR. An example here is the Angolan civil war, fought between 1975 and 1991, which was characterized by US and South African support for UNITA and FNLA forces, while the opposing MPLA was supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba. Many African conflicts within the 1970s and 1980s can also be considered 'reform' wars, characterized by insurgencies against post-colonial governments that had failed to deliver on their promises of development and prosperity (e.g. the activities of the National Resistance Army in Uganda between 1979 and 1986).

Following the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the end of the cold war, there followed a period of 'Post-Cold War Transition' (Gilpin, 2016) during which illegitimate governments collapsed, and a range of competing and well-armed non-state actors began to fill the institutional vacuum left behind. Conflict over the control of natural resources also became particularly prominent during the 1990s. Finally, as outlined above, it can be argued that conflict and the causes of conflict throughout Africa since 2005 have been characterised by the rise of non-state violence and one-sided conflict, fuelled by the rise of extremist and disaffected non-state actors, and civil society groups who increasingly have a political voice. Moreover, this is increasingly taking place in urban settings (Cilliers, 2018). Once again, the persistence of poverty, inequality, fragile governance systems and increasing transnational influence within a more connected world, have created the perfect storm (Figure 4.3).
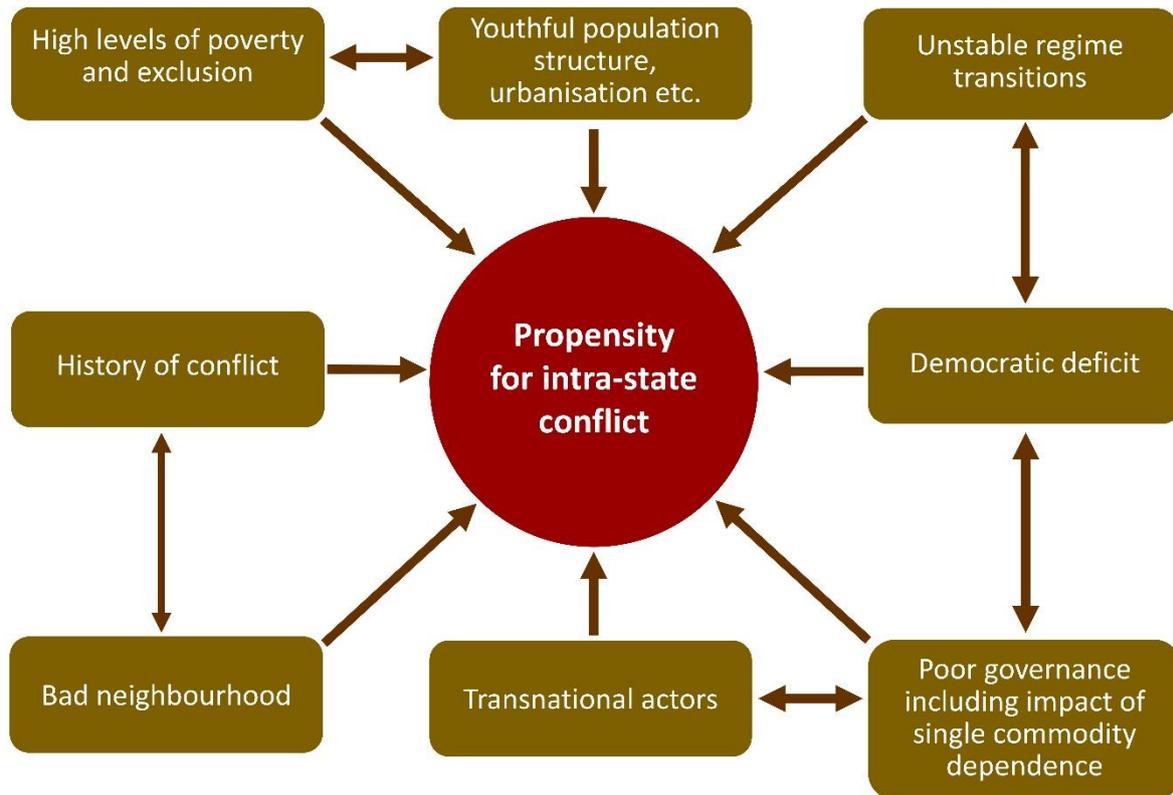
Figure 4.3. Key drivers of conflict and violence in Africa (Source: adapted from Cilliers and Sisk, 2013).

4.3.1 Poverty, inequality and underdevelopment

The persistence of poverty, inequality and underdevelopment is probably the most cited explanation for do I get conflict in Africa, and whilst few would dispute the correlation between the two, the direction of causality continues to stimulate much debate (Braithwaite *et al.*, 2014; Okunlola and Okafor, 2020). The 'greed and grievance' theory holds that those who live in poverty caused by the lack of economic development and opportunity have little to lose by joining a rebellion or engaging in a conflict that promises an improvement in quality of life (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Indeed, this has often been offered as one explanation for the child soldier phenomenon, common in the recent conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire (Achvarina *et al*., 2009; Maconachie and Binns, 2007a). However, the relationship between poverty, inequality and conflict is extremely complex; high levels of poverty and inequality are both a cause and a consequence of underlying structural issues such as weak governance and poor political performance, that themselves predispose a state or region to conflict and violence (Cillers and Sisk, 2013). While economic inequality within society – that is, wealth existing alongside poverty – is also regarded as an underlying risk factor, it is

important to view this in the wider context of the social and political processes that have created it (Cramer, 2003). Moreover, as Ostby (2008) points out, it is the inequality that manifests between specific groups (rather than individuals) that tends to cause resentment and grievances that are likely to evolve into conflict and violence. This is evident in the conflict that occurred during South Africa's apartheid era which emanated from economic inequality between groups rooted in complex historical, social and political processes and transformations. Meanwhile, although the uprisings and conflict in North Africa during the 'Arab spring' of 2011 were influenced by growing unemployment, economic inequality and poverty, it was arguably underdevelopment in its widest sense, in terms of the lack of human rights and political freedoms, that sparked the protests and conflict (Sadiki, 2015).

4.3.2 Ethnicity

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 placed ethnic politics firmly at the forefront of attempts to understand and predict conflict in Africa. Although there is some debate as to how influential a country's ethnic composition and differences are as causes of conflict, several studies have proposed a heightened risk where one ethnic group is dominant within society or holds more political power (e.g. Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). For example, the 2020 armed conflict in northern Ethiopia between ethnic Tigrayans and central government forces has its roots in the country's system of ethnic federalism instituted after the overthrow of the communist government in 1991. While this saw Ethiopia divided into nine regional states that reflected traditional ethnic territories, the central federal government was dominated by the interests of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) for over 17 years, raising ethnic tensions around the country. The election of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018 and the subsequent restructuring of political power raised accusations of exclusion by the TPLF, who in defiance of federal government held their own elections that led to hostility and an armed conflict characterised by thousands of casualties and accusations of rape and civilian killings from both sides.

While ethnicity is often cited as cause of conflict, ethnic tensions may simply reflect underlying social and economic inequalities. In the case of Rwanda, ethnic tensions date back to the German and Belgian colonial governments that arbitrarily segregated Hutu from Tutsi and installed the latter in positions of power. Seeking to quash growing demands for independence from the Tutsi elite during the 1950s, the colonial government then transferred power and land from Tutsi to Hutu. Subsequent conflict, while fundamentally driven by

unequal power relations, increasingly became associated with ethnicity, to the point where the systematic eradication of Tutsis became the goal of various Hutu militia groups in 1994. Similarly, in neighbouring Burundi, it has been argued that ethnic tensions were manipulated by both Hutu and Tutsi political elites to further their own interests during the civil war of 1993 (Ngaruko and Nkurunziza, 2005). Elsewhere, ethnic tensions across Sudan have been cited (particularly by the world's media) as the driver of ongoing conflict and violence in the Darfur region since 2003 (Box 4.2).

Box 4.2 The conflict in Darfur: ethnic tensions or climate change?

The Darfur region of Sudan came to the attention of the world's media in 2003, when a violent armed conflict suddenly erupted between indigenous nomadic pastoralist Arabs and farmers of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups. Despite a relatively peaceful coexistence of these groups in the past, during which farmers allowed pastoralists access to land and water, sporadic outbreaks of violence attributed to ethnic tensions over land and resources first began to occur during the 1980s. In 2003, however, tensions rapidly escalated into a regional conflict that has claimed the lives of over 2.4 million people and has led to an ongoing humanitarian crisis in the region.

Shortly after the outbreak of violence in 2003, and particularly as the conflict began to escalate, it became clear that a process of 'ethnic cleansing' (some would suggest genocide) was being perpetrated throughout Darfur by government forces and state-sponsored local Arab militia, known as *Janjaweed*. Indeed, since the late 1990s, the Arab government of Sudan had been replacing local administrators in Darfur with its own political figures, with the aim of supporting Arab pastoralist groups over farmers (de Waal, 2005). The need to retaliate against this oppression triggered an escalation of conflict and the establishment of armed militant 'rebel' groups in opposition to the government in Khartoum, and despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping force, attempts at several ceasefire agreements (most recently in 2016), and the ousting of long-time president Omar al-Bashir in 2019, the conflict has continued. As recently as 2021 the region experienced violent conflict between Masalit groups and Arab nomads escalating into a declared state of emergency in the West Darfur region.

In 2007 the UN published its *Sudan: Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment* report, which

challenged the view that Darfur's conflict was rooted in ethnic divisions. Instead, the report blamed the conflict firmly on land degradation, desertification and an 'unprecedented' scale of climate change (UNEP, 2007: 60). It suggested that rainfall throughout the region has declined significantly and this has caused drought, water shortages and the degradation of agricultural land. This, combined with a growing population and poor environmental governance, has purportedly led to the breakdown of established social systems in Darfur and the outbreak of conflict due to competition for scarce resources. The Darfur conflict was subsequently characterized in the media as the first of many climate-induced conflicts that would inevitably affect Africa in the years to come.

While few would deny that sustaining a livelihood in Darfur has been a challenge, many denounced the environmental degradation argument as being too simplistic, citing evidence that people in the region have adapted to environmental change for centuries without resorting to conflict. Indeed, in a detailed analysis of rainfall trends in the region, Kevane and Gray (2008) report that while there has been some variability in rainfall from one year to the next, there is little evidence of a gradual, long-term decline in rainfall during the thirty years preceding the conflict. Moreover, they note that the significant droughts of 1984 and 1990 did not lead to ethnic conflict. The roots of the conflict, they suggest, are overwhelmingly political, and ultimately rest with "an elite ruling the country from the capital that has preferred to exclude peripheral populations from genuine participation in political processes and has repeatedly revealed a willingness and ability to use large-scale violence, often against civilian populations, in response to perceived threats from the peripheral regions" (Kevane and Gray, 2008: 10).

Almost two decades on from its start, it is clear that conflict in Darfur shows no signs of abating and continues to be driven by a nexus of concerns about access to natural resources combined with ethnic politics and tensions that reflect the national situation. Even if the ethnic origins of the conflict are debatable, there is little doubt that the conflict and violence of the last 20 years has fuelled institutionalised grievances and antagonism along ethnic lines (DRC, 2021).

