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Africa's "Scramble for Africa"
Lessons of a Continental War
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The war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which began in August 1998, is unprecedented—at times involving armies from eight African states. Soldiers from Chad are fighting alongside regiments from Namibia, Angola, and Zimbabwe in defense of President Laurent Kabila. And on offense, the two main rebel groups, the Congolese Assembly for Democracy (which is known by the acronym RCD) and the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), are backed by troops from Uganda and Rwanda. As Susan E. Rice, assistant secretary of state for African affairs, warned the House International Relations Committee in September 1998, "The fighting threatens regional stability, hampers economic progress, endangers the lives of millions of people, perpetuates human rights abuses, and impedes the democratic transformation of Africa's third-largest country." This war, Rice said, is potentially "among the most dangerous conflicts on the globe."

Yet, the war in Congo goes on almost unnoticed outside of Africa. While African heads of state spent much of the last year shuttling across the continent, wrestling with the crisis and searching for a peaceful solution, Congo has been largely missing from the agendas of the Western powers and multilateral organizations. Only in January, when the U.S. representative to the United Nations, Richard Holbrooke, taking advantage of his tenure as Security Council president to draw attention to Africa, did the war enter Western consciousness.

The conflict in the DRC is the first *inter*state war in sub-Saharan Africa since Uganda invaded Tanzania in 1978, and only the third since 1960. Although Africa is seen as a hotbed of violence and warfare, most conflicts have been *intra*state in nature. Norms of sovereignty reinforced by clauses in the charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the constitutions of the various subregional organizations have effectively prevented cross-border conflict from the time of independence until now. The Ugandan and Rwandan-led invasion of Congo, as well as the presence there of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) intervention force, therefore represents a watershed in the recent history of African conflict. It appears that the forces preventing cross-border conflict since 1960 have become seriously weakened.

What are the implications of the rise of interstate war in Africa for peace and security on the continent? Why have Western powers been so reluctant to take an active role in resolving Africa's first "world war"? And what impact will the changing nature of warfare in Africa have on U.S. policy and the role of the United Nations there?

A Brief History of the Conflict
President Mobutu Sese Seku ruled over Zaire (as Congo was called from 1971 to 1997) with an iron fist for over 30 years. Mobutu exploited Zaire's enormous mineral wealth (diamonds, metals, rubber) for personal gain, squandering the opportunity for economic growth. He invested resources in the strengthening of his presidential guard at the expense of the military at large, creating an impenetrable shield around his ruling

elite that would take nearly three decades to break down. During the Cold War, the United States encouraged Mobutu's suppression of dissent and autocratic rule in order to combat the spread (or perceived threat) of communism in the region. In retrospect, Mobutu's reign was very nearly an extension of the Belgian occupation of the Congo; like King Leopold II in the late nineteenth century, Mobutu bled Zaire—robbing the citizenry of the country's natural wealth, using force to sustain his autocratic rule, and refusing to invest even the most limited resources in development.

With the Cold War receding into memory, more than ten neighboring countries (and foreign powers across the globe), welcomed Laurent Kabila and his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (ADFL) as they marched across Zaire's vast expanse in an effort to topple Mobutu. When Kabila arrived in the capital city of Kinshasa in May 1997, he was greeted by cheering crowds. Although many were anxious about the direction this new leader would take, most were relieved that Mobutu's brutal reign had come to an end.

The ADFL was essentially a Rwandan creation, although it gained credibility with the local population as it advanced on Kinshasa in 1997. At its inception, it was dominated by the Banyamalengue, an ethnic Tutsi group that had lived in Congo since the nineteenth century. Contentious politics have always surrounded the Banyamalengue, who were concentrated in the Kivu region in the eastern part of the country and were often seen as interlopers. Mobutu painted them as "Rwandans" and denied them citizenship in an effort to strengthen his domestic support in the region. Following the genocide in Rwanda in April 1994, in which ethnic Hutu militias had systematically exterminated much of the Tutsi population, with an estimated 800,000 killed, the Banyamalengue also came under attack. After the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) defeated the Hutu forces in July of

that year, the new leadership in Kigali began to secretly train and equip the Banyamalengue in order to prevent cross-border attacks from the 1.5 million Hutu refugees who had fled Rwanda and were now living in camps in the Kivu region. Many of these refugees were former members of the Rwandan Armed Forces who were using the refugee camps as bases for rearming themselves.

