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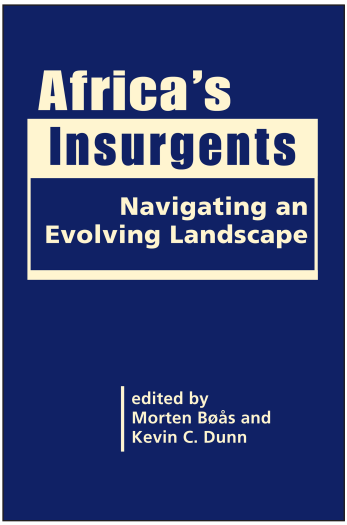
Africa's Insurgents: Navigating an Evolving Landscape



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1

The Evolving Landscape of African Insurgencies

Kevin C. Dunn and Morten Bøås

The contributors to this volume explore the shifting landscape of African insurgencies through a variety of contemporary case studies and innovative conceptual frameworks. Our common point of departure is that in Africa, as elsewhere, armed struggles are in a constant state of flux. As new technologies, strategies, ideas about the state, and pathways to resistance emerge, existing insurgencies adapt while new ones are created. Global and regional forces—be they political, economic, or social—have an impact on the context of the armed struggles in multiple, and often unpredictable, ways. In some cases, local causes of conflicts become interconnected, intertwined, and layered to produce a constantly shifting landscape. Very rarely does a conflict zone remain stagnant, as change and mutation are the rule, not the exception. Nowhere is that more evident than in contemporary Africa, where new forms of insurgencies are emerging and existing guerrilla groups are evolving and mutating.

The continent of Africa has a lengthy and tragic history of armed conflict that existed prior to colonialism. Nonetheless, the colonial conquest by Europeans was brutalizing and also introduced new factors influencing the utilization of violence—from technological advancements in the ways to kill one's fellow man, to introducing new and exclusionary political systems and extractive economic practices that increased social stratification in many communities. Though it certainly does not hold a monopoly on violence, Africa has become synonymous with armed conflict in the popular imagination of many around the globe. In part, this stereotype is unwarranted. Most Africans live their daily lives far removed from the ravages of war and outbreaks of armed violence. For every war-torn country such as Somalia, there is a Botswana, Tanzania, or similar country enjoying peace and stability.

Even in war-ravaged countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the vast majority of the country is at peace and was for most of the years of conflict. Moreover, countries such as Angola and Mozambique that were gripped in a seemingly intractable conflict have gained a peace that seems to last, providing some hope for other conflict-torn countries on the continent.

Yet, there is also a degree of truth in the image of Africa at war. After all, more than seventy wars have been fought in Africa over the past four decades. Some of these have been very long wars, such as those in Angola and the Sudans, each of which lasted more than twenty years, but the continent has also experienced many short civil wars that only lasted for a brief period. About 64 percent of African internal or internationalized internal armed conflicts in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset lasted five years or less, while roughly 22 percent lasted eleven years or more (see Straus 2012).

What sets African conflicts apart from those elsewhere is not their length in time, but that, first, African conflicts are almost entirely armed insurgencies. Intrastate conflicts and secessionist struggles have been quite rare in postcolonial Africa (see Englebert and Dunn 2013). Rather, what is typical is the emergence of insurgents trying to seize power through the force of arms, often but not exclusively through the use of guerrilla-style tactics. In fact, more than thirty African countries experienced one or more nonseparatist conflicts since 1960. Second, even if war activities strictly defined do not last that much longer than elsewhere, what they lead to is not necessarily a new social order of peace and stability, but the much more murky terrain of what Paul Richards (2005) has characterized as "no peace, no war." The war may be over, but uncertainty, instability, and violence prevail. For example, this was the situation in the Mali-Sahel periphery between when the civil war of the early 1990s officially ended and the eruption of new large-scale hostilities in 2012 (see Bøås and Torheim 2013a).

How can one explain the persistence of armed insurgencies in Africa, particularly given their relatively low rate of success if measured by the degree to which they have been able to overthrow the existing regimes? With the exception of anticolonial struggles, no African insurgency was successful until Hissen Habré's Forces Armées du Nord (FAN) seized control of the Chadian state in 1979. It was almost a decade before another insurgency was successful, namely Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda. Admittedly, the rate of success has improved slightly in recent decades with successful insurgencies in Rwanda, Ethiopia, Congo, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire.

In his seminal 1998 volume *African Guerrillas*, Christopher Clapham (1998a) offered an influential typology for examining insurgents in Africa,

making distinctions between secessionist, liberationist, reformist, and warlord movements. Given the decreasing relevance of the first two categories, Clapham's volume primarily focused on reform and warlord movements. For Clapham, reform insurgencies are highly disciplined formations, representing a clear ideology and structure. They seek the creation of a new *kind* of state within an existing national territory and are exemplified by such examples as Museveni's NRA in Uganda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and Meles Zenawi's Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in Ethiopia. In contrast, Clapham considered warlord insurgencies as neither reformist, secessionist, nor liberationist, typically lacking an ideological structure but possessing a highly personalized leadership. Examples include Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), and Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. By labeling them "warlord" movements, Clapham sought to focus attention on their leadership, arguing that these leaders were political entrepreneurs exploiting underlying social and economic conditions to create conflicts from which they derived certain benefits (usually economic).