4.3.3 Religion

Armed conflicts and violence linked to religion have increased significantly in recent decades, with religion-fuelled extremism and terrorism killing civilians in many countries including

Burkina Faso, Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria and Mali. In Nigeria in particular, religious conflict that exists to this day can be traced back to the country's formation from two different territories during the British colonial era: the largely Muslim north, with historical cultural ties to North Africa and the Middle East, and the ethnically diverse and largely Christian south. Like ethnicity, religion is often a convenient label for conflict that has more deep-rooted and complex underlying causes, and for Nigeria it has largely been the case that underlying inequalities in natural resource access have driven religious tensions and violence. Since the declaration of Sharia law by some northern Nigerian states in the early 2000s, however, tensions have grown between Muslim and Christian communities from which extremist religious groups such as Boko Haram have emerged (Box 4.3).

The increasing trend towards the radicalisation and subsequent violent action of religious groups throughout Africa has in part been attributed to the spread of conservative and fundamentalist versions of Islam that have originated in north Africa, the middle east, and in some cases terrorist organisations such as al-Qaida and Islamic State (Kim and Sandler, 2020). These have fuelled 'theological conflicts' often characterised by violence between different parties over ideas, for example the role of religion in state functioning, as has become a recurring issue in Somalia and Nigeria. Meanwhile, the number of 'inter-religious armed conflicts' in which conflict occurs between parties identifying with a particular religion (e.g. Christians and Muslims), has remained relatively stable (Basedau, 2017). Basedau and Schaefer-Kehnert (2019) further point to a growing trend of religious discrimination throughout Africa.

Yet, despite the growing trend in theological conflicts and religious extremism across the continent, it is important to recognise that religious ideas *per se* do not cause extremism and religion-motivated conflict; rather it tends, once again, to be the prevalence of weak states and poor governance that create the conditions for religious discrimination and radicalisation among vulnerable and disaffected populations (Basedau, 2017). With its long history of peaceful and tolerant religious practice, the challenge for Africa is one of mitigating and adapting to the transnational influences that empower religious conflict and violence.

Box 4.3 The Boko Haram insurgence in Nigeria.

Boko Haram, which translates from Hausa as 'Western education is a sin', is the common name of the Islamic terrorist group known officially in Arabic as 'Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad' (translated as 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'). The group was founded in 2002 in Miaduguri, northeastern Nigeria, by Islamic preacher Mohammed Yusuf, but did not come to international attention until 2009 when it launched its first insurgence against security forces across several Nigerian states that left more than 1000 dead. Following the capture and execution of Yusuf by state forces after this uprising, Abubakar Shekau emerged as the new leader and Boko Haram entered a new phase of attacks which grew in intensity and duration throughout the 2010s. Most notably these included the murder of 65 students at an agriculture college in Yobe state in 2013, the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from the town of Chibhok in 2014, bombings in Jos and Maiduguri throughout 2014, a massacre in the town of Baga in 2015 which claimed the lives of 2000 people, and the bombing of a market in Gamboru in 2020 which killed 38. Between 2009 and 2022 it has been estimated that Boko Haram actions have led directly to the deaths of over 35,000 people, indirectly to over 100,000 deaths, as well as the displacement of over 3 million people. The wider impacts on development have also been extensive (see Nnorom, 2021). Farming, fishing and various other livelihood activities have experienced severe disruption, leading to greater poverty and a decline in their contribution to GDP. In terms of education, almost 2300 teachers have been killed and 14,000 schools destroyed, resulting in children being forced from school and in some cases being recruited to fight for Boko Haram. The conflict has also led to more polarised religious divisions within the secular and traditionally tolerant Nigerian Society, and hence a shift towards an era of national political unrest.

Like many other insurgency groups, Boko Haram has experienced frequent in-fighting and challenges to doctrine and authority, and in 2016 a new faction – Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP) – broke away from Boko Haram and pledged loyalty to Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). While ISWAP and Boko Haram both continued their terrorist insurgencies, each gained control over different areas; Boko Haram had a stronghold in southern Borno and the border with Cameroon, while ISWAP continue to control areas around northern Borno, southern Niger and around Lake Chad. In May 2021 Abubakar

Shekau was assassinated on the orders of the new head of Islamic State in Syria during a clash between Boko Haram and ISWAP forces, and in the following months thousands of Boko Haram rebels were reported to have either surrendered to Nigerian forces or defected to ISWAP. While the influence of Boko Haram has declined in recent years in no small part to the actions of Nigerian state security forces, ISWAP in contrast has emerged as the most powerful faction in the region and there are growing fears that it will further consolidate its power and influence in the Lake Chad basin.

One reason for this lies in the defeat of other Islamic terrorist organisations in Iraq and Syria, that have subsequently sought to reposition their transnational militant Islamic forces, interests and resources to west and east Africa. However, the situation has also been enabled by a mix of political, social, economic and environmental factors (Avis, 2020). The ISWAP stronghold in the Lake Chad basin is geographically remote and diverse in terrain, which has always been a challenge for state governance and security. Similarly, there are few barriers to illegal and unregulated cross-border trade – in both goods and weapons. The region has also suffered from the impacts of climate change, that has rendered people's livelihoods vulnerable and increased levels of unemployment, migration and poverty. Finally, support among the different border communities has been achieved through ISWAP's use of the common regional language, Kanuri (Barkindo, 2020). Both Boko Haram and ISWAP have, therefore, been able to appear more in touch with the needs of these poor and marginalised communities, and able to fill the gaps in governance, service delivery, security and economic support that the state governments of these remote areas have neglected for years.

4.3.3 Natural resources

Much attention has focused on the role of high-value natural resource endowments in fuelling conflict in Africa, and it has been suggested that a strong statistical correlation exists between a county's reliance on natural resources and its susceptibility to conflict and violence (Collier and Hoeffler, 2001; Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2002; Adhvaryu *et al*., 2021; Sini *et al*., 2021). Certainly, since the 1990s attempts to control access to natural resources such as diamonds, gold, timber and coltan have been blamed for long-enduring violence and conflict in DRC, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Angola (Maconachie and Binns, 2007a; Conrad *et al*., 2018).

The relationship between natural resources and conflict is also complex. In the well-documented case of Sierra Leone, it remains unclear whether the desire to gain access to diamond mines constituted the original cause of the conflict between the state forces and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) (Richards, 2003). Nonetheless, once the conflict began, there is little doubt that control of these areas became a major objective (Maconachie and Binns, 2007b; see Plate 4.1). According to UNEP (2009), natural resource endowments are linked to conflict in three ways. First, the economic inequality that results from unequal access to the benefits of natural resources can lead to grievances and trigger the outbreak of conflict, as was arguably the case in Sierra Leone. Second, where conflict exists for other reasons, high-value natural resources may become strategic targets for military forces who see their control as a means of increasing revenue and fuelling further conflict. This has been the situation in eastern DRC, where the forces of several countries sought to gain control over diamond mines and coltan-rich areas, despite fighting what was initially an ethnic-based war. Third, because of the wealth generated by natural-resource exploitation, there is often little incentive to halt the conflict and concede territory and access rights. Natural resources, therefore, can become a barrier to peacebuilding.

Plate 4.1. Diamond miners shovelling gravel in eastern Sierra Leone (Tony Binns).

In examining these relationships further, several preconditions for natural-resource-fuelled conflict emerge. It has been argued that the failure of states to manage and distribute the benefits of natural resources in a fair manner can precipitate violent conflict. Corruption, land appropriation, tolerance of illegal exploitation, or simply the lack of enforceable laws, can create the conditions for grievance among the population, especially those who are living in acute poverty. Removing control of natural resources from the state can therefore be seen as a way of addressing inequality. Many authors, however, have suggested that greed rather than a desire for redistributive justice is a major driver of seeking natural-resource control (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Maconachie and Binns, 2007a). Greed combined with available opportunities for resource exploitation arguably go hand-in-hand. Klosek (2018) points to the critical role of a resource's 'value-to-weight' ratio in determining the likelihood of exploitation and conflict; natural resources that are smaller, more easily traded, and ultimately more readily 'lootable' by state and non-state actors, tend to be associated with some of the more violent and long-standing conflicts in Africa. Rather than poor governance and fragile states being a causal factor behind resource conflicts, some have argued the opposite: that the presence of these high-value, easily exploitable natural resources (and a dependency on them) actually erodes state functioning because resource-centred governance tends to neglect other infrastructural considerations (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Collier, 2007). This has arguably been the case in Nigeria, where most of the country's economic activity centres on oil production, and where concerns persist about the fragile nature of the state and the challenge of governing a diverse, multi-ethnic population (Maier, 2001; Obi, 2014). Indeed, it is hardly surprising that many have written of Africa's 'resource curse'.

4.3.4   Geographical factors

In addition to the presence and distribution of specific natural resources, a range of other geographical factors has been proposed as contributing to the risk of conflict in Africa (ADB, 2009). The presence of distinct geographic boundaries, including rivers, mountains and forests, can provide geographical isolation for insurgency groups, as was the case for the anti-government Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) forces operating from the northern Ethiopian Highlands during the civil war during the 1970s and 1980s. The size of a country and the distribution of population within it can also be influential. It has been argued that large populations located in peripheral areas, away from the capital, may be ignored by government, thereby fuelling resentment and conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). This may well have been a contributing factor towards

civil conflict in sub-Saharan Africa's two largest countries, DRC and Sudan, where central government has struggled to be effective in distant regions that offer safe havens for rebel forces. On the other hand, many of Africa's smaller countries, such as Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone, have been engaged in civil conflict, too. In the case of Rwanda, population pressure and tension over land availability have been cited as two of many factors driving the ethnic conflict in 1994 (Magnarella, 2005).

Many have argued that the roots of modern conflict in Africa lie in the arbitrary geographical boundaries that were imposed by colonial governments during the late nineteenth century. One simply has to look at the present-day borders between Ethiopia and Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania, and Senegal and The Gambia to realize that these were drawn with little consideration of culturally and ethnically contiguous areas. In the case of Ethiopia and Somalia, conflict in the late 1970s was driven by Somali claims over the disputed, ethnically Somali, Ogaden territory, which had been allocated to Ethiopia by colonial powers in the 1950s. Conversely, while Sudan and South Sudan were managed as two distinct regions during the colonial era, these were merged after independence in 1956 leading to over 50 years of conflict between the less developed, ethnically diverse south and the more developed, mainly Arab north. Despite South Sudan gaining independence in 2011, conflict has continued unabated and driven by longstanding territory disputes that reflect natural resource access grievances and ethnic rivalries (Martell, 2018).