The Roots of the Crisis
The roots of the current crisis in Congo lie in the period immediately following Kabila's takeover. The new Congolese leader soon antagonized his Rwandan and Ugandan backers by ignoring their security concerns and allowing Hutu refugees to launch destabilizing attacks on Rwanda from Congo. This fed Ugandan fears that Kabila would—through inaction and inattention—enable Ugandan rebel groups to mount similar attacks on Uganda from northwestern Congo.

The Rwandans had hoped that by installing Kabila as the leader of the DRC, they would have the help of the Congolese army (backed by their own forces) to clear the jungles in eastern Congo of the Interhamwe (Hutu) rebels. However, as he took hold of the reins of power, Kabila shifted his attention away from Rwandan and Ugandan interests toward issues related to the development of Congo. During his first year in power, he restructured the government, promoting ethnic countrymen at the expense of Tutsis. He consolidated his hold on power by cracking down on domestic opposition. And he sought to reduce the influence of those Rwandans who had remained in Congo after the takeover of Kinshasa to help restructure the army. By the summer of 1998, Kabila, tired of having policy dictated from Kigali, kicked the Rwandans out of the country, thereby setting the stage for the events of August.

Rwanda responded by mobilizing the Banyamalengue and various other disenchanted parts of the new Congolese army

who decided to back the Rwandans and prepared for a military invasion of Congo. Rwandan vice president Paul Kagame, who was largely in control of the government, and Rwanda's military leadership planned to depose Kabila and replace him with a new leader more attuned to the region's security concerns. Anxious to present this new intervention as an internal rebellion, Kigali orchestrated the formation of the Congolese Assembly for Democracy, which included many of the same individuals who had installed Kabila only 15 months earlier. However, since the RCD was officially established only after the rebellion began, Kigali's meddling was transparent.

Kagame and his allies failed to anticipate the regional response to their effort. As their soldiers approached Kinshasa, Kabila appealed to African leaders to lend their support to his fledgling regime. Troops from Zimbabwe rushed to Kabila's aid, working with forces from Namibia and Angola to rescue Kinshasa and repel the invasion. Soon after, Chad and Sudan joined the fray as well.

Why Conflict Arises

There are a number of standard explanations for why conflict arises in Africa, explanations that can provide a starting point for understanding the current conflict in Congo.

Tribal hatred and ethnic conflict drive conflict. Many analysts have pointed to the underlying ethnic cleavages in Africa as the source of domestic instability, civil war, and cross-border conflict. Politicians and would-be leaders play upon ethnic differences to divide and conquer, and distribute resources to one group or another in order to build coalitions.

Ethnicity is clearly an important part of the equation in the Congo conflict. As the history of the conflict suggests, Tutsi-Hutu divisions in the Great Lakes region are at the bottom of Rwanda's interest in eastern Congo. The efforts of the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front to mop up the In-

terhamwe in the Kivu region are essentially a continuation of the Rwandan civil war, with the Tutsi leadership in Kigali anxious to consolidate power over the Hutus at home and across the border.

Moreover, the Rwandan Tutsi feel a powerful kinship with the Banyamalengue, their ethnic brethren in eastern Zaire. The Banyamalengue have consistently come under attack by the local and national leadership in Congo. The local indigenous population — villagers with little or no education—express resentment toward the Banyamalengue, characterizing them as "land-grabbing, greedy foreigners." Such resentments, taking root at the local level and mobilized at the national level, have contributed to the current anti-Tutsi hysteria in Congo.

But the ethnic equation is even more complicated than this brief analysis suggests. Ethnic allegiances are constantly shifting, and fractures have emerged within the Banyamalengue leadership as the war has evolved. Some have turned against their former masters in Kigali, who have used ethnic kinship to exert political control outside Rwanda's borders. The coalition supporting the insurgent groups has also developed fault lines. In late 1999, and again this spring, Ugandan and Rwandan troops reportedly clashed in Congo.