As useful as Clapham's framework was for research and policy analysis, its utility has also been challenged by developments in Africa. For example, the three examples given above as "reform movements" ultimately proved successful, with many observers assuming that they would help initiate democracy and development across the continent (Ottaway 1999). However, within a few years in power, each of these movements had established repressive regimes, and the view that insurgent warfare might lead to a progressive reform of the African state was increasingly regarded as bankrupt (Clapham 2007). While the warlord category continued to provide some analytical mileage for some scholars, today it is increasingly clear that even this remaining category is analytically deficient, being both too narrow and failing to offer much explanation of recently emerging African insurgencies. First, in-depth studies of insurgencies typically classified as belonging to the "warlord" category have shown that even if they had some of the features belonging to this category, they also had in them a number of other issues, such as youth rebellion (see Hoffman 2011a; Vigh 2006; Utas 2003; Richards 1996) or were deeply integrated in local rights-based conflicts (see Bøås and Dunn 2013). Second, the rise of radical Islamist movements across Africa, but particularly in the Horn of Africa/East Africa and the Sahel, means that we are in need of new frames for analysis and interpretations as the "warlord" label does not offer much analytical mileage here. While much used, geopolitical narratives of "global terrorist networks" (Islamists or otherwise), "economies of pillaging and plunder," and "ungoverned spaces" seem equally limited, if not outright misguided, to us.

It is not our aim to suggest a new typology based on a mono-causal explanatory framework, but we nonetheless have an ambition to present and discuss new analytical categories that can be applied across rather similar cases in order to advance what we find most promising, namely "middle-range" theorizing. Thus, we believe that greater understandings come from looking at the richness of the details from individual cases of a certain degree of similarity where a number of commonalities will be identified and explored throughout this volume, both in the handful of thematic chapters that make up the first part of the book and the in-depth case studies. Thus, whereas we actively reject simplistic frameworks that claim to explain African conflicts through grand proclamations about environmental degradation or economic opportunism, we argue the case for the value of carefully designed comparisons based on empirically rich and detailed case studies. This is of uttermost importance as conflict zones are rarely stagnant but are fluid and shifting with opportunities as well as external shocks and other types of constraints to livelihoods and social aspirations. Many factors are present, but how much they matter varies in time and space, and any meaningful comparison must take this into consideration.

At the same time, we believe that it is important to be sensitive to the historical conditions that have shaped life in Africa. In many cases, the insurgencies themselves may be newly created—and the ways in which they operate likewise—but the cleavages that they manifest and represent are not. They have their origins in history and the ways in which those histories are remembered and narrated, stretching back to the colonial, as well as precolonial, times. Scholars ignore these histories at their peril. Yet, there are also important developments in more recent history that need to be attended to. On the one hand are the significant economic developments loosely categorized as globalization. While this label is often too broadly employed to provide sufficient analytical purchase, its use does capture the reality that there have been dramatic changes to intertwined economic systems and practices across the globe that require close attention in our analyses. On the other hand, there are equally important developments concerning the Westphalian state, perhaps even reflecting the emergence of a post-Westphalia of new hybrid orders within world politics. These changes to the Westphalian state and its attendant state system have both shaped the emerging landscape of insurgency and been shaped by it. Indeed, one can see that many of today's insurgencies have their more recent roots in developments starting in the 1990s—such as the wars in the Mano River Basin and in Central Africa, the collapse of the state in Somalia, and the coming to life of the predecessor of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel—all of which were related to changes in the Westphalian state and state system. This draws our atten-

tion to the ways in which armed insurgencies are intimately linked to competing systems of governance.

Competing and Shifting Systems of Governance

A conflict zone is not defined by the very absence of governance, but competing modalities of governance. In fact, we begin with the observation that armed insurgencies are part of emerging systems of governance. Insurgencies do not exist in isolation from the political, social, and economic dimensions of those systems (see also Bøås 2015a). Nor do they necessarily eclipse those other dimensions. Insurgencies tend to emerge in a context in which alternative modalities of governance are in competition, leading to a shifting and, often, unstable landscape of authority and rule. In some cases, armed insurgencies are but one articulation of these emerging and competing systems of governance. For example, AQIM's rise to prominence in parts of northern Mali was directly related to its ability to capitalize on the fragmenting systems of governance that preceded its ascendency. Likewise, al-Shabaab's rise to prominence in parts of Somalia was directly related to its ability to capitalize on the fragmenting systems of governance typified in the warlord system that preceded its ascendancy. As Stig Jarle Hansen's Chapter 10 in this volume illustrates, al-Shabaab established justice and enforcement systems that minimized transaction costs, ensured contracts, and offered protection and safety for weaker elements in society. In this case, treating al-Shabaab as a warlord movement or simply the product of global jihad would be highly erroneous. In general, to focus exclusively on the military-strategic or economic dimensions of African insurgencies would fail to capture the multiple functions that violence is actually performing in today's Africa.