4.3.5   *Globalization, interconnectedness and the spill-over effect*

It has been argued that an increasing interconnectedness of the world system, which has included transport, telecommunications and markets, in combination with the collapse of Cold War rivalries during the 1990s, has provided an environment in which conflict can easily flourish. Luckham *et al*. (2001) suggest that the immediate reduction in funding and arms supplies after the Cold War led to the instability of many states, and subsequently both state and rebel forces looked to the growing number of private suppliers of arms to provide the resources to assert control over territory. Meanwhile, as access to global markets improved, new sources of revenue such as natural resources have been exploited. This has been exacerbated by the proliferation in mobile telecommunications, internet access and the use of social media networks over the last two decades; a period in which mobile phone subscriptions in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 11.5 million in 2000 to almost 800 million in 2019 (World Bank, 2020b). Social media in particular has been accused of creating virtual

echo chambers of views that provide a breeding ground for disinformation, conspiracy theories and political and religious radicalisation that go on to fuel violence and conflict. On the other hand, social media has also been used as a tool to draw attention to on-going conflict, political repression and human rights abuses, and in so doing has provided a trigger for protest and further conflict. This was evident in the built up to Robert Mugabe's removal from office in Zimbabwe in 2017 when the #ThisFlag campaign and others galvanised opposition movements (Hove and Chenzi, 2020).

A further consequence of the seemingly arbitrary nature of Africa's borders is the way in which conflict has spilled over from one country to the next, and as Gleditsch (2007) maintains, conflict is twice as likely in a country where one of its neighbours is at war. The porosity of borders means that militia, weapons and resources can circulate freely, as typified by conflict in the DRC, where no fewer than nine state forces were fighting at any one time during the 'Second Congo War' between 1998 and 2003; a conflict that became defined more by the interconnections between natural resource markets, arms suppliers and the mobility of different ethnic groups, rather than the state versus rebel groups. More recently, North Africa's Arab Spring uprising that originated in Tunisia spread rapidly into neighbouring countries, and in Libya in particular its legacy has been one of on-going conflict between a range of state and non-state actors and frequent disputes with neighbouring Chad and Algeria, who themselves are embroiled in range of ethnic and theologically-driven conflicts between different groups that span the different borders of the Sahel (OECD, 2020a).

4.3.6 Climate change and conflict

Of increasing concern is the relationship between climate change and conflict, so much so that in 2021 the Peace and Security Council of the African Union issued a Communique on the theme "Sustainable Peace in Africa: Climate Change and its Effects on Peace and Security in the Continent" (African Union, 2021). According to the IPCC (Trisos *et al.*, 2022), temperature increases and water shortages in Africa will have a dramatic effect on agricultural land and food security, with between 75 million and 250 million people affected in coming decades. Environmental degradation, food insecurity and water scarcity inevitably put pressure on people's livelihoods, create competition for land and resources, and ultimately enhance the risk of violent conflict (Brown *et al.*, 2007; Niang *et al.*, 2014). Some researchers have also gone as far as suggesting a causal 'heat-violence' relationship in which increasing temperatures have evidenced a proportional increase in violent conflict (Chersich *et al.*,

2019). Indeed, in 2007 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon claimed that the impact of climate change was a significant cause of the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region (see Box 4.2). Meanwhile in neighbouring Chad the conflict and violence around its borders with Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon have long been attributed to climate-induced water scarcity characterised by a 90% reduction in surface water in Lake Chad since the 1960s (Nagabhatla *et al.*, 2021). Although not yet erupting into armed conflict, tensions continue to grow between Egypt and Ethiopia over access to the Blue Nile's water, which have been exacerbated by climate-induced changes to seasonal rainfall and also Ethiopia's response to this which has been to construct a series of large dams that Egypt claims will have a catastrophic impact on downstream flows and its economy in the coming years. In 2020 the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed warned, "*No force can stop Ethiopia from building a dam. If there is need to go to war, we could get millions readied*" (BBC, 2019).

However, the links between climate change and conflict are not clear cut, and it has been argued that analyses tend to ignore complex socio-economic and political determinants that constitute 'climate fragility risks' (Nagarajan *et al*, 2018) as well as the impressive adaptive capacity of people, institutions and policies (Hendrix and Glaser, 2007; Abraham, 2007). Certainly, it is the calls for adaptation for climate resilience through political co-operation and a commitment to climate mainstreaming that lie at the heart of the aforementioned AU call for action.

4.3.7   *Conflict triggers*

While each of the factors discussed above heighten the *risk* of conflict and violence, it is usually specific political, social, economic or environmental events that *trigger* it. Military coups, for example, have triggered conflict in Burundi, DRC and Angola, although 'bloodless' coups – such as those in Benin, Burkina Faso, The Gambia and Ghana – have also frequently occurred (Meredith, 2005; see Plate 4.2). There have also been numerous examples of government elections that have precipitated civil conflict and unrest. In Ethiopia (2005), Kenya (2007, 2017), Zimbabwe (2008, 2018), Nigeria (2011, 2019), Côte d'Ivoire (2011, 2020), and Guinea (2020) violence erupted in response to voter intimidation and alleged electoral manipulation (Kovacs and Bjarnesen, 2018; Laakso, 2019). Perhaps the most striking example of a conflict trigger in Africa in recent years was the self-immolation of street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia in 2010 in protest to the confiscation of his goods by municipal officials, which sparked the Tunisian revolution and subsequent civil unrest

throughout North Africa.

Plate 4.2. Arch 22, Banjul, The Gambia to commemorate the military coup of 22 July 1994 (Tony Binns).

4.4 The impacts of conflict

In 2005 the UN's *Human Development Report* suggested a 'strong association between low human development and violent conflict', with nine out of the ten lowest-ranked countries (which were all African) having experienced violent conflict between 1990 and 2005 (UNDP, 2005: 154). Re-examination of the data as recently as 2020 reveals an almost identical situation; one in which each of the 10 least developed countries, with the exception of Sierra Leone, have experienced conflict during the previous decade (UNDP, 2020). The implication here is that conflict has a serious impact on those variables used to calculate the Human Development Index – GDP, life expectancy and education – although, as is explored in this section, the impacts of conflict are significantly more diverse and wide-ranging. The impact of conflict on people and their livelihoods can also be long-lasting, extending well beyond the period of conflict itself. Since few African countries have escaped conflict, understanding the interrelated impacts and legacies of conflict has become a fundamental component of most development strategies, particularly those involved in post-conflict reconstruction and

peacebuilding. A critical consideration in understanding the impacts of conflict, however, is that the consequences of conflict are not always negative. While this is undoubtedly subjective – depending upon which 'side' one is on and the underlying causes of the conflict – periods of conflict are fundamentally characterized by a dynamic restructuring of power relationships from the macro-economic to the household levels. Conflict can create new forms of inequality and poverty, but it can also lead to the development of new opportunities for people, which can be consolidated in the post-conflict period (see Section 4.6).

Before discussing the specific impacts of conflict in detail, it is worth considering the issues surrounding the reporting of these impacts. Here, the reliability of data becomes a key problem. As Luckham *et al.* (2001) point out, government records may be physically destroyed during the conflict, making it difficult to establish a benchmark from which demographic, economic and social change can be measured. Data may also exist only at an aggregated, nationwide level, which can mask the effects of localized conflict. Perhaps more importantly, it is often difficult to establish the impacts of conflict relative to what would have occurred in its absence, particularly given the already impoverished status of many African countries that face a range of other development challenges. Statistical information, therefore, is at best unreliable; and most would argue that, for these reasons, the effects of conflict tend to be greatly underestimated.

4.4.1   Casualties

It is important to distinguish between direct 'battle deaths' – military personnel and civilians killed during conflict – and 'total war deaths', which include the former as well as indirect deaths from disease, starvation and crime (Lacina and Gleditsch, 2005), although these are notoriously difficult to estimate. The African Development Bank (ADB, 2008) suggests that 1.6 million battle deaths occurred in Africa between 1960 and 2005, some 24 per cent of the global total, yet these may constitute only a fraction of total war deaths. For instance, in Angola, there were an estimated 1.5 million total war deaths between 1975 and 2002, of which 165,475 were recorded battle deaths (Lacina and Gleditsch, 2005). Similarly, it is estimated that war in the DRC between 1998 and 2007 cost the lives of over 5.4 million people (2.1 million after the formal end of the war in 2002), yet fewer than 10 per cent of these were battle deaths (Coghlan *et al*., 2008). The gross disparities between battle deaths and total war deaths are even more stark in the case of Ethiopia, where the 1976–1991 conflict resulted in just 16,000 battle-related deaths, but most likely 2 million total war deaths, mainly

due to the ensuing famine (Lacina and Gleditsch, 2005).

As discussed above in 4.2.2, the inter-state conflicts of the 1990s in which battle deaths peaked (Figure 4.4), have given way to multiple intra-state and non-state low-intensity conflicts involving various state and non-state actors (Palik *et al.*, 2020). Hence, despite battle deaths showing signs of decline during the 2000s, this recent proliferation in the number and frequency of low-intensity conflicts has contributed to an increasing number of casualties since 2013. Indeed, during the 2000s there were on average just over 12,000 battle deaths per year, while for the 2010s this increased to over 17,000 (UCDP, 2021b). Estimating the total war deaths on top of this remains more challenging than ever given the increasing complexity and interconnectedness of conflict. As Wagner *et al.* (2018) reveal, infant deaths as an indirect consequence of conflict are estimated to be up to 3.6 times the number of infants killed directly from armed conflict.
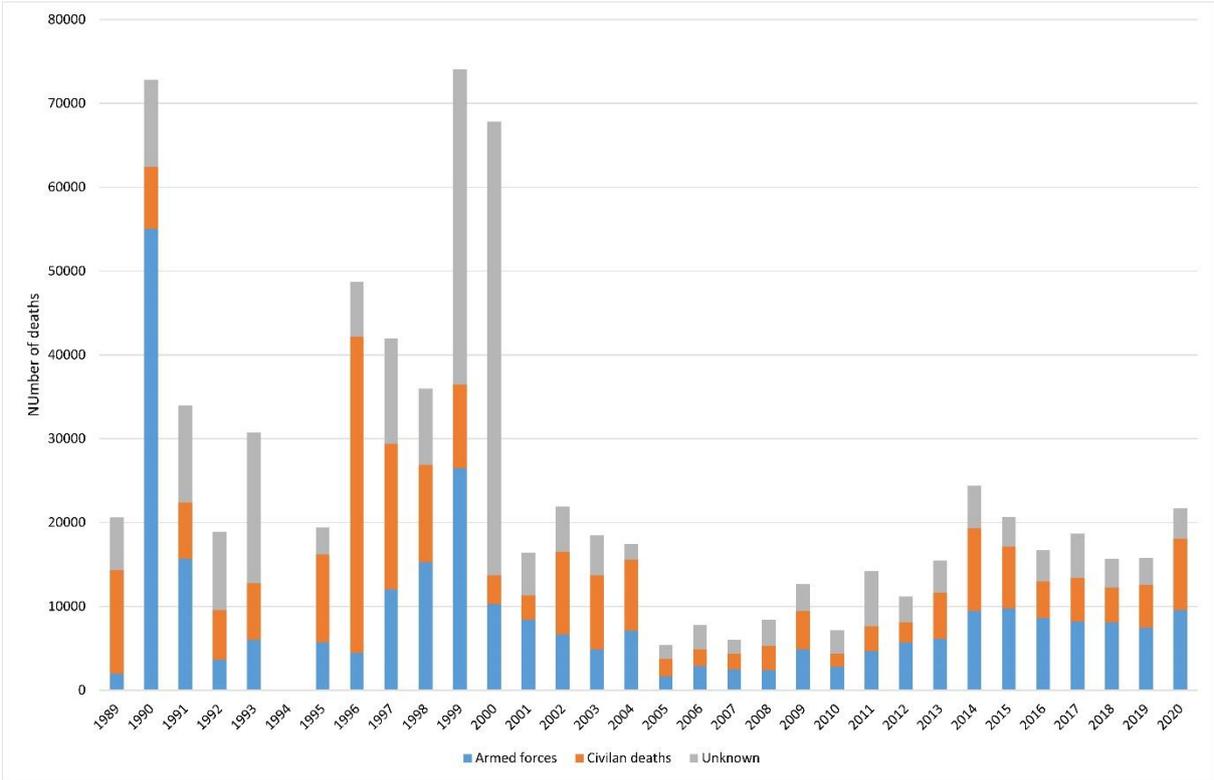

Figure 4.4. Estimates of battle deaths from 1989 to 2020 throughout Africa (Source: UCDP, 2021b).