Security dilemmas lead to war. Border security and regional power politics are at the heart of security dilemmas in Central Africa. So long as states care about their survival as independent entities, they will seek to strengthen themselves relative to their neighbors. This competition between states for *relative* power often leads to attempts to amass more power and resources than is needed to maintain security. The introduction of ethnic considerations only intensifies the security dilemma since ethnic hatred (or a history of conflict between groups) strengthens the rationale for mobilization or preemptive strikes against a neighboring group.

The major parties to a conflict may also face significant internal threats from armed opposition groups. Their efforts in the international arena are motivated not only by a desire for regional influence, but also by the need to prevent external assistance to their foes at home.

Rwanda's interventions in Congo are driven by the interaction between ethnic tensions and border security issues. Offensives to capture Hutu militias in eastern Congo may be seen as part of Kigali's efforts to consolidate control in Rwanda following its brutal civil war. The rearmed Hutu refugees in Congo are a destabilizing force. Ultimately, although it may be unable to wipe out the Interhamwe, Rwanda aims to install a friendly regime in Kinshasa that will assist it in preventing cross-border attacks by this group.

Although the Rwandan leadership shares close ties with Uganda's president, Yoweri Museveni, ethnic linkages are not the key to understanding Ugandan involvement in Congo. Uganda's primary reason for sending troops into northeastern Congo is to control insurgents who are mobilizing and attacking Uganda. Museveni is particularly concerned about a group called the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which is entrenched in the mountains on the Uganda-Congo border. He believes that the ADF is actively supported by the Sudanese government—possibly out of the desire on Khartoum's part to pay back the Ugandan government for its support of a rebel movement in southern Sudan that has been engaged in a battle with the Islamic government in the north for over 20 years. Khartoum's support for the ADF thus brings Sudan into the DRC conflict.

Angola's security agenda is driven entirely by Luanda's desire to prevent UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) from gaining a strategic advantage in its own civil war. A rebel group under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi that has waged a continuous battle against the gov-

ernment since independence in 1975, UNITA relied on Mobutu's patronage and had established bases in Zaire before Kabila's rise in 1997. Its efforts have been funded largely through the diamond trade—the precious stones being smuggled out through Zaire and arms returning by the same route.

With the fall of Mobutu, UNITA's trade route was disrupted, but if the Congolese rebels were to oust Kabila, Savimbi would have the opportunity to reestablish his supply lines. Angolan president Jose Eduardo Dos Santos's fear of renewed cross-border assistance for UNITA is justified. One key insurgent group in Congo is largely composed of former Mobutu loyalists with deep ties to the UNITA leadership. As a consequence, Angola's support for Kabila has been unwavering; Angolan troops played a major role in repelling the initial march on Kinshasa in August 1998.

State collapse is the source of war. Part of the explanation for the war in Congo is related to the fall of the Zairean state. A collapsed state can no longer perform its basic functions. It can neither make nor enforce laws, maintain order, deliver services, or ensure security. As its administrative and bureaucratic capacity disappears, the failing state's hold over society wanes, and competing interest groups arise. While such groups may be unable to exercise control over the entire state, they are able to extract resources from select populations. At this stage, neighboring states may be drawn into the governing vacuum and attempt to install friendly governments that may shift resources and profits across the border in exchange for support.

Zaire found itself vulnerable to foreign incursions in 1997 and 1998, because, in the words of political scientist William Reno, its government was characterized by "warlord politics." The long-ruling Mobutu had rejected the pursuit of policies or the building of institutions that would have served the collective good. Instead, he consolidated his own authority by monopo-

lizing resources, systematically destroying domestic rivals, and building a network of domestic and foreign elites who aided him in amassing a vast personal fortune. He used this fortune to buy off opposition forces and to strengthen his military in order to be able to coerce local populations.

When Laurent Kabila took Kinshasa, he landed in a power vacuum—effective state administration having disappeared long before—and found himself in the midst of a swarm of political and civil society leaders seeking to represent the interests of the Congolese people. Although he commanded little domestic support and was backed by a weak military, Kabila sought to assert control through the use of force. However, given the immense size of Congo, his lack of governing experience, and the genuine desire of the Congolese people for a new kind of leadership, the new leader struggled to exert influence over the direction of the country. Thus the weakness of the Congolese state (and the inability of Kabila to legitimize his rule) paved the way for the Rwandan and Ugandan incursions.