Contemporary African insurgencies tend to be linked to competing systems of attempted governance that are underpinned by complex configurations of networks of power and rule. In the postcolonial era, African societies enjoyed a level of functionality when those networks were both stable and unchallenged in their dominance. Today, we see that in the cases where armed insurgencies exist, a monopolized system of governance has broken down and competing systems have emerged. Another illuminating example of this can be found in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). In a particularly well research monograph, *Violent Capitalism and Hybrid Identity in the Eastern Congo,* Timothy Raeymaekers regards the conflict zone in the Kivus as a "transformative state of being" (2014: 14) in which competing modalities of political, economic, and social practices emerge and mutate, leading to profound social transformations and the inversion of

sovereign relationships. For example, smuggling along the frontier zones, such as in Kasindi, has a high degree of participation and endorsement by the state authorities who are officially meant to combat and curtail such economic transactions. Raeymaekers's rich ethnographic work illustrates how the politics of informal trade regulations (the "formalized informality" of frontier economic transactions [30]) have become a very powerful weapon during war, one that has entangled the entire region in a complex web of hierarchical market relations. Raeymaekers's work challenges assumptions that violence and political uncertainty are destructive by pointing out the myriad and contradictory ways in which they produce new social relations, economies, and practices of authority. Moreover, the emerging hybrid systems of order profoundly reconfigure state sovereignty and produce new systems of order.

The case of the DR Congo is instructive in part because, prior to the spectacular collapse of the Zairian state in the 1990s, order had largely been maintained through Mobutu Sese Seko's system of neopatrimonialism. Scholars tend to regard neopatrimonialism as a mixed type of rule combining various degrees of differentiation and lack of separation between public and private spheres, creating a context where bureaucratic rationality and patrimonial norms coexist (Médard 1991). In the postcolonial era, neopatrimonialism produced remarkably stable systems of rule in many countries across the continent, such as Zaire, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Malawi. Ultimately, the success and longevity of neopatrimonial networks requires political elites to fulfill the expected vertical redistribution of resources through the patron-client relationship. In many African neopatrimonial states, there has recently been a failure to deliver on the promises of the patronage system. For various reasons—from the vagrancies of economic neoliberalism to the loss of external patrons—the capacity of ruling elites to maintain the systems of reciprocity that the patron-client relationship relies upon has been undermined. As a result, there has emerged both a crisis of legitimacy for many ruling elites and the perceived bankruptcy of the established state system. As neopatrimonial practices become unstable, the established modality of governance is thrown into question and begins to fray. While the logic of neopatrimonialism remains vital, we now see multiple and conflicting networks emerging, often with each constructing a competing system of governance.

Postcolonial systems reflected a degree of stability because they were rooted by their parasitical relationship with formal state institutions. Today's networks, however, are characterized by their flexibility and adaptability, where actors compete for the role of the nodal point among various networks of attempted informal governance that collaborate, but also compete and at times are in violent conflict with each other over the

issue of control (Bøås 2015a; see also Hagmann and Péclard 2010). We maintain that an understanding of today's African insurgencies requires both an awareness of the ongoing crises of established systems of governance and the realization that these insurgencies reflect not the absence of authority but the emergence of alternative and competing modalities of rule and governance.

The Increasing Importance of Big Men

The fluidity of contemporary neopatrimonial networks can be reflected in the continuing existence—but changing function—of regional and local "Big Men" within these armed insurgencies. These function within networks based on personal power where the "attainment of big man status is the outcome of a series of acts which elevate a person above the common herd and attract him a coterie of loyal, lesser men" (Sahlins 1963: 289). These networks vary in depth, geographical reach, and ability to penetrate the state, but all of them are unstable, changing, and constantly adaptable. While they share common interests, participants do not necessarily share the same goals or have similar reasons for being involved. The type of Big Men with whom we are concerned can therefore be understood as occupying the nodal points within networks of power and rule. Within neopatrimonial systems, they occupy essential positions for the running and maintenance of those networks (see Utas 2012). What is occurring in many African societies is the new forms and increasing degree with which these Big Men (and their networks of governance) are connected to other regional and international networks and markets. This has increased the number and range of systems of governance in Africa, leading to networks that are increasingly characterized by their adaptability and pragmatic shifting of alliances.

In many African societies, we are witnessing the end of a monopolization of systems of governance as the number of networks of rule and power are increasing and becoming intertwined in larger networks and markets while retaining their flexibility and adaptability. In contemporary African politics, different networks and nodal points are increasingly more of the nature of "ships that pass in the night" than representing grand designs and permanent alliances and allegiances (Bøås 2015b). The elevation to Big Man status does not follow one universal path. It varies in time and space and it can be based on different combinations of power. However, in areas of insurgency activity where authority is always contested, it must include the ability to use force, to generate resources, and not the least to locate authority in and between the state and the informal. The example of three

well-known Sahel Big Men illustrates this (see Chapter 8 by Morten Bøås in this volume). Ibrahim Ag Bahanga embarked on his Big Man career during the Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s as a lesser rebel leader and gained control of a commune (division of local government) after the rebellion ended. He was involved in trade and smuggling; he led other rebellions, but also maintained relationships with neighboring governments (e.g., Algeria and Libya) and also to certain segments of the Malian government and administration. Iyad Ag Ghaly was one of the main Tuareg rebel commanders during the rebellion in the 1990s. He later held various government positions, including a post at the Malian embassy in Saudi Arabia, but was also at times involved in minor rebellions together with the aforementioned Ag Bahanga, before he established the Tuareg jihadist insurgency Ansar ed-Dine in 2012. Mokhtar Belmokhtar is one of the best known jihadists of the Sahel, but prior to the attack on In Aménas, Algeria, in January 2013, he was better known as a smuggler and kidnapper with a vast network that must have included actors involved with the forces of transnational crime as well as operatives of state agencies. The point here is that their status as Big Men was not based on just one of their activities, but the totality of them, and thereby their ability to, if not control, at least influence and maintain different but also partly overlapping networks that in their own right do not have much commonality with regard to long-term objectives and strategy (Bøås 2015b).