4.4.2   *Macro-economy and government*
Despite the correlation between conflict and a country's low ranking on the human

development index, it is difficult to determine whether underdevelopment is a cause or consequence. The reality is both: underdevelopment increases the risk of conflict, while conflict exacerbates economic decline and underdevelopment. Oxfam's *Africa's Missing Billions* report in 2007 suggested that conflict in twenty-three African countries between 1990 and 2007 cost around $300 billion in total, with conflict shrinking a country's economy (GDP) by an average of 15 per cent per annum (Oxfam, 2007). More recently, an IMF analysis of 45 African countries between 1989-2019 estimated that in conflict-stricken countries annual growth was on average 2.5 percentage points lower than non-conflict countries, and GDP per capita was up to 20 per cent lower five years after the start of a conflict (IMF, 2020). Again, the economic costs incurred as a result of conflict are difficult to quantify, but they can be divided into direct and indirect costs. The former are those costs that involve expenditure to support or manage the effects of conflict. Military spending, for example, will increase significantly during periods of conflict, and effectively divert money away from other essential services or infrastructure. In 1999, a year into its conflict with Ethiopia, Eritrea poured a staggering 34.4 per cent of its GDP into the military (in 2003, several years after the ceasefire, military expenditure remained at 20.9 per cent) (SIPRI, 2022). This is illustrated in Figure 4.5, which also shows the level of military spending as a proportion of GDP in several other countries. The increase in military spending in Burundi between 1993 and 2005 can be linked to the country's civil war in that period. Similarly, in Sudan, spending fell after the end of the north–south conflict in 2001, while the subsequent sustained rise from 2004 can be linked to the conflict in Darfur. Meanwhile, military expenditure in both South Sudan and Libya corresponds with the escalation of conflict during the mid-2010s. Figure 4.6, however, points to a trend of declining military spending over the last three decades among the vast majority of African countries, even though, as highlighted earlier, this does not appear to correspond to a decline in conflict itself. Once again, this is perhaps indicative of the displacement of conflict among private and non-state actors.

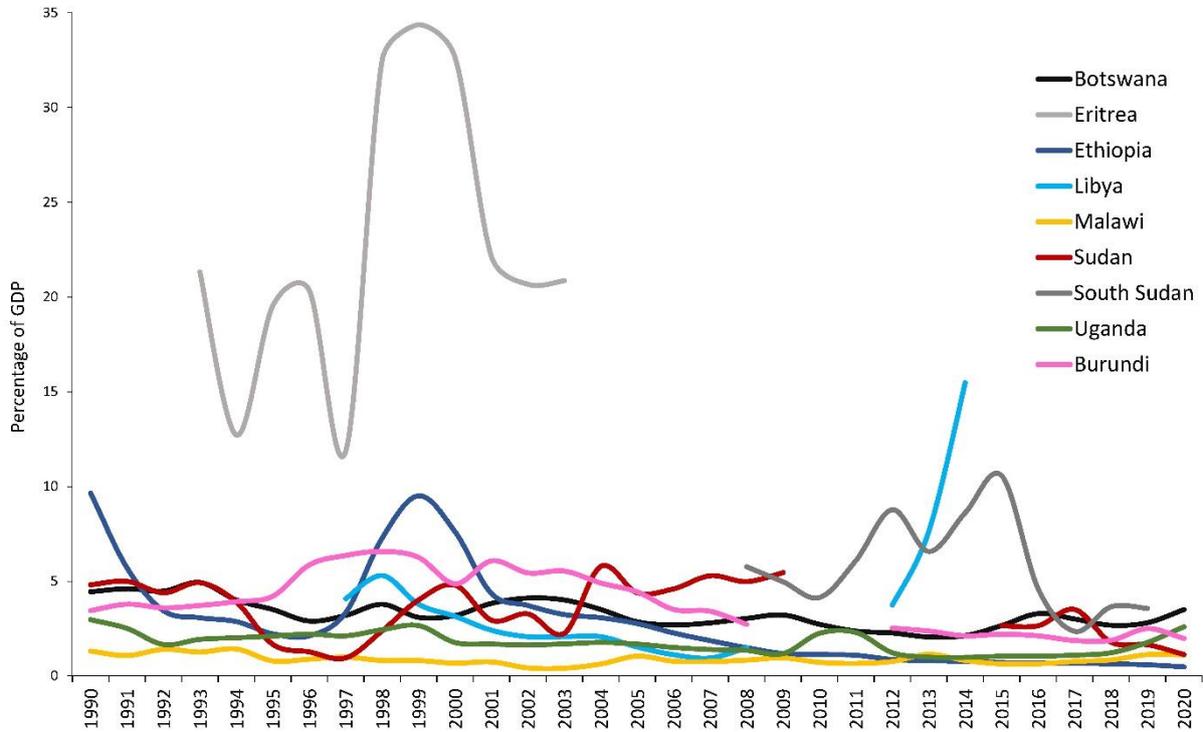Plate 4.3. Display of armaments in Johannesburg (Etienne Nel).

Figure 4.5 Military spending as a percentage of GDP in selected African countries, 1990–2020 (Source: SIPRI, 2022).
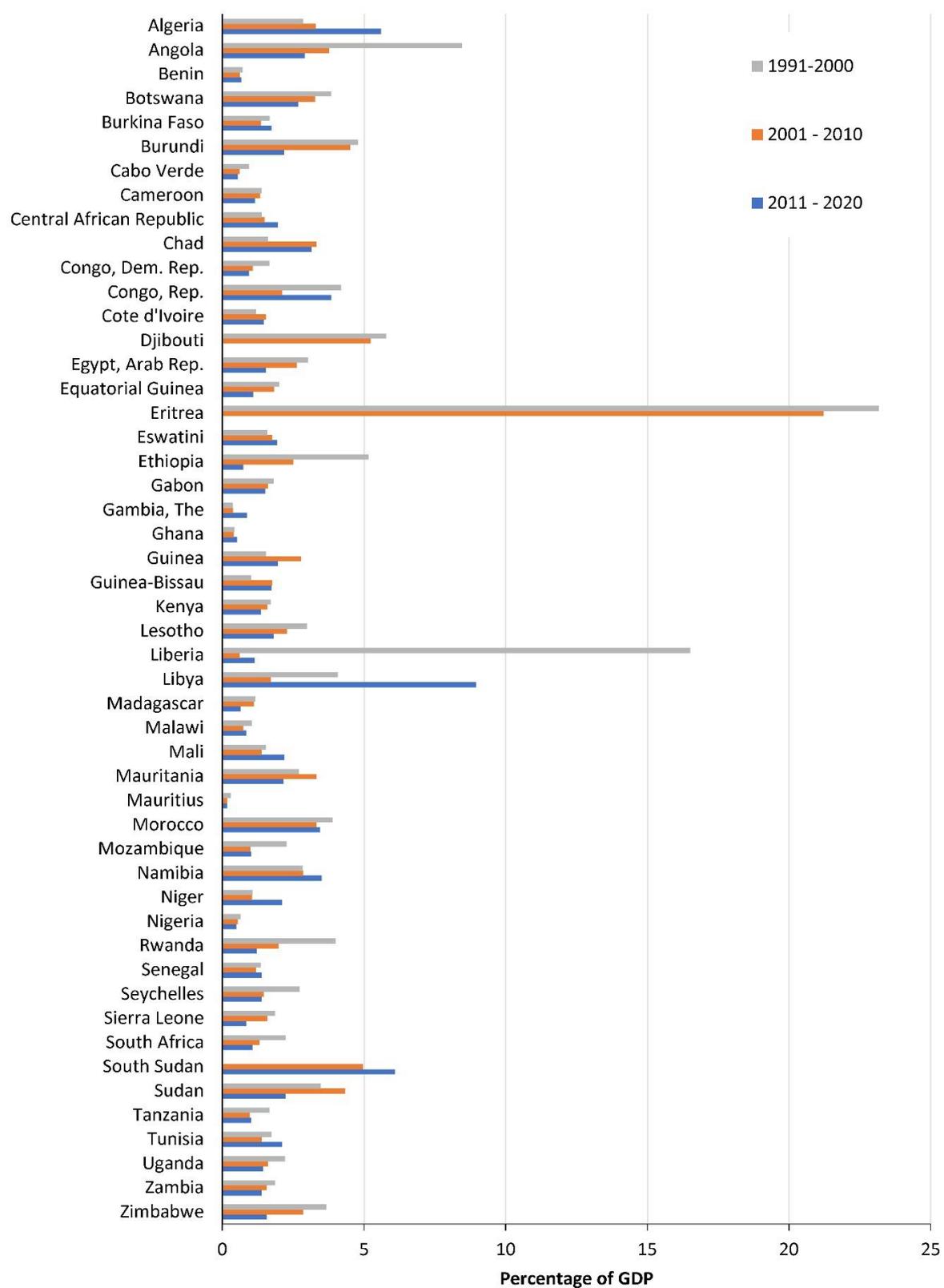
Figure 4.6. Average military spending as a percentage of GDP in selected African countries across three decades (Source: SIPRI, 2022).

The direct costs of conflict also include medical and repatriation expenses for the injured, the costs of civilian displacement (see Section 4.4.6), and the cost of rebuilding essential infrastructure, although this usually occurs during the post-conflict period (see Section 4.6). The diversion of funds to meet the direct costs of conflict inevitably results in a range of indirect economic costs, which can be seen in terms of opportunities lost through the lack of investment in essential peacetime infrastructure, services and economic development activities. The deterioration of infrastructure, through either physical destruction or lack of investment, together with ineffective governance, creates the conditions of economic decline. Under these circumstances, tax revenues decrease as economic activity shifts towards an informal economy characterized by short-term opportunistic behaviour and segmented markets, as occurred throughout Somalia following the collapse of the state in 1991 (Luckham *et al*., 2001) (although Mackie *et al.* (2017) suggest that growth of the informal economy has actually benefitted longer-term peace and stability in some parts of the country). There may also be a significant 'brain drain', as those with skills in such sectors as health and education flee the country (Mlambo *et al.*, 2019). Bilateral and multilateral aid and funding for development projects and NGOs are also likely to be suspended as donors become concerned about operational issues, or money being diverted into military spending. Similarly, foreign direct investment by private firms may be scaled down or halted, while the occurrence of conflict will significantly reduce the likelihood of future foreign investment due to the perceived risks of insecurity. The overall effects of this reduced investment and economic decline are multi-sectoral in nature: health, education, development, energy, roads, water, environment and social services are all likely to be affected, albeit it in different ways (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Summary of conflict impacts on different sectors.