A New Kind of African Conflict
The conflict in Congo is similar to other African wars in a number of ways. First, while ethnic tensions are not at the root of the violence, ethnic differences have been used to motivate a number of parties to the conflict. Second, the security of borders and the preservation of sovereignty dominate the rhetoric emanating from Rwanda and Uganda, and are the unspoken motivating factors behind the actions of Sudan and Angola. Third, the collapse of state administration following Mobutu's demise left Congo without leadership and structure—making neighboring states nervous about their security, but also creating the opportunity for their leaders to extend their spheres of influence.

But this war has been surprising in a number of respects. First, the emergence of interstate war in Africa is a recent phe-

nomenon. When the Organization of African Unity reaffirmed the legitimacy of existing colonial borders in its founding charter, many saw this as an attempt by weak post-independence leaders to protect themselves from ambitious neighbors, but—more important—it provided them with the opportunity to consolidate political power in their own societies. Thus they sought to make these borders sacrosanct under the OAU charter, which affirmed the sovereignty of the individual states and expressly forbade cross-border military operations. Despite the lack of an enforcement mechanism, these rules were observed for nearly 30 years. Surrogates acting at the behest of the Cold War's superpowers and South Africa proved the exception to the rule, but by and large African states did not invade one another. Now, with more than eight armies on the ground in Congo, there is a whole new ball game in Africa.

Second, despite a weak domestic economy, an increasingly vibrant domestic political opposition, and riots and strikes on the streets of Harare, Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe has committed nearly half of his country's active military forces to an unpopular war in Congo. He has paid a significant political cost already, as International Monetary Fund and World Bank officials have suspended balance-of-payments and loan support out of concern over military spending, among other issues. The recent emergence of a united opposition movement further threatens his regime. Yet Mugabe has remained firm. And nearly two years after they arrived, Zimbabwean troops still dominate the Congolese landscape, from Lubumbashi to Kananga, and from Kinshasa to Mbuji-Mayi.

Third, the evolution of the conflict over the course of the year has been surprising. After the Zimbabwean-led SADC contingent rescued Kinshasa from advancing rebel forces composed largely of Rwandan and Ugandan troops in the fall of 1998, Rwanda and Uganda turned their attention once

again to the eastern part of Congo. Zimbabwean forces dug themselves into defensive positions around key mining towns, including Kananga and Mbuji-Mayi, and the Kabila strongholds of Lubumbashi and Kinshasa. Angola took hold of the far western tip of the country in an effort to prevent UNITA from making any strategic gains in its own internal conflict. Over the past two and a half years, the war has alternated between pitched battles in which hundreds of troops are rumored to have been killed and periods of total respite. Throughout the course of the conflict, diplomats have engaged in relentless negotiations in capitals across the region.

However, despite the signing of the Lusaka Peace Accord in July 1999, the fighting continues. Ignoring international criticism, all forces have stated their commitment to remain in Congo until the cease-fire is implemented or one side achieves an outright victory.

Finally, why has the international community been silent on Congo? The United States was slow to acknowledge the presence of "foreign troops" in Congo and waited until October 1998—nearly two full months after Rwanda and Uganda began their invasion and failed to take Kinshasa—before condemning the foreign involvement. The British and the French, long active participants in this region, have hardly been heard from over the last two years. And the United Nations has been hesitant to offer peacekeeping troops and the logistical support necessary to make the peace agreement stick.

The Changing Balance of Power
Part of the answer to these questions lies in the changing distribution of power among African states. Thirty years ago, although African states varied in size and population, the new generation of leaders who met to sign the OAU charter faced similar circumstances at home. Most had come to power as part of a widespread movement aimed at ridding the continent of the colonial powers.

When Britain, France, Portugal, and Belgium left, they did not leave much behind. The new leaders—Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, Guinea's Sékou Touré, Zaire's Mobutu, among others—found themselves assuming leadership over countries with little or no infrastructure, few college graduates, and a vibrant oppositional culture alive and well at the local level. These leaders used the OAU charter to reinforce their domestic strength by eliminating the threat of outside involvement in their affairs.