Similar developments can be seen by noting the dual dynamic taking place in other parts of Africa, such as in eastern DR Congo. On the one hand, there is the drive in which existing regional Big Men operate in a downward direction to capitalize on local grievances, largely for their own benefit. Take, for example, the history of the Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP) and M23, both of which relied heavily on top-down leadership by regional Big Men as they in different, albeit similar, complex ways were related and connected to persons of importance in Kigali. This is not the full story of CNDP and M23, as their respective relationship with Kigali was one of support, collaboration, and collusion, but also of much disagreement that at times spilled over into open conflict as illustrated by the downfall of CNDP leader Laurent Nkunda, who clearly was removed from the "game" by the regime in Kigali.

On the other hand, one can witness the evolution of local defense forces/militias moving upward and becoming intertwined in larger networks and markets and, in the process, producing new regional Big Men. Take, for example, the proliferation of Mayi-Mayi and other local self-defense militias as the Raia Mutomboki that originally emerged as a grassroots response to the abuses perpetrated by the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR). In the Walikale area of North Kivu where Raia Mu-

tomboki was born, local people were definitively at the mercy of FDLR as neither the UN force (i.e., United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo [MONUSCO]) nor the Congolese Army (i.e., Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo [FARDC]) were able to offer them much protection. Frustrated with constantly being preyed upon by FDLR forces that roamed the forests of Walikale, local society leaders initially formed Raia Mutomboki as a local response to a very imminent security threat. However, once formed, such militias also can gain an agency independent of its initial leaders where, regardless of original internal dynamics, new networks of power and rule are constructed that challenge—and replace—existing systems of governance. What we see are therefore complex political configurations that have shifted away from monopolized systems of governance and patronage to one characterized by a multitude of competing actors and networks of patronage and shifting alliances that compete to be the most relevant actor and the main provider of both security and violence in the areas where they operate. This is what we call a "state of competition," and central to these dynamics is the emergence of Big Men as nodal points of power and authority.

However, even if the contradictory impulses of neopatrimonialism in the contemporary African context have contributed to these developments, some nuance is required when examining this. While it is certainly true that many of today's African insurgencies are related to the development of alternative modalities of governance in the wake of a breakdown of neopatrimonialism's seeming stability, they can also be regarded as laying out the foundations for new manifestations of alternative forms of neopatrimonial rule. One can see this in the case of South Sudan. As Anne Walraet writes in Chapter 11, the outbreak of warfare in December 2013 was largely driven by a power struggle between supporters of President Salva Kiir Mayardit and supporters of former vice president Riek Machar Teny. Whereas one reading of this conflict would posit two competing structures of patronage—essentially a struggle over who is "in" and who is "out"—Walraet's reading provides a more nuanced examination of the practices of neopatrimonialism in the South Sudan context, one in which the "clients" actually have significant power over their "patrons." Walraet's examination of the South Sudan case illustrates both the need for a nuanced understanding of the actual practices of neopatrimonialism in a given case, as well as a reminder that neopatrimonialism has the ability to produce stability and instability. Indeed, an examination of the ways in which established patronage systems stop producing stability also helps expose how neopatrimonialism can become an engine for perpetual crisis. When it breaks down, the lack of a more formally institutionalized structure can create fragmentation that sustains itself into possibly even deeper

levels of fragmentation. Again, this underscores the centrality of Big Men as nodal points in emerging competing modalities of governance.

Increasingly Complex Local/Global Connections

Contemporary African armed insurgencies are the essential, but by no means only, manifestation of multiple and competing networks of power and rule. These systems of governance rely on the utilization of violence for security, resistance, and predation, but any understanding of these armed groups must recognize the larger context in which they are embedded.

The cases examined in this volume illustrate the increasingly complex nature of the ways in which the local and global interact and overlap. In recent years, there have been numerous and influential arguments regarding the global dimensions of African insurgencies, yet very little consensus has come about concerning how this actually takes place. Recognizing the complexity and ambiguity of many African conflicts, some scholars have explored the ways in which African insurgents have been able to adapt to changes in the global environment, particularly their ability to benefit from the global connections of business and crime. For example, Mary Kaldor (1999) characterizes the emergence of "new wars" as those typified by nonprofessional combatants fighting in unconventional manners in the context of "weak" or collapsed states over access to global economic markets. Kaldor and likeminded observers argue that state institutions have been weakened by the pressures of globalization, leading to an increase in corruption, criminality, and a propensity for violence. For Kaldor, contemporary globalization has led to decentralized conflicts in which combatants finance themselves through plundering resources and accessing informal economic networks, thus a reliance on the local population is greatly diminished. Globalization has also meant that combatants acquire their weaponry directly or indirectly through the global arms market, making access to the tools of violence significantly easier than before. In contrast, Ian Clark (1999) argues that globalization is not undermining the state as much as transforming it, particularly the domestic bargains between the state and citizenry. This is particularly relevant regarding the types of security arrangements that governments are willing to provide, as well as their ability to realize them unilaterally. For Clark and others, globalization does not mean the eclipsing of the state but its transformation to meet a wide range of challenges and opportunities.