	Direct impacts	Indirect impacts
Agriculture	Destruction and contamination of land Destruction or theft of livestock and equipment	Displacement of people Difficult rural livelihoods
Industry	Destruction and looting of factories and equipment Disruption of supply and marketing channels	Reduced economic activity Unemployment Perceived investment opportunities too risky
Education	Destruction of schools Shortage of teachers	Brain drain Legacy of poor education
Health	Destruction of hospitals and health infrastructure Looting of equipment	Disease and ill health Increased morbidity and mortality Public health neglected
Tourism	Destruction of infrastructure (buildings, roads) and natural capital (wildlife)	Declining tourist receipts, collapse of sector, and unemployment

4.4.3   Tourism

Tourism is an essential source of foreign exchange and in 2019, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, it contributed overall to around 6.9% of Africa's GDP (WTTC, 2021). However, even brief periods of conflict or civil unrest can affect tourist receipts as visitors are sensitive to the security situation. The violence that followed the Kenyan presidential elections in 2007 resulted in a halving of tourist revenue during 2008, with serious implications for employment in the sector (see Box 8.6, below; BBC, 2008). Similarly, in the aftermath of revolution in Tunisia in 2011, tourist revenues declined by almost $1bn in the following year and, despite a strong recovery thereafter, terrorist attacks at a beach resort near Sousse in 2015 led to a further decline (WTTC, 2021). In cases of more prolonged conflict, the physical destruction of tourism infrastructure, such as buildings and wildlife, means that tourism takes a long time to recover and requires significant investment during the post-conflict period (Ferreira *et al.*, 2015).

The last 20 years has also seen increasing tourism revenues generated by what is often termed 'dark tourism', in which conflict, violence and its legacy become an attraction and marketable commodity. Rwanda, for example, offers 'peace and reconciliation' tours in which tourists can visit some of the 400 genocide memorials, inspect human remains and meet both victims and perpetrators of the 1994 genocide (Friedrich and Johnston, 2013). Albeit less recently, the battlefield sites of the Anglo-Zulu and Anglo-Boer Wars in South Africa have become

ingrained in the country's cultural and historical heritage and have become popular tourist attractions.

4.4.4 Agriculture and rural livelihoods

While agriculture, forestry and fishing contributed just under 18% of Africa's GDP in 2020, this figure masks the significant spatial variation between countries and the fact that smallholder farmers make up 70% of the population and similarly produce around 70% of Africa's food supply (AGRA, 2017). Conflict-induced destruction of land, homes and agricultural resources such as livestock and farming equipment, can consequently have a catastrophic impact on rural livelihoods and food security. In Somalia, for example, decades of conflict led to a national shortage of economically significant livestock resources (Ahmed and Green, 1999), whilst more recently one impact of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria has been a significant reduction in agricultural productivity specifically among staple crops such as sorghum, cassava, soya and yam (Adelaja and George, 2019). Even if land is still accessible and agricultural activities can continue, normal agricultural production may be disrupted by the destruction and collapse of infrastructure, such as water supply, road networks and extension services, as well as the lack of finance and marketing opportunities. The presence of armed groups may also place increasing pressure on farming; Luckham *et al*. (2001) cite the case of RENAMO insurgents in Mozambique, where soldiers forced local people to give up their food and water supplies. A shortage of agricultural labour may also result from the forced conscription of men and children, as occurred in Sierra Leone during the 1990s.

Despite the severe disruption to the functioning of many rural livelihoods, however, evidence suggests that people adapt to the new scenarios created by conflict. Faced with a decline in the able-bodied male workforce, women are likely to take on new roles (albeit with a significant burden). Forms of agriculture that require less maintenance, and are less vulnerable to destruction, may also be developed, or adaptation may be characterised by livelihood diversification (e.g. brick-making, labouring or manure-selling) which itself can create new markets and stimulate economic growth (Young and Ismail, 2019).

4.4.5 Environmental impacts

The impacts of conflict on the environment can also be considered in terms of their direct and indirect impacts, and in the wider context of the institutional and governance vacuum created

by conflict. Direct impacts include the physical destruction or contamination of land, natural resources and wildlife, usually caused by explosives or their debris. However, the indirect impacts are arguably even more significant (Solomon *et al.*, 2017).

Indirect impacts on the environment occur largely through the actions and coping strategies of civilians; in the absence of infrastructure, governance and livelihood opportunities, people are often forced to exploit natural resources. Deforestation, for example, can increase in response to local fuel shortages and the need for construction materials, but illegal timber production and marketing can also form a lucrative economic activity for both civilians and the military. The profit from 'conflict timber' consequently acts as an incentive for further conflict (see Section 4.3.3). In the absence of markets and 'normal' agricultural resources, wildlife poaching tends to proliferate and 'bush meat' becomes an important source of food. This was particularly evident in central Africa and especially the DRC during the 1990s and 2000s, causing alarm amongst conservationists as endangered species such as mountain gorillas were hunted. Recent evidence, however, suggests that this dependency on bushmeat was relatively short-lived and that the number and diversity of species have shown significant recovery (Van Vliet *et al.*, 2017).

These pressures tend to be highest where there are displaced people, particularly where refugees are concentrated. For example, it has been estimated that around 3750 hectares of forest were lost within three weeks of the arrival of refugees from Rwanda in the South Kivu region of the DRC in 1994 (UNEP, 2005). Similarly, in Karago, western Tanzania, where refugees from Burundi have been hosted since 1999, there is widespread evidence of serious soil erosion and land degradation caused by the destruction of vegetation. The demands placed on water resources by refugees can also lead to water shortages, and a deterioration of water quality through human-waste contamination. Again, these effects may be limited to the short term, however, and as Black (1998) suggests, there is evidence that refugees adapt to their new environment in ways that do not necessarily lead to long-term environmental degradation.

4.4.6   *Displacement and refugees*

Faced with the destruction of land, resources and livelihoods, many people in conflict zones are forced to migrate in search of security (Freeman, 2017). Those leaving their country of origin assume the status of a refugee, while those who remain are classified as internally

displaced persons (IDPs). In both cases, displacement has a range of social, economic and cultural consequences for those on the move and for those already residing in host areas. Not only have displaced people lost their livelihood assets, such as land and resources, but they may have lost their kinship and social connections. Displaced people subsequently become 'outsiders' in the areas where they settle, to the extent that this may create tensions within host communities, sometimes leading to further conflict (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006). In a recent study of DRC refugees in Rwanda, however, Fajth et al. (2019:17) suggest that "…*over time, refugees and host communities may build close social relations and sustain a peaceful and inclusive social environment*".

Recent data from the UNHCR suggest that in 2021 there were over 24 million IDPs and over 7.9 million refugees throughout Africa; this represents a huge increase since 2010 when numbers were estimated at 6.4 million IDPs and 2.3 million refugees. From the data highlighted in Table 4.3, it is clear that conflict in DRC, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan and South Sudan has had a dramatic effect on the displacement of people: over 5 million people have been displaced within the DRC alone. Many of those displaced will inevitably be drawn towards relief camps, where there is a chance that their basic needs will be met, until the security situation improves and repatriation can occur. Yet, the high concentration of people in relief camps creates other challenges. Food and water tend to be limited, and hence malnutrition and disease become endemic. For example, in the relief camps established around Goma in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, an estimated 50,000 people died as a result of cholera and dysentery linked to poor sanitation (Goma Epidemiology Group, 1995). However, recent evidence suggests that organisations such as UNHCR have made significant progress in managing outbreaks of infectious diseases such as measles, cholera and meningitis in refugee camps, not least due to better vaccination programmes (Altare *et al*., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic meanwhile, continues to raise a new series of challenges (as discussed in Chapter 6).

Table 4.3. Refugees and internally displaced people in selected African countries, 2021

	Internal Displaced Persons	Refugees under UNHCR's mandate	Total
Democratic Rep. of Congo	5,094,035	864,510	5,958,545
Ethiopia	3,954,760	145,125	4,099,885
Somalia	2,967,500	790,022	3,757,522
Nigeria	2,762,562	369,880	3,132,442
Sudan	2,552,174	805,874	3,358,048

South Sudan	1,710,966	2,277,919	3,988,885
Burkina Faso	1,312,071	15,813	1,327,884
Cameroon	1,032,942	83,027	1,115,969
Mozambique	788,091	74	788,165
Central African Rep.	716,678	713,262	1,429,940
Chad	401,511	10,361	411,872
Mali	386,454	174,319	560,773
Niger	319,895	20,321	340,216
Libya	223,949	18,346	242,295
Congo	134,430	12,595	147,025
Burundi	19,399	323,149	342,548
Eritrea	0	492,465	492,465
Rwanda	0	247,974	247,974
Western Sahara	0	116,960	116,960
Zimbabwe	0	8,458	8,458
Kenya	0	7,533	7,533
Malawi	0	516	516
Lesotho	0	6	6

Source: UNHCR, 2021.

4.4.7   *Women*

The consequences of conflict differ greatly between men and women, in a manner which usually reflects wider gender divisions in society. Since men are more likely to be directly involved in fighting, and account for the majority of deaths, it is women and children who can be most affected by the indirect impacts of conflict. Indeed, Wagner *et al*. (2019) estimated that women living within 50km of a high intensity armed conflict have a 21% greater increase in mortality than those who live further away, and that this is mostly attributed to the deterioration of health services and a subsequent increase in maternal mortality. One effect of the disproportionate loss of men during conflict is an increase in the work burden of women, who are forced to extend their role in economic production, in addition to continuing their household and childcare activities. The death of between 10-15 per cent of Rwanda's male population during the genocide created a large number of female-headed households, which in turn had a significant impact on rural livelihood dynamics across the country (Brück and Schindler, 2009). Although it has been suggested that such circumstances can be transformational in terms of women's empowerment, this can be temporary and long-term change hinges on women's representation in peace agreements and planning during the post-conflict period (Bakken and Buhaug, 2020).

Although research suggests that gender-based violence during conflict is influenced by its

prevalence in pre-conflict periods, there is little doubt that sexual and domestic violence towards women increases significantly during conflict periods. This can be explained in terms of the 'breakdown' of societal norms, but also by the fact that sexual violence has been used as a strategic weapon to spread fear and destabilize communities (El Jack, 2003; Mpinga *et al*., 2017). For example, in conflicts in Sudan, Uganda and particularly Rwanda (during the 1994 genocide), rape was used extensively as an 'ethnic cleansing' tool in an attempt to exercise power over specific ethnic groups. More recently, systematic sexual violence occurring alongside "shocking levels of brutality" has been evidenced among government and rebel forces in Ethiopia's civil conflict (Amnesty International, 2021). While the effects of sexual violence are profound and long-term in terms of the direct impacts on physical and mental health, and the trauma within families affected, there is also an economic impact; those affected may be unable to return to their livelihood opportunities or may become ostracized within communities.

4.4.8 *Children*

In terms of vulnerability, children are arguably in a similar situation to women. Indeed, many children born into Africa's long-running conflict hotspots in West Africa, the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa have known little else. In addition to experiencing poor health and nutrition, displacement and a lack of education opportunities (and perhaps because of this), children are also being recruited into military forces. By the end of the 2010s there were over 100,000 active child soldiers in Africa (Vautravers, 2009), although with the relative decline of conflict in western and central Africa these numbers have fallen, and in 2017 UNICEF declared that almost 65,000 children had been released in the preceding decade (including 20,000 from Democratic Republic of Congo alone) (UNICEF, 2017).

While children have always been involved in fighting during periods of conflict throughout history, several explanations have been proposed for their increasing participation in African conflicts in recent years. The long duration of many of these conflicts has led to a decline in the availability of adult male combatants, and hence forces have turned their attention to children as potential recruits. Children are often psychologically manipulated by armed groups who emphasize the moral justifications of their cause; and, as occurred during the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, drugs such as marijuana and cocaine may be administered to instil fearlessness and a willingness to fight. In many cases, however, children have been forcibly abducted. Alternatively, there is evidence that some children join armed

forces simply because they perceive this to be the only route out of a life of poverty (which itself has been created partly by long-term conflict). Others, meanwhile, are motivated by a desire to avenge the deaths of friends and relatives. Finally, it has been argued that the widespread availability of cheap and light firearms, which can be operated easily by children, has been a major driver (Vautravers, 2009).

Soldiering has a long-term effect on the lives of those children involved. In addition to sustaining physical injury, many are engaged in violent conflict during their formative learning years, and hence violent behaviour can become an embedded, 'normal' way of life. Indeed, this has been offered as one explanation for the way in which conflict tends to re-emerge within society. A key challenge for the post-conflict situation, therefore, is how to reintegrate physically and psychologically scarred child soldiers into society (Albertyn *et al*., 2003; War Child, 2019).

4.5   Conflict resolution

As pointed out above, many of Africa's conflicts have become protracted because there has been little incentive for armed groups who are profiting from it to stop fighting. This is particularly the case where access has been gained to lucrative natural resources, or where a return to pre-war inequalities is economically or ideologically unattractive for participants. Nonetheless, as is highlighted in Table 4.1, conflicts *do* end, usually due to a combination of several factors. First, decisive military action by one group may comprehensively defeat the opposition, as occurred in the Angolan government's victory over UNITA forces in 2002. Second, the intervention of external forces in a peacekeeping role may swing the balance of military action or lead to the demobilization of armed groups. Throughout the 1990s, ECOMOG (the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) was active as a peacekeeping force in Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone (see Box 4.4), although the effectiveness of external peacekeeping interventions has been mixed. While the end of the civil war in Sierra Leone in 2000 is widely attributed to the intervention of British troops who restored relative security to the country, UN peacekeeping operations in Rwanda (1994) and Somalia (1992–1995) failed to prevent an escalation of conflict.

Finally, with or without military victory, conflicts may be resolved through diplomacy and brokered negotiations culminating in a peace deal, the crux of which is usually some sort of power-sharing arrangement. Peace agreements and power-sharing initiatives, however, can be

fragile, and at worst can lead to the renewal of hostilities. At their most cynical, power-sharing agreements can involve what Omeje (2008) regards as 'elite co-optation' – that is, the incorporation of influential individuals from opposition groups into positions of power – to bring conflicts to a close and effectively weaken the legitimacy of opponents. In Zimbabwe, for example, the merger between Robert Mugabe's ZANU party and Joshua Nkomo's opposition ZAPU party in 1987 following civil war between the two groups secured Mugabe's one-party control of the state and effectively silenced all opposition movements; this was repeated in 2009 when opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai was appointed to Prime Minister. Power-sharing arrangements can also be problematic in that they effectively reward those involved in violent conflict, while at the same time marginalizing the more moderate voices in society (ADB, 2009). Such polarization in representation may lead to the emergence of new inequalities, and new opposition movements, hence providing a breeding ground for future conflict. Power sharing may also be unsustainable where parties control specific resources or territories and are reluctant to give up their claims and dominance in those areas (this is a major issue hindering conflict resolution in the DRC). Disarmament is another key issue: parties are likely to retain their arms and military wings in anticipation of the failure of the conflict-resolution process.

Box 4.4 Regional peacekeeping: the role of ECOMOG in Liberia.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed in 1975 with the aim of forging closer economic links and monetary union between participating countries, of which there were fifteen in 2010. Since its formation, ECOWAS has been dominated by Nigeria, which has the largest population and economy of the constituent countries. Among its founding principles was the need to maintain peace and security throughout the region, and in 1981 it enshrined in its constitution a protocol relating to mutual assistance on defence, legitimizing a collective response to any conflict that threatened the security of member states. Subsequently, in 1990, a regional peacekeeping force known as ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) was deployed in the ongoing Liberian Civil War, with the aim of imposing a ceasefire between Samuel Doe's government forces and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia, and establishing the conditions for an interim government. Around 3500 troops were initially deployed, with this figure rising to around 10,000 just before the force was withdrawn in 1998. However, despite ECOMOG's

mission being considered a success in terms of restoring peace and security to Liberia, controversy has surrounded the nature of its intervention.

Very soon after arriving in Liberia and consolidating their position in Monrovia, ECOMOG forces were drawn into the conflict in a way that was perceived by many to go beyond their peacekeeping mandate. The rebel leader Charles Taylor regarded the Nigerian-led ECOMOG forces as invaders, and attacks on the peacekeepers themselves precipitated a shift from humanitarian peacekeeping to offensive military action. Consequently, ECOMOG was perceived to have aligned itself with the Doe government in Monrovia, and then, following Doe's death, as one of various factions vying for state control. The situation was compounded by political divisions between ECOWAS's francophone and anglophone states: Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire opposed troop deployment and were critical of anglophone Nigeria's political ties with Doe's government (Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire themselves were sympathetic towards Taylor). In order to placate these concerns, leadership of the ECOMOG forces was handed to a Ghanaian general, Arnold Quinoo, but this merely led to further problems of command, given that over 70 per cent of the troops were Nigerian. At various stages in the conflict, ECOMOG forces were accused of assisting all of the increasing number of rebel groups in one way or another, and being inconsistent in their approach to military action. The legitimacy of ECOMOG peacekeepers was eroded further by reports of widespread corruption and looting, earning them the alternative acronym of 'Every Car or Movable Object Gone' among the local population (Tuck, 2000).

In theory, a regional peacekeeping intervention such as ECOMOG should have been considerably more effective than a typical UN-led peacekeeping operation, not least because the West African force possessed a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the culture, environment and politics of the region. Indeed, a lack of 'local knowledge' is often cited as a major problem for multinational UN peacekeeping operations. However, it was arguably the political closeness of all the states involved that led to confusion and disagreements over the precise role of ECOMOG troops. Furthermore, fear of the escalation and spill-over of the conflict into other parts of the region had a significant influence on the extent to which each state supported the intervention, particularly when the impartiality of ECOMOG was questioned. This lack of support – in terms of finance, resources or troops – effectively diminished the opportunities for clear and decisive action, and undoubtedly resulted in a more prolonged and bloody conflict.

Sources: Brown (1999); Tuck (2000); Olonisakin (2008).

4.6   The post-conflict period

Perhaps in response to the peak in the number of Africa's armed conflicts during the 1990s, much attention among development academics, practitioners and international organizations has focused on the so-called 'post-conflict period' – a transitional period between a state of conflict and peace, during which significant challenges emerge for peace, reconstruction, rehabilitation and development. Although individual circumstances dictate the nature and duration, and indeed the formal designation, of post-conflict periods, the period tends to be characterized by intense social, political and economic change. While ceasefire agreements and power sharing may bring conflict to an end, they do not signal an instant return to normality or a state of peace and security. Indeed, to the majority of people caught up in violent conflicts, there is little difference between the conflict and the immediate post-conflict periods, since little may change in terms of state functioning, access to resources and livelihood opportunities. Post-conflict periods may also see a continuation of violence as small pockets of armed conflict in isolated areas, or they may be relatively short lived and simply provide an intermission between conflicts, as occurred in the Great Lakes region during the 1990s. Either way, the post-conflict period gives rise to a range of complex, interrelated development challenges, which to some extent are influenced by the original causes of conflict as well as the way in which the conflict ends (Green, 2001). Clearly, post-conflict rehabilitation and development are likely to be faster and easier where conflict has been short in duration, and where the impacts have been kept to a minimum. But it has also been argued that where the conflict itself is perceived to have been a liberation struggle, or initiated by external actors, then the rehabilitation will be easier than if the causes are more deeply entrenched in groups within society (Green, 2001; see Plate 4.4).

Plate 4.4 Conflict memorial in Koidu, eastern Sierra Leone (Tony Binns).

An important consideration during the post-conflict period, particularly for those involved in planning and development, is that a return to the 'normality' of pre-conflict is not necessarily desirable. For example, the inequalities that led to conflict may have been entrenched in pre-conflict government structures and societal institutions, and hence rebuilding these during the post-conflict period may simply reproduce the conflict at some point in the future. The post-conflict period therefore presents valuable opportunities for change which often go beyond socio-political reforms. The damaged economic sector can be restructured, enabling inefficient or subsidized industries or agriculture to be replaced with more profitable alternatives. There is also the opportunity for pre-conflict gender inequalities to be redressed, particularly given the redefining of women's roles in economic production and social support during the conflict period itself. This occurred in post-conflict Liberia, where President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman to be elected head of an African country, spearheaded a programme of gender mainstreaming that aimed to increase sensitivity to women's issues in all government departments. Similarly, the inclusion and empowerment of women in post-conflict Rwanda has played a significant role in peacebuilding and stability (Svobodova, 2019).

Until the mid-2000s, post-conflict reconstruction and development within many African countries was largely undertaken in an *ad hoc* manner, involving numerous international and regional actors. In 2005, however, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme of the African Union launched its vision for post-conflict reconstruction in the continent, providing a comprehensive framework identifying common issues, phases, dimensions and processes that should be addressed in pursuit of sustainable peace, security and development (NEPAD, 2005). While highlighting the common needs of post-conflict reconstruction, the strategy also emphasized the importance of recognizing the individual circumstances of each country's conflict – that is, the often unique and complex causes and consequences of conflict that should explicitly inform the reconstruction process. Box 4.5 summarizes the NEPAD approach, which characterizes post-conflict reconstruction in terms of three phases (emergency, transition and development), in which five dimensions of reconstruction should be addressed.

Box 4.5 The NEPAD strategy for post-conflict reconstruction (Source: NEPAD, 2005).

Dimensions	Emergency phase	Transition phase	Development phase
Security	Establish a safe and secure environment	Develop legitimate and stable security institutions	Consolidate local capacity
Political transition, governance and participation	Determine the governance structures, and foundations for participation, and processes for political transition	Promote legitimate political institutions participatory processes	Consolidate political institutions and participatory processes
Socio-economic development	Provide for emergency foundations, humanitarian needs	Establish foundations structures, and processes for development	Institutionalize long-term developmental programme
Human rights, justice and reconciliation	Develop mechanisms for addressing past and ongoing grievances	Build the legal system and processes for reconciliation and monitoring human rights	Established and functional legal system based on accepted international norms

Dimensions	Emergency phase	Transition phase	Development phase
Coordination and management	Develop consultative and coordination programme mechanism for internal and external actors	Develop technical bodies to facilitate programme development	Develop internal sustainable processes and capacity for coordination

Security

Security is of paramount importance. It facilitates emergency operations and reduces the likelihood of further outbreaks of violence. Security activities may involve the protection of returning refugees and IDPs, institutions and infrastructure. They may also focus on demobilization activities, the control of small arms and repatriation, while security sector reform is a key component of reconstruction activities.

Political transition, governance and participation

This dimension centres on the development of political and administrative institutions, through a process that maximizes the participation of a range of stakeholders. Activities include strengthening democratic civil society and government administrative organizations, facilitating the participation of ex-combatants in the political process, and developing mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

Socio-economic development

This dimension reflects the need to rehabilitate or reconstruct basic social and economic services, and essentially rebuild livelihood opportunities for the population. Activities include the provision of humanitarian assistance (during the emergency phase), facilitating repatriation, building infrastructure such as roads, airports and telecommunications, rehabilitating markets and the financial sector, and restoring industry and agriculture.

Human rights, justice and reconciliation

In the post-conflict environment, there is a need to rebuild trust, ensure human rights are upheld, and promote reconciliation in the interests of building a sustainable peace. Activities may include judicial reform, establishing human rights monitoring systems, and instituting a truth and reconciliation process.

Coordination, management and resource mobilization

Building the capacity for coordination, management and resource mobilization is fundamental to facilitating the activities in each of the other dimensions. Reconstruction and rehabilitation require planning, cooperation and the coordination of other development strategies.

Common to all conflict is an emergency period that immediately follows the cessation of hostilities. During this phase, a major goal will be establishing security, possibly through the deployment of African Union or UN peacekeeping forces. These should then provide an operational environment suitable for an emergency response in the form of humanitarian assistance from international NGOs, such as UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) and ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross). Following the emergency phase, the transition phase is characterized by the appointment of an interim government which oversees reconstruction until elections are held and a legitimate government is formed. There should also be a transition away from emergency relief to a wider process of reconstruction and recovery, characterized by the rebuilding of infrastructure, economy, security and social services, such as education and health. Finally, in the development phase, security operations are scaled down, and the responsibilities of external agencies are likely to be handed over to internal actors and government. However, external aid may continue for some time in support of sectoral development programmes, political reform and economic development. Although this phase may last up to ten years, it is likely that the repercussions of conflict will have to be dealt with for many years thereafter.

However, the NEPAD strategy has been criticized. Murithi (2006) highlights the absence of any reference to gender mainstreaming in the original framework and lack of attention paid to the role that civil society groups can play in the immediate aftermath of conflict, and how they can work with other stakeholders. It has also been criticized for not explicitly addressing the role of culture in post-conflict reconstruction, again in terms of how indigenous systems of conflict prevention and resolution can be developed and integrated within civil society to avoid the outbreak of violent conflict. As Murithi points out, however, the key challenge lies in popularizing and institutionalizing such a comprehensive strategy among African governments and the various external actors involved in order to prevent *ad hoc* uncoordinated responses in the future. Only in late 2021 did the African Union officially

launch its dedicated 'Centre for Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development' as a means of operationalising the NEPAD strategy.

4.6.1   Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

As can be seen in Box 4.4, there are many challenges for post-conflict reconstruction throughout all of these three periods in terms of security, governance and participation, socio-economic development, human rights, reconciliation and coordination. Within NEPAD's 'security' dimension, one of the key challenges for African countries in a post-conflict situation has been how to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate (DDR) rebel forces back into society and thereby reduce the risk of future conflict. Since 1989, DDR initiatives managed by the UN have been an integral part of post-conflict resolution in such countries as Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burundi. The DDR process usually begins with disarmament, characterized by the collection and destruction of weapons, a process which is often publicized widely to symbolize the end of the conflict. For example, in July 2007, various African heads of state attended a 'flame of peace' ceremony in Côte d'Ivoire, during which President Laurent Gbagbo and Prime Minister Guillaume Soro each set fire to a pile of weapons to signify the launch of the post-conflict disarmament process. Meanwhile, at the 29th Summit of the African Union in 2017 the month of September between 2017 and 2020 was designated 'Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illicit small arms and light weapons'. This was instigated as part of the AU's 'Silencing the Guns' campaign (African Union, 2013) and in response to an estimated 40 million firearms being in civilian possession. However, such disarmament programmes have achieved mixed results. In Liberia, the first attempts at disarmament in 2003 led to sporadic outbreaks of violence when large numbers of ex-combatants were turned away from under-resourced demobilization camps that were unable to cope with the demand (Daboh *et al*., 2010). Meanwhile, despite the initial poor performance the Nigerian government's efforts to disarm ethnic groups in the Niger Delta via its Niger Delta Amnesty Program, it has been able to deliver a fragile peace to the area (Okonufua, 2016).

Once disarmament has taken place, demobilization attempts to discharge combatants from their armed forces. This usually involves the processing of ex-combatants within demobilization camps, where they receive a discharge package. This has varied between countries, but common elements of these packages include finance, land allocation, job training and healthcare (with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS awareness). In Uganda during the

1990s, the school fees of veterans' children were paid for one year as part of the discharge package (Kingma, 1997). Clearly, the emphasis here is on providing a social and economic incentive for ex-combatants to return to civilian life.

Plate 4.5 Ex-combatant training to be a blacksmith in Panguma, Sierra Leone (Tony Binns).

It is perhaps the reintegration of ex-combatants within society that poses the greatest challenge for the whole DDR process (see Plate 4.5). As Solomon (2008) points out, there is the overarching question of 'reintegration into what?', since most ex-combatants will have been socialized into a vastly different way of life and hence cannot simply be deposited within a community and expected to revert to their pre-conflict livelihood system. First, as occurred in Liberia, there may be problems gaining access to land as a result of land expropriation by displaced peoples during the conflict. Second, ex-combatants may be stigmatised and struggle to gain acceptance and forgiveness from their communities due to the erosion of trust during conflict, and this can lead to further violence (Schmitt *et al.*, 2021). Resentment may be compounded if ex-combatants receive financial assistance through reintegration packages while local communities do not. Finally, many ex-combatants will suffer from mental health problems which render them unable to reintegrate fully into community life. In recognition of this, reintegration programmes in both Liberia and Sierra Leone have pioneered psycho-

trauma counselling and human rights training, alongside the provision of education and employment opportunities. While the DDR programmes in these two countries have been largely successful, it is widely acknowledged that a sustainable peace depends upon a long-term political and financial commitment to providing employment and sustainable livelihood opportunities for ex-combatants (Daboah *et al*., 2010; Solomon, 2008; Hill *et al*., 2008).

The challenges of DDR are much more acute when children have been directly involved in conflict. Children experience conflict in different ways to adult combatants: they are more likely to suffer from psycho-social trauma and aggression disorders, and they will not have gained a complete education (Albertyn *et al*., 2003). Yet, because demobilization activities have largely adopted a policy of 'one man, one weapon' – an ex-combatant must give up a weapon in order to qualify for a discharge package – children have been excluded from many DDR programmes (Gislesen, 2006). This is changing, however, and in recent years there has been greater recognition of the unique circumstances and challenges facing child ex-combatants (Haer, 2015). For example, UNICEF and Save the Children have established separate DDR programmes for children in Angola, Sierra Leone, Sudan, the DRC and Rwanda. As well as providing counselling, healthcare and education, children's DDR has focused on facilitating family reunification, since many children have been forcibly displaced as a result of conflict or, for various psycho-social reasons, are initially reluctant to return home.

4.6.2   *Justice and reconciliation*
A central element of building peace in the post-conflict period is bringing to justice those who have perpetrated war crimes, while simultaneously engaging in a wider process of reconciliation among all those involved in conflict. As Ginty and Williams (2016) suggest, the underlying rationale here is that it is important to ascertain the 'facts' of a conflict, in particular who is responsible for the killing and/or human rights abuses. In doing so, victims and perpetrators can reflect on their experiences and begin the process of rebuilding trust and functional relationships – important elements of most peace agreements and the path towards democratization. Non-judicial Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) have increasingly formed part of the post-conflict reconstruction process throughout Africa in recent years, most famously in South Africa, where the TRC sought to investigate and highlight the injustices and abuses that occurred during the apartheid era. South Africa's TRC pioneered the idea of conditional amnesty, which allowed participants to gain amnesty from

prosecution in exchange for the truth about their experiences and crimes (although amnesty was refused in some cases where the testimony of witnesses did not fulfil specific criteria). More recently, TRCs have been established in Sierra Leone (2002), Liberia (2005), DRC (2004), The Gambia (2017), Zimbabwe (2018) and Libya (2021).

While TRCs constitute a form of 'restorative justice', in that they focus on rebuilding the relationship between victims and perpetrators of crime within society, most post-conflict African countries have also engaged in a process of 'retributive justice' by prosecuting perpetrators in courts of law. For many, criminal investigations and war crimes tribunals represent the most effective way of reinforcing the rule of law, removing the perpetrators of crime from power, and deterring war crimes and human rights abuses in the future. While many war crimes tribunals throughout Africa have been held at the domestic level, there has been a shift in recent years towards embedding prosecutions within a framework of international law. In 1994, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was established by the UN to bring to justice the planners and leaders of genocide, crimes against humanity and other war crimes. Among those individuals standing trial was the former prime minister of Rwanda, Jean Kambanda, who pleaded guilty to genocide and was subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment.

However, despite significant progress in bringing the perpetrators of genocide to justice (93 individuals were indicted to the ICTR before its abolition in 2016) the process was criticized for its long duration and its reluctance to indict Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Meanwhile, thousands of lower-ranking individuals accused of complicity in the genocide have been brought to trial more conventionally through the Rwandan national court system, although the sheer number of cases and detainees have placed immense pressure on the domestic judicial and prison systems, which had all but collapsed during the 1994 conflict. In response to these pressures, the Rwandan government announced in 1999 that it would speed up the tribunal process by referring the accused to *gacaca* courts, a traditional community-based system for achieving conflict resolution (see Box 4.6).

Box 4.6 Indigenous justice and reconciliation: gacaca courts in Rwanda

Despite trials of individuals commencing in 1996, Rwanda's judicial and prison systems were

ill-prepared to cope with the sheer number of prosecutions against suspected perpetrators of crimes during the genocide, and by the end of the 1990s an estimated 120,000 suspects remained in prison awaiting trial. At the time, it was estimated that completing these cases through the conventional courts would take more than 100 years. To manage the backlog of cases, in 2001 the Rwandan government reinstituted a traditional community approach to justice known as *gacaca* courts (in Kinyarwanda, the national language, *gacaca* means 'grass'; in the past, these hearings were conducted in the open air).

Although initially devised to speed up the number of prosecutions, many saw the potential of *gacaca* courts to act as mechanisms for establishing truth and reconciliation, which could help rebuild trust within communities, and in Rwandan society more generally. While the more serious genocide crimes were dealt with by the ICTR and the Rwandan national courts, those suspected of murder, assault and damage to property were diverted to the *gacaca* courts. Suspected perpetrators of violence could be given the opportunity to explain their actions, often in front of their victims, and seek forgiveness as a means of 'moving on'. The courts retained the power to impose sentences, including community work or imprisonment, although those who openly confessed to their crimes were given a reduced sentence. The judges, known as *inyangamugayo*, which translates as 'those who detest dishonesty', were elected from within the community and included women and young people. Following periods of training for *inyangamugayo* and the piloting of *gacaca* courts in specific areas, the system was introduced nationwide in 2005 with the expectation of having completed all the trials by June 2009. However, it was not until 2012 that the process formally ended, leaving a legacy of over 160,000 judges participating in 12,000 *gacaca* courts that engaged in over a million cases, resulting in the conviction of over 800,000 people.

Although the *gacaca* courts were generally considered to have had a positive impact on Rwandan society and the rebuilding of trust within communities, they have been criticized on several grounds. First, many have perceived the whole process as a form of 'victors' justice', in which Paul Kagame's Tutsi-led government sought retribution for the crimes committed by Hutu during the genocide. Crimes committed by the Rwanda Patriotic Front during the genocide, and subsequently during the spill-over conflict in the DRC 1996, are not considered within the remit of the *gacaca* courts. There has also been concern that the large number of convictions (approximately 14 per cent of Rwanda's total population in 1994) reflects political manipulation in the process, because judges are under pressure to convict as many

people as possible. Furthermore, Longman (2009) suggests that in some cases the government encouraged *gacaca* courts to bring charges against those who were openly critical of the regime. Other critics have highlighted the lack of legal representation for the accused, some of who died in prison, which also led to convictions based on unreliable witness testimonies. Finally, it has been suggested that the lengthy duration of the *gacaca* system meant participation in it gradually declined as communities became weary and cynical of the process.

Despite these issues, the legacy that *gacaca* leaves behind is one of a pioneering innovation in community-based retributive and restorative justice for post-conflict periods. The central lesson to be drawn, however, is the need to avoid political interference in the process, and to ensure fairness and equity on all sides in terms of accountability for crimes committed.

Sources: Kanuma (2003); Malan (2008); Longman (2009)

The approach of Sierra Leone has been slightly different to that of Rwanda in that it commenced both restorative and retributive approaches to justice and reconciliation following the end of the 1991–2001 civil war (Bender, 2011). A TRC was established to document the causes, nature and extent of human rights violations and war crimes, and particularly the role of national and international organizations in the conflict. The TRC also broke new ground in that it collaborated with UNICEF in establishing suitable mechanisms through which children could be involved in the process of reconciliation and reintegration (May, 2006). Simultaneously, a Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) was established in 2002 to prosecute the key perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Most notably, the ex-president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was indicted in 2003, and later transferred for trial to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague following concerns over regional security if his trial was held in Sierra Leone. The ICC itself, established in 2002, has also been extensively involved in investigations of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes in the DRC, Uganda, the Central African Republic, Kenya and Sudan. In 2009, much media attention focused on its issuing of an arrest warrant for Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir relating to his responsibility for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur. Despite a subsequent arrest warrant in 2010, al-Bashir continued to receive support from the African

Union throughout the 2010s. Only in 2021, following his eventual ousting from power following a military coup 2019, did the Sudanese government agree to hand him over to the ICC.

4.6.3   Preventing future conflict

There is general consensus that the key to preventing future conflict in Africa lies in addressing and reducing the underlying causes, as outlined earlier in this chapter. From an economic perspective, the African Development Bank and the World Bank have emphasized the importance of facilitating economic growth throughout the continent, which in the long term will increase people's income, raise educational levels and promote livelihood diversification to the extent that conflict will become a less attractive option (ADB, 2009; African Union, 2013). Furthermore, the ADB regards the sustainable and equitable management of natural resources as central to both economic growth and conflict prevention; ensuring that revenues from natural-resource exploitation benefit the country as a whole rather than the minority and can reduce regional inequalities and risk of further conflict. However, there is a wider consensus that the elimination of poverty – in its economic, social or cultural sense – constitutes the way forward in building human security and preventing conflict in Africa (Salih, 2008). This lies at the core of the AU's 'Silencing the Guns' campaign within its Agenda 2063 transformational strategy (African Union, 2015).

Strengthening democratic institutions and instituting good governance at both the local and the national level is also widely regarded as a means of reducing the risk of conflict. Multi-party democracies, characterized by open and fair elections, independent judiciaries and central banks, transparency in economic activities, and a commitment to decentralization and public participation, have been regarded as a prerequisite to peace, security and economic growth (Michailof *et al*., 2002; ADB, 2009). However, many have questioned the extent to which 'Western-style' democracy has been, and indeed might be, successful in Africa, given the diversity of ethnic groups and the continuing significance of tribal leadership and traditional institutions (Gebrewold, 2008). It has been suggested that the incorporation and promotion of traditional African values and philosophies into systems of democratic governance might embed a better framework for conflict prevention and resolution in society (Gade, 2020). One example is the Swahili concept of *ubuntu*, which embodies group cooperation, respect, forgiveness, tolerance and generosity; values that were central to South Africa's widely respected TRC.

While recognizing what needs to be done is relatively easy, the implementation of economic, social and political reform to prevent conflict is much more challenging, particularly for those countries mired in a post-conflict period. It is therefore unsurprising that since the late 1990s, when conflict in Africa peaked, a significant amount of external aid and assistance has been linked to conflict-prevention initiatives and post-conflict development strategies. Within the discourse of development, poverty reduction strategies have sought to emphasize the links between human development, on the one hand, and security and conflict prevention, on the other. Similarly, the concepts of 'nation-building', 'good-governance', 'democratization' and indeed 'post-conflict reconstruction' itself began to enter the mainstream development discourse, and subsequently bilateral and multilateral aid interventions. For example, in 2001, the UK's Department for International Development established its 'Africa Conflict Prevention Pool', an initiative which aimed to support conflict-prevention capacity within Africa, post-conflict reconstruction and security sector reform. Specific interventions included the provision of civil society peace initiatives in Kenya following the post-election violence in 2007, funding for peace talks between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government, and training assistance for security forces in Sierra Leone (DfID, 2008a). The World Bank, meanwhile, launched its State and Peace-Building Fund in 2008 and spent $359 million during the following decade on projects including land sector reform in Liberia, support for gender-based NGOs in Côte d'Ivoire, improving information communication technologies in Somalia and strengthening resilience and collaborative dialogue throughout the Lake Chad Region (World Bank 2020c).

4.7   Conclusion

This chapter has drawn attention to the complex relationship between armed conflict in Africa and poverty, inequality and development. While one should be cautious about generalizing, given the diversity of experiences throughout Africa, it is clear that those countries affected by conflict are more likely to have inadequate health, education and economic infrastructure; they are more likely to experience environmental degradation and resource exploitation; and they are significantly more at risk of future conflict than those countries that have remained largely peaceful. Although it has been suggested that poverty and underdevelopment themselves fuel armed conflict (the so-called poverty-conflict nexus), this has not always been the case. Many countries, for example Malawi and Zambia, have remained poor but have not descended into armed conflict. Clearly, although our current understanding of the nature of

African conflicts helps us to predict, plan for and institute measures to prevent conflict, history has shown that conflict is often a result of a volatile, unpredictable mix of specific events and circumstances. What is evident from the experiences of the last decade, however, is that political, social and environmental change that emanates beyond Africa's borders, is increasingly driving new conflict scenarios characterised by an increasing number of non-state actors. The unpredictability, in a sense, has become even more unpredictable.

Possibly more than at any time in Africa's history, the continent and the rest of the world now appear better equipped to minimize the likelihood of prolonged large-scale armed conflicts. The peak in armed conflicts during the 1990s and early 2000s appears to have placed conflict firmly on the development agenda, while the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the US intervention in Somalia in 1995, the Darfur conflict and the Arab Spring in north Africa have also provided sobering lessons for the international community in terms of what action can, and should, be taken. Over the last decade, however, there has been significant progress from within Africa's own institutions in addressing conflict and its complex inter-related causes.

Summary

1   Most African countries have been involved in some form of armed conflict during the last seventy years.

2   Despite conflict declining throughout the 2000s after significant peaks during the late 1990s, the 2010s have seen a proliferation of conflict driven by the involvement of multiple non-state actors.

3   The causes of conflict in Africa are complex, diverse and interrelated. They have included competition for natural resources, ethnic tensions, religion, colonial boundary legacies, persistent poverty and inequality, and climate change.

4   Although conflict can have a direct impact on populations in terms of war casualties, the effects of poverty, underdevelopment and insecurity caused by conflict usually have longer-term impacts on mortality.

5   Conflict can have a major impact on the agricultural sector and lead to chronic food insecurity.

6   Many of Africa's refugee crises have been caused by conflict.

7   There is a marked gender dimension to conflict: women and children suffer greater long-term consequences than men.

8   UN peacekeepers have had mixed results in preventing and resolving conflict throughout the continent.

9   The post-conflict period poses new challenges for development in terms of establishing security, demobilizing armed groups, rebuilding institutions and infrastructure, and removing the original causes of conflict.

Discussion questions

1   Why might the impacts of conflict be difficult to assess?

2   In what ways have Africa's conflicts affected rural and urban livelihoods differently?

3   How has globalization influenced armed conflict in Africa?

4   What challenges face the establishment of security during the post-conflict period?

5   In what ways is the boundary between the conflict and post-conflict periods often blurred?

Further reading

Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. (2004) 'Greed and grievance in civil war', *Oxford Economic Papers*, *56* (*4*): 563–595.

Francis, D. (2008) *Peace and Conflict in Africa*, London: Zed Books.

Ginty, R.M. and Williams, A. (2016) *Conflict and Development*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Turner, T. (2007) *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality*, London: Zed Books.

Williams, P.D. (2016) *War and Conflict in Africa.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Useful websites

- The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) https://www.accord.org.za/ seeks to 'promote the constructive resolution of disputes, by the peoples of Africa, and so assist in achieving political stability and socio-economic recovery, within just and democratic societies, towards peaceful co-existence'. It commissions and disseminates research on conflict trends and peacebuilding.

- SIPRI (the Stockholm Peace Research Institute) http://www.sipri.org/ is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. The website contains research reports, publications and databases with statistics on conflict and security trends and military expenditure.

- The Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) https://ucdp.uu.se/ is the world's main

provider of data on organized violence and the oldest ongoing data collection project for civil war, with a history of almost 40 years.

- NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development) http://www.nepad.org/ is a programme of the African Union which aims to promote sustainable growth and development throughout Africa. The need for peace and security is implicit in many of NEPAD's strategies and development initiatives.
- UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) http://www.unhcr.org is a UN agency that leads and coordinates international action to protect refugees worldwide. The website has numerous reports, publications and updates outlining the state of Africa's conflicts and their implications for IDPs and refugees throughout Africa.
- PRIO (The Peace Research Institute Oslo) conducts research on the conditions for peaceful relations between states, groups and people. https://www.prio.org/