Much has changed in the intervening decades. Some economies have grown; many have not. While most postindependence leaders managed to consolidate power for themselves or their political parties, a new generation has replaced them. As a result of thirty years of uneven development and growth, the distribution of African states along a spectrum from weak to strong has widened. Political leaders no longer all face the same domestic constraints, and in many instances the incentives to maintain the principles of sovereignty of the OAU charter no longer exist. In fact, for some leaders, exactly the opposite is true. For some, the norms of sovereignty must be weakened to permit them to extend their spheres of influence and tighten their hold on the reins of power.

Disparities in power among the states in sub-Saharan Africa is one key to understanding the emergence of interstate war. Some states, such as Rwanda and Uganda, have effectively built professional militaries with the aid of foreign partners (including the United States) to supply and arm their forces. Zimbabwe, now riven by internal conflict, has transformed its military since the end of its civil war in 1980—combining two separate rebel groups into a unified army that is one of the most effective peacekeeping forces in Africa. As surrounding states fall into political or economic crisis, strong regional powers have new incentives to intervene—in their own self-interest—

to preserve order and, often, to take advantage of the economic resources and opportunities that exist in the neighboring state.

Africa's Scramble for Africa

Differences in the economic and military strength of African states feed into the second new development heralded by the crisis in Congo. In the past, African states were robbed of their natural and human resources by the colonial powers. Belgium's King Leopold II built his fortune on the wholesale extraction and export of rubber, hardwoods, and metals from the Congo. Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, met a similar fate, as did the oil-rich states of West Africa. However, since the fall of the colonial powers, resource extraction has been largely the province of the postindependence leaders—many of whom followed the lead of their former colonial masters to create vast personal fortunes.

The current war in Congo is surprising in the extent to which participating states have blatantly advertised the economic motivations underlying their participation. Intervening states have sought a direct share in Congo's revenues from the extraction of mineral and other resources. As a condition of its participation, Zimbabwe, for example, has demanded payment for most of its associated costs—and when cash has not been available, the Zimbabwean government has been willing to accept concessions or direct transfers of natural resources. Mugabe's government has focused the attention of its domestic audience on the issue of economic investment, intricately tying the fortunes of Zimbabwe's poorly performing economy to the success or failure of its involvement in Congo. Zimtrade, the quasi-governmental trade promotion agency, is organizing a series of workshops on "Doing Business in the DRC" that aim to help small businesses export their products to Congo. This is all the more surprising in that Congo's banking system is in shambles and it lacks a stable currency. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine

investors wishing to put their money into a country in a state of civil war.

But there are personal fortunes to be made. Zimbabwean officials and ministers have taken advantage of the economic opportunities presented by their involvement in Congo. In a *Wall Street Journal* exposé, the journalist Robert Block revealed the extent to which President Mugabe's ministers, generals, relatives and close associates in the ruling party are benefiting from Zimbabwe's involvement.[1] The commander of the Zimbabwean forces in Congo, Lt. Gen. Vitalis Zvinavashe, owns a transport company that won a government contract to ship military supplies to Congo. Zimbabwean Defense Industries, a major state-owned corporation controlled by retired military officers, has received a $53 million contract to supply Congo with a range of supplies including dried food goods and military equipment. Zvinavashe Transport has been their trucking company of choice. And so on.

However, Zimbabwe is not the only culprit in the pillaging of Congo. Maj. Gen. Salim Sheh, the former commander of Ugandan forces in Congo (and President Museveni's brother), has a number of mining interests in northeastern Congo.[2] In order to fund their military intervention, and with the aim of increasing their personal wealth, Uganda's and Rwanda's leaderships and elites have targeted their offensive maneuvers around key mineral deposits. Zimbabwe and its allies cannot afford to lose the potential income offered by those deposits. The recent political crisis in Zimbabwe, during which President Mugabe has allowed war veterans to confiscate white-owned farms, only underscores the depth of his domestic political and economic troubles.