While African conflicts, like conflicts elsewhere, are shaped by the increasingly complex and contradictory impulses of globalization, they also have regional dimensions that cannot be ignored. Whereas many of the

conflicts in the mid- to late-twentieth century were often treated primarily on the level of national struggles (though often through the prism of Cold War geopolitics), it became clear in the post–Cold War era that Africa's conflicts had significant cross-border dimensions, often resulting in regional zones of insecurity and conflict. For example, at the end of the twentieth century, one could see two pronounced regional conflict zones in Africa. The first was in West Africa, primarily around the Mano River Basin, drawing in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea. With the collapse of Mobutu's Zaire a second conflict zone emerged around the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa and impacted Angola, Burundi, Chad, Namibia, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Observers began to recognize that localized conflicts were becoming intertwined and taking on regional dimensions in complex ways that helped both sustain and spread conflict (Bøås and Dunn 2007). This dynamic was not simply the result of interventionist regional states, but was related to how various localized conflicts become intertwined and regionalized. While those two regional conflict zones have evolved and new ones have emerged, particularly in the Sahel and on the Horn of Africa, the lesson remains that the region is a crucial level of analysis for understanding contemporary African insurgencies. Bøås's Chapter 8 on the Mali-Sahel periphery and Ken Menkhaus and Matt Gore's Chapter 7 on al-Shabaab in Kenya are exemplars of this sensitivity.

While we maintain that analysts need to be aware of the global and regional contexts shaping African conflicts, we also believe that the current African insurgencies are deeply entrenched in local, historical dynamics. Within Africa, as elsewhere, the past and the present are connected, and the only way we can hope to understand the development of armed insurgencies is to consider how current conflicts are an integral part of the total history of each unique local context, whether it is northern Nigeria or South Sudan. We believe that conflicts generally are local in character, even if they become part of global discourses, and also appropriate global discourses, as is the case of both al-Shabaab and AQIM discussed in this volume. This therefore requires analyses that are sensitive not only to material aspects, but also to questions concerning belonging, identity, and authority.

The selections in this volume show that investigations of contemporary African insurgencies require sensitivity to multiple levels of analysis—from the global and regional to the local—while also examining the complex and often contradictory ways in which these levels interact and overlap. These dynamics are particularly evident when one examines one of the most significant developments of several contemporary African insurgencies in recent years, namely their drawing upon global politico-religious ideological frames—particularly global jihadism.

Ideology or Global Brand?

Just over a decade ago, we joined other observers in noting the paucity of ideological frameworks for African armed groups (Bøås and Dunn 2007). While early African armed guerrilla movements were largely characterized by their anticolonial nationalism and later movements promoted ideological adherence to the external patrons during the Cold War, by the beginning of the twenty-first century few armed insurgencies had an overt ideological position. As William Reno (2007) noted, armed guerrillas dropped labels such as "revolutionary" or "resistance" in preference of "contemporary-sounding generic labels typical of development and human rights NGOs." This led many observers, ourselves included, to conclude that ideology in the form of the traditional left-right divide had become less relevant in Africa's armed struggles than other political motivations such as, for example, local conflicts over land and belonging (see also Bøås and Dunn 2013).

We still maintain that ideology—whether framed as socialism, liberalism, or conservatism—is not the primary cause of conflicts within Africa, though it is apparent that ideological frameworks, particularly global Islam, is a significant feature of many emerging insurgencies, from AQIM in the Sahel to Boko Haram in Nigeria to al-Shabaab on the Horn of Africa. While we do not wish to underplay the significance of Islam or any other form of spirituality for individuals and communities, we think there is analytical value in understanding AQIM's, Boko Haram's, and al-Shabaab's adherence to a global jihadist ideology as part of employing a "global brand." Positioning themselves as part of a "global jihad," these movements are able to connect their local and regional struggles within a recognizable global "brand" that provides them with significant resources. On one level, it is a recognizable shorthand for what are often the complicated sociopolitical positions informing the insurgency. After all, while the three movements mentioned above all claim to be part of a global Islamist movement, they are extremely different, as the chapters in this volume illustrate. On another level, employing the global brand makes what is essentially a local movement appear much more powerful and threatening. As Bøås's chapter on AQIM illustrates, the movement's international significance changed greatly once it attached itself to al-Qaeda, making it more feared than it had previously been. Of course, employing a "brand" attracts its loyal adherents, as well as potentially lucrative external support. It is widely believed, for example, that Boko Haram's choreographed courtship with the Islamic State was driven in large part by the desire to enhance its global stature and exaggerate its power, making it look more powerful than it actually was in the face of a major Nigerian army offen-

sive assisted also by troops from neighboring Chad and Cameroon in the lead-up to the Nigerian general election in March 2015.

There are, of course, risks to employing a global brand, such as "global jihad." While it may enhance one's global image and provide much-needed external support, it may also bring unwanted attention, such as US drone attacks and other aspects of the West's war on global terrorism. Perhaps more significant, however, are the challenges such movements face in maintaining a balance between their local and global supporters. The use of a brand is, after all, to appeal to larger "market" audiences. But one runs the risk of losing local support if the movement appears to be more driven by the global ideology than local needs, as Chapter 10 on al-Shabaab pointedly illustrates.

The tension between the advantages and disadvantages of drawing upon global politico-religious ideological frames is yet another example of the complexities of the local/global connections in contemporary African insurgencies. One may also ask if this entails an end of nationalist struggles and claims of secessionism. We suspect not, as these dynamics are played out in different ways locally, as is evident from the chapters on Boko Haram, AQIM, and al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya. The reality is that all successful insurgencies must produce something for the local market, be it violence, order, or distribution or—as most often—a mix of these. However, it also may mean that finding effective solutions within the opportunities and constraints of the existing state system may become much harder as these movements seemingly refuse the modern state and the modern state system. As groups such as Boko Haram, AQIM, and al-Shabaab represent a new challenge to the international community, local dynamics impact the global in new and unforeseen ways. Here, it may be instructive to consider also the situation that the international community faced in the wars in the Mano River Basin compared to the current conflict zones of West Africa, namely in northern Nigeria and neighboring Chad and Cameroon, and in the Sahel. No matter how brutal, chaotic, and violent an insurgency such as Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front was presented to be, the international community could still enter into negotiations with it. Why was this the case? It was because no matter how violently RUF fought its war, it still respected the state of Sierra Leone and the international state system. This is not the case for insurgencies such as AQIM and Boko Haram. They reject the modern state and the modern state system; thus, for them, there is very little to negotiate about. Moreover, they are proving very difficult to beat militarily given that they are engaged in asymmetrical warfare where insurgents do not have to win, only outlive their opponents by one day more. For example, AQIM is convinced that there is a time limit to how long the international community

through the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and French military will be able to stay on the ground and take frequent casualties. AQIM's reading of the situation is that this will not last forever. Sooner or later they will be exhausted and find an excuse to leave, and then these fragile states—a fragility that jihadi insurgent leaders such as Belmokhtar has firsthand knowledge of—will fall under their, if not command, at least sphere of influence.

Beyond Elites to Participants: Youth, Gender, Radicalization, and Violence

Much of the existing literature on African insurgencies tends to focus on elite behavior. Why do certain leaders, whether they are Yoweri Museveni in Uganda, Taylor in Liberia, or Machar in South Sudan, choose to pick up weapons against state authority? Such approaches have been useful to understand personal psychologies and political rationalizations, as well as insights into the complicated machinations of African political systems. For example, in his recent work, Philip Roessler (2016) has noted that within highly personalized political regimes, power-sharing among elites is fundamental to maintaining political stability but greatly increases the possibility for a rival to seize state power via a coup d'état. Yet, elite exclusion increases the possibility of civil war. Thus, a "security dilemma" of sorts exists driven by strategic uncertainty among rival political factions. Attempts to strengthen one's own position ultimately increase the insecurity of others. This dynamic of instability is well reflected in postindependence South Sudan.

As we noted in an earlier volume (Bøås and Dunn 2007), many African guerrilla movements have been characterized by the prominence of "recycled elites"—individuals who once enjoyed positions of privilege within ruling neopatrimonial systems but have since fallen from grace. In many cases in Africa, as elsewhere, armed groups are either led by or contain large numbers of people who once enjoyed the fruits of state power and now seek to recapture those benefits through force of arms. Many African neopatrimonial systems, from Tubman's Liberia to Mobutu's Zaire, are characterized by attempts to stifle opposition by capturing and assimilating leadership across the broad spectrum of popular organizations (Bayart 1993). But when the neopatrimonial systems can no longer co-opt dissent or sufficiently reward or stifle particularly demanding Big Men, the possibility for them to seek power through the force of arms increases. As Africa witnesses crises in established systems of neopatrimonialism, one development has been the increasing exis-

tence of former elites in the leadership and among the rank and file of armed insurgencies.

While such explanations help us understand the political rationalization of political elites leading insurgencies, it does little to explain the motivations of an insurgency's rank and file. Why do individual Africans choose to participate in armed violence? Who exactly is participating in these insurgencies? Generally speaking, armed insurgents tend to be youths, reflecting issues of social marginalization, stuck aspirations, generational tensions, and youthful aspirations of resistance. Moreover, these youths are largely young men, and the violence that they engage in has recognizable gender dimensions, including rape, sexual violence, and mutilation of women's bodies. Thus, an understanding of contemporary African insurgencies requires a critical examination of social factors, including the complex role of masculinity and violence upon women's bodies. Yet, the participation of females in enacting sexual violence should complicate simplistic gendered readings of African conflicts. For example, research in Sierra Leone indicates that armed groups with more women in their ranks committed more rapes than groups with fewer women, with women participating in roughly a quarter of the rapes committed (Cohen 2013a). Analysts clearly need to take into consideration such factors as youth, gender, and radicalization, but should do so critically. While the chapters in this volume contribute greatly to our understanding of why and how individuals take up arms and join insurgencies, secular and religious, the thematic chapters on youth (Chapter 2 by Mats Utas and Henrik Vigh) and gender (Chapter 3 by Maria Eriksson Baaz) are particularly relevant here.

As Utas and Vigh illustrate through their ethnographic work, youth are sporadically radicalized, with individuals reflecting different degrees of radicalization. It works in different ways, but one element in common is the local-global connections and how they brand themselves—the insurgency as a branding operation of marketing and commercialization through social connections, media, and otherwise. At the same time, we observe discrete patterns of mobilization among youths that undergo radicalization, jihadist indoctrination, recruitment, and training—and move across borders to join fighting factions as foreign fighters under the banner of self-styled emirates and caliphates: they increasingly conceive of their border crossing as a *hijra*—that is, the emigration to the safe land of the Quran. As Oliver Roy (2011) points out, most of the neofundamentalist movements stopped discussing the *dar-el-Islam* (abode of Islam) in territorial terms: they would advocate the revival of the Caliphate as an entity that could be restored in short order, so long as Muslims decided it existed and pledged loyalty to it. The Muslim foreign fighters phenomenon that we currently observe in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa has its roots in a

qualitatively new subcurrent of Islamism (i.e., populist pan-Islamism) that emerged in the 1970s, expanded via a global network of charities for the provision of inter-Muslim aid throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and gained a global audience over the past decade. Its recent morphing into an armed movement that—in the specific case of the "Islamic State"—was able to develop amid Middle Eastern instabilities to the point of fueling the proclamation of a caliphate that not only is in control of territory (the so-called Sunni heartland), but also receives international association by other jihadist movements that are in control of territory such as northern Nigeria's Boko Haram. This interrogates Westphalian thinking in a number of ways and calls for a more nuanced approach that observes variation, rivalries, and interconnections related to material, organizational, and ideational resources among different armed insurgencies.

Likewise, Eriksson Baaz's chapter on the gendered dynamics of African insurgencies illustrates the need to move beyond analyses that rely upon simplistic narratives of African conflicts driven by angry young men with guns. Gender is certainly important, but the historical record shows a need for nuanced understandings of the intersection of gender and violence, especially as we disrupt accepted concepts of perpetrator and victim. Moreover, our analysis needs to investigate the ways in which gender is performed and challenged, as well as the complicated connections between gender and class, age, and ethnicity. Indeed, the strength of Eriksson Baaz's intervention is her move to provide a much-needed postcolonial reading of gender and conflict in Africa and beyond.

Toward Nuanced, In-Depth, Middle-Range Theorizing

This volume begins with several conceptual chapters followed by a number of specific case studies from across the continent that speak to these analytical dimensions just introduced. The thematic chapters address (1) the complicated links between youth and extremist violence, (2) the ways in which gender informs the dynamics of armed insurgent groups, and (3) a critical interrogation of the successes and failures of secessionist struggles. The rest of the volume provides chapters on specific case studies from across the continent, specifically DR Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Central African Republic, Uganda, and South Sudan. While the contributors examine a range of insurgencies in these specific countries, the scope often combines local, regional, and global levels of analyses.

In the final chapter, we briefly sketch out some issues for future research agendas, with an eye for moving beyond mono-causal explanations to more nuanced, in-depth, middle-range theorizing. Yet, it is worth intro-

ducing that discussion here at the outset because, unfortunately, too much of what has been written about African conflicts and insurgencies tends to gravitate toward mono-causal explanation at the expense of nuanced readings that combine multiple levels of analysis with a historic grounding of the localized nature of these conflicts. Still, we would welcome more constructive debate between these positions, as there is currently a tendency within each position to obscure relevant insights made by scholars from the other position.

For example, lessons can be drawn from the observation that most of today's war-prone countries tend to be poor. Tragically, the poorest one-sixth of humanity endures about four-fifths of the world's civil wars. Yet, some have sought to argue that poverty magnifies inequality, making it the causal factor in the emergence of armed violence. Such approaches, sometimes labeled "Malthusian" or "Neo-Malthusian," seek to make connections between conflict and scarcity. For example, Thomas Homer-Dixon (1994) suggested that contemporary conflicts were intimately linked to environmental scarcity. Likewise, Michael Klare (2001) suggested that wars would increasingly be caused by competition and control over critical natural resources. Approaches that make (mono)-causal links between scarcity and violent conflict have been strongly challenged by other scholars. The relationship between environmental scarcity and contextual factors is highly interactive, making it impossible to determine the relative power of environmental scarcity as a cause of violence in specific cases. Moreover, there are a number of empirical studies that suggest environmental change rarely causes conflict directly and only occasionally does so indirectly (Kahl 2006; Derman et al. 2007; see also Kevane and Gray 2008). Thus, one should be cautious in inferring a simple relationship between increased environmental scarcity and warfare.

A number of scholars have expanded on Homer-Dixon's hypotheses regarding "simple-scarcity" or "resource wars." For example, Paul Collier (2000, 2007) argued that the calculations of costs and gains made by leaders of a rebellion are shaped by the revenues to be generated by control of natural resources, the availability of young men, and low levels of economic development, all of which he argues makes conflict more likely. For Collier, economic greed (or opportunity cost) and control over scarce resources is a far stronger explanatory factor than political grievance. The works by Collier and others often imply that African wars are fought not over political issues but in order to gain access to profits. Thus, conflict is regarded as driven by the pursuit of personal wealth instead of political power (though one may argue that these are the same things in neopatrimonial societies). Some observers have suggested that the goal of many armed conflicts in Africa is not necessarily the defeat of the enemy

in battle, but the institutionalization of violence for profit (Berdal and Malone 2000). Critics have argued that the "greed not grievance" approach assumes that theft and predation are the *reasons* for the guerrilla struggle, mistaking effect for cause (Richards 2005; Bøås and Dunn 2007). While such an approach may help explain how some conflicts are sustained, it fails to explain why conflicts start in the first place. There is clearly merit in the argument that economic rivalries greatly complicate and prolong a number of wars, but the "greed not grievance" thesis primarily offers the observation that economic factors are necessary but not sufficient conditions for conflicts to occur.

Economically speaking, these armed groups are not purely extractive in motive, though the economic dimension of these systems of alternative governance should not be discounted (nor should they be assumed to be the driving force for rebels' actions). Returning to the example of the eastern DR Congo, Raeymaekers examined the complex development of what he refers to as "hybrid capitalism" in the war zone, resulting in a well-researched and nuanced presentation of how citizens have managed to occupy the widening interzone between receding states and (violently) expanding capitalist markets. As such, he rejected simplistic explanations regarding economies *of* war to a more profound examination of economies *in* war. Ultimately, the chapters in this collection encourage us to interrogate the complex connections among the local/regional/global realms—economic, as well ideological, strategic, and otherwise—that help us as scholars move toward more nuanced, in-depth, middle-range theorizing.

Likewise, while we certainly recognize the importance of identity within many of Africa's contemporary conflicts, we are loathing accepting mono-causal explanations based on this factor. All postcolonial African states, with the exceptions of Swaziland and Lesotho, have internal communal subdivisions, which provide fertile soil for the expression of political aspirations tied to subnational identities (Posner 2005). Donald Horowitz (1985) has argued that ethnic conflict is at the center of politics in divided societies, straining the bonds that sustain civility and often igniting violence. Yet, it should be stressed that the expression of communal identities, whether they be ethnically, racially, or religiously defined, does not necessarily lead to armed conflict. In fact, many African states with diverse populations, such as Tanzania, have not experienced significant ethnic or subethnic conflicts (Posner 2004a). Communal struggles tend to emerge in states that have several large geographically distinct ethnoregional groups, such as Nigeria, Sudan, Angola, and DR Congo, or by a dominant group and an extremely cohesive, culturally distinct, and usually economically more advantaged minority, such as in Ethiopia. While many modern African conflicts be-

come framed as identity conflicts, we do not believe that ethnic difference necessary leads to armed conflict.

Finally, we also recognize the important role that state institutions, and the degree of their effectiveness, play in the development of contemporary conflicts. Just as a "strong" state with increased military capability can exacerbate regional insecurity, so too can a "weak" state when neighboring states begin to worry that their domestic dissidents will seek refuge there. Such is the case of Somalia and the logic behind the numerous interventions therein by neighboring states such as Ethiopia and Kenya, as well as the United States (Lindley 2009). Yet, we do not accept explanations of African wars that place causality on "weak" or "collapsed" states. Certainly the degree to which the African state is able to function or perform might contribute to the rise of armed conflicts. As state institutions no longer prove effective instruments of power, new opportunities become available both to individual Big Men whose interests often run counter to that of the ruler (Utas 2012; Reno 1998). As the state shrinks and political competition can no longer be managed through legitimate channels, the possibility of armed conflict might increase. Moreover, the weakening of state institutions may not reflect the deterioration of political authority, as much as dramatic shifts in the bases of political structure (Reno 1995). Regardless, these are manifestations of larger dynamics and are the context, not the causal factor, for the outbreak of violence. To this end, we need to explore the complex and often contradictory ways in which African insurgencies function as alternative modalities of governance.

With regard to the previously stated ambition of contributing to a pragmatic and eclectic framework for middle-range comparisons and theorizing, we believe that the issues we have discussed can be summed up in the following factors that represent the range of conceptual issues and detailed case studies presented in this book. We will return to these factors in the conclusion to discuss their merits and challenges based on the analytical and empirical content of the chapters that follow. The new landscape of African insurgencies as we see it is best captured through the following dimensions.

First, we need to acknowledge that the emerging landscape of African insurgencies does not fit very well with established categories of insurgencies—for example, national liberation, separatism, reformist, or pure warlordism. The new ones, such as for example AQIM, are both local and global at the same time. They effectively appropriate the global discourse of Islamic jihad, but at the same time remain rooted in local cleavages. AQIM's roots are first and foremost in the Algerian civil war and thereafter locally in northern Mali due to their ability to appropriate local cleavages

and conflict. However, in the same way as they appropriate local grievances, the movement also appropriates and makes use of the discourse of global jihad. Second, this means that establishing and maintaining a brand name—locally and/or globally—has become an integral part of their strategy. This is a strategy that may be fixed and flexible at the same time. The emerging landscape of African insurgents is religious fundamentalists, but also pragmatic opportunists at the same time, and it is this flexibility that enables them to appropriate local grievances. An insurgency such as AQIM has fine-tuned such strategies in the northern Mali periphery for decades (see Chapter 8), whereas other insurgents seem to rely more on a loot-and-plunder approach to most of the local communities around them (e.g., Boko Haram). This suggests to us that branding has become an ever more important arena of insurgency activity. It is therefore significant to make a distinction between insurgencies that mainly appropriate such discourses for rhetorical branding purposes in order to establish an image of global importance and strength, as opposed to those that aim to become operational units in a larger global struggle.

Third, the range of African insurgencies reflects very different capacities for governing and governance. Some clearly have this capacity (e.g., AQIM, al-Shabaab), whereas others (e.g., Boko Haram, LRA) are basically roaming movements without much stationary territorial control. The extent to which they differ, we hypothesize, is based on their leadership profile; the resources available to them through extraction, taxation, and trade; and their level of external and internal economic support. Fourth, we assume that this also affects their recruitment strategy and their ability to attract foreign fