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War and Conflict in Africa

By Paul D. Williams

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After the Cold War, Africa earned the dubious distinction of being the world's most bloody continent. But how can we explain this proliferation of armed conflicts? What caused them and what were their main characteristics? And what did the world's governments do to stop them?

In this fully revised and updated second edition of his popular text, Paul Williams offers an in-depth and wide-ranging assessment of more than six hundred armed conflicts which took place in Africa from 1990 to the present day - from the continental catastrophe in the Great Lakes region to the sprawling conflicts across the Sahel and the web of wars in the Horn of Africa. Taking a broad comparative approach to examine the political contexts in which these wars occurred, he explores the major patterns of organized violence, the key ingredients that provoked them and the major international responses undertaken to deliver lasting peace.

Part I, Contexts provides an overview of the most important attempts to measure the number, scale and location of Africa's armed conflicts and provides a conceptual and political sketch of the terrain of struggle upon which these wars were waged.

Part II, Ingredients analyses the role of five widely debated features of Africa's wars: the dynamics of neopatrimonial systems of governance; the construction and manipulation of ethnic identities; questions of sovereignty and self-determination; as well as the impact of natural resources and religion.

Part III, Responses, discusses four major international reactions to Africa's wars: attempts to build a new institutional architecture to help promote peace and security on the continent; this architecture's two main policy instruments, peacemaking initiatives and peace operations; and efforts to develop the continent.

War and Conflict in Africa will be essential reading for all students of international peace and security studies as well as Africa's international relations.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Williams has written a superb overview of this complex subject without resorting to academic jargon. It deserves to be read by novices and specialists alike."

Foreign Affairs

"A critical contribution to the literature ... Williams synthesizes an enormous amount of research on the dynamics and processes of conflicts ... [It] is a critical text for scholars of conflict and peace, as well as policymakers who seek to devise more effective strategies for managing Africa's wars."

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International Affairs

"Paul Williams has done what he set out to do exceptionally well. Admirably researched and eloquent [it] will deservedly be read by students, fellow scholars, and - yes - those policymakers who wish to end Africa's bloody present, and who seek swift but stimulating summaries of the key themes and processes."

H-Net Reviews

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Australian Journal of International Affairs

"Well written and thoroughly researched, *War and Conflict in Africa* provides a comprehensive assessment of attempts to explain the proliferation of conflict in post-Cold War Africa ... the book provides a useful overview for scholars and naturally lends itself as an academic course-text."

Journal of Military History

"A valuable reference for students, policy makers, civil society actors and those determined to promote peace and security in Africa."

Political Studies Review

"War and Conflict in Africa contributes to a more complex understanding of the political actors and systems that catalyze or prevent conflict and offers a cautionary tale to those who seek only proven, easy predictions."

New Security Beat

"Williams has produced the foundational framework for understanding the mainsprings of armed conflict in Africa over the past twenty years. This book is a must-read for those who want a nuanced understanding of the causes and processes of conflict on the African continent. Williams's analysis is brilliant and enhances the book's value for students, governments, NGOs - anyone working to promote peace and security in Africa."

William Reno, Northwestern University

"Encyclopaedic in scope and cogent in analysis, *War and Conflict in Africa* debunks a great deal of received opinion and offers not only a sophisticated view of how African conflicts come about but also a critical appraisal of attempts to resolve them. It should be required reading for scholars as well as for all those who seek to mediate in conflicts both in Africa and elsewhere."

Christopher Clapham, University of Cambridge

"This incisive study will be an invaluable resource for students and policymakers seeking to understand and ameliorate Africa's complex and destructive conflicts."

David Keen, London School of Economics and Political Science

About the Author

Paul D. Williams is associate professor in the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University.

Users Review

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