Certainly the scramble for control of Africa's mineral resources is not a new phenomenon: the colonial era was marked by such exploitation, and the civil wars in Angola, Liberia, and Sierra Leone have pitted rebel groups against one another in a quest for control of resources. But the conflict in

Congo marks a new turning point: never before have African leaders publicly stated their intentions to enrich themselves and their countries through foreign intervention. They have encouraged their trade promotion agencies to drum up support for military activities and key politicians have been offered economic incentives to go along. "Africa's scramble for Africa" is a primary cause of the rise of interstate war on the continent. And it explains why Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Uganda, and Angola are not at all anxious to pull their troops out of Congo.

The Silence of the West
The relative silence of the Western powers and multilateral organizations with respect to the war in Congo is particularly noticeable given the role they have played in Africa in the past. During the Cold War, conflicts in Africa were largely seen through the prism of the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. The superpowers played a significant role in wars in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and elsewhere. However, the remaining superpower evinces little interest in the current conflict. Western powers were left out of the key meetings that led to the Lusaka Agreement. And only recently, with a Holbrooke-initiated trip to Congo, has the United Nations gone beyond a Security Council resolution in support of the ineffective cease-fire agreed to after more than a year of talks. Why have Western powers, and in particular the United States, been so reluctant to take an active role in resolving Africa's first "world war"?

The story begins with Somalia and with the genocide in Rwanda. Any proposal for U.S. intervention—especially if it involves Africa—must deal with the legacy of Operation Restore Hope. What seemed to be a no-lose humanitarian mission in the run-up to the 1992 presidential election ended up as a televised bloodbath and a disaster for President Bush. The images of the bodies of

American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu were irrevocably stamped in the minds of U.S. military officers and policymakers, and discussion of intervention in Africa inevitably brings back the bitter taste of Somalia.

The cause of Western and particularly American inaction in Congo, runs even deeper. In particular, the failure of Western powers to act during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and America's subsequent embrace of a new generation of African leaders (including Museveni of Uganda and Kagame of Rwanda) has immobilized Washington. The United States and the international community, consumed by guilt for their failure to intervene in the Rwandan genocide, have granted the new Tutsi leadership of Rwanda (and their Ugandan counterparts) tremendous leeway in the region. With Rwanda and Uganda rationalizing their intervention in Congo in terms of "securing their borders" from the *genocidaires*, the United States perforce remains quiet.

Nor has the United Nations been able credibly to object to their behavior on moral grounds. There is no firm footing from which to preach when you have allowed a genocide to take place right under your nose. At the same time, the Western powers are bound by international law to condemn the violation of sovereign borders that has undeniably occurred in the Congolese conflict. These two competing factors have left the United States and its Western allies as ineffective forces for peace in the region.

The American Role
Unwilling to intervene, either alone or through multilateral organizations, the United States has turned to "African solutions." The African Crisis Response Initiative, put forward by President Clinton during his trip to Africa in March 1998 and under which the United States and other Western powers would support

the development of a regional peacekeeping force, is one such "solution."

In retrospect, Clinton's triumphant tour through Africa two years ago was premature. Touting a "new partnership with Africa," the president criss-crossed the continent, alternately embracing Africa's new young dynamos and snubbing many leaders who had led the battles for independence from colonial rule. In substance, the trip resembled previous U.S. efforts in the developing world to strengthen the hands of chosen regional leaders, to empower local hegemons in the hope of ensuring stability. The efforts to highlight an emerging bloc of leaders— Museveni and Kagame, as well as Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi and Eritrea's Isaias Afwerki —were deliberate, as was the snubbing of Kenya's strongman Daniel arap Moi and Zimbabwe's Mugabe. Clinton endorsed the "African renaissance" envisioned by Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and announced grand new initiatives aimed at promoting trade and investment, expanding access to education and technology, and encouraging Africa's new cadre of leaders down the path toward economic prosperity.

But two years later, Clinton's trip can be seen not as a series of visits with a new generation of forward-looking African leaders but rather as stops in the governing capitals of Africa's new warmongers. Museveni and Kagame have emerged from their respective civil wars into powerful domestic positions. They have invested in the development and professionalization of their militaries (with significant U.S. support) and, with the onset of the Congolese conflict, they have begun to wield a destructive influence outside their borders. Ethiopia and Eritrea have been unable to resolve a border dispute that has blossomed into a full-scale military conflict, costing thousands of lives and resulting in significant destruction of infrastructure along their border. Clinton's new initiatives to promote trade, investment, and education have been moved to the back burner, as his dedicated core of Africa staf-

fers have turned their attention to conflict resolution and high-stakes bargaining.

Other Western governments and multilateral organizations have been equally ineffective. African leaders have become increasingly disenchanted with the United Nations —especially in view of embarrassing allegations about the organization having deliberately ignored the Rwandan genocide—and are increasingly looking to regional and subregional organizations, including the Organization of African Unity and the Southern African Development Community, for help with their problems.

Lessons of a Continental War
The implications of the rise of interstate conflict in Africa—in terms of the destruction of infrastructure, educational and health systems, and, most important, domestic stability—are serious. Moreover, the current war in Congo is laying the foundation for future conflicts between the participating players.

Two factors are driving these new developments. The distribution of power among states on the African continent has shifted dramatically. As a consequence, the behavioral norms that drove the formation of the OAU and the signing of the nonintervention clause have weakened. In addition, African leaders have turned to adventures abroad in an effort to legitimize and strengthen their rule at home.

For the international community, there are no easy answers to these developments. Given their precarious footing in Africa, it is not clear that any major foreign policy effort on the part of the United States or the other Western powers would be greeted warmly. One thing is undeniably clear, however. The policy of "African solutions to African problems" has not led to the desired outcome. U.S. investment in the development of professional militaries in Rwanda and Uganda in the early 1990s laid the groundwork for East African interventionism in Congo. At the same time, American

investment in a regional peacekeeping capacity for Southern Africa (with military exercises conducted in Zimbabwe) contributed to the development of an effective pro-Kabila alliance.

However, Zambia's president, Frederick Chiluba, has played an active role in trying to resolve the conflict in Congo in his capacity as the SADC-appointed mediator for the region. And Zimbabwean peacekeeping regiments (trained with U.S. and British support) have played a valuable role in U.N. missions elsewhere, including in Angola and Somalia.

So African solutions are not to be entirely abandoned. The United States and other Western powers must invest in the development of strong regional, multilateral organizations within Africa. In particular, African leaders should be encouraged to focus on the internal processes that govern the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States, and other regional organizations, as well as the OAU. How can these organizations be structured both to reflect the democratic principles that the OAU embraced at its summit last year and to provide the flexibility for active involvement in the resolution of regional conflicts? Western military assistance that prepares battalions for participation in U.N. peacekeeping missions is not enough. Much work remains to be done in building organizations of states throughout Africa that have the capacity and credibility to stem the rising tide of conflict on the continent.

More important, Western governments must focus their attention on resurrecting the United Nations. Following its dramatic failures in Somalia, Rwanda, and East Timor, the credibility of the organization can only be restored if Western powers invest the resources necessary for it to operate effectively. After the signing of a peace agreement in Lusaka, the warring parties turned to the United Nations for assistance in demilitarizing the parties. The organization was quick to respond, putting officials and consultants on the ground immediately. But the provision of resources and manpower was incredibly slow, with the result that the fighting reignited.

For the United States, the lessons of this war are more difficult to ignore. America was caught tacitly supporting the Rwandan and Ugandan armies as they invaded Congo. The fighting there had gone on for nearly three months before the State Department released a statement demanding that foreign troops leave the country. Sadly, the Clinton administration's desire to make up for America's failures in Rwanda has only sowed the seeds for a more virulent anti-Tutsi sentiment that now extends to the southern and western coasts of the continent. Picking winners is a dangerous strategy if America's ultimate goal is to help African leaders create a peaceful environment in which political and economic reform rise to the top of the agenda.●

Notes

1. Robert Block, "Zimbabwe's Elite Turn Strife in Nearby Congo into a Quest for Riches," *Wall Street Journal*, October 9, 1998.

2. David Shearer, "Africa's Great War," *Survival*, vol. 41 (summer 1999), pp. 89–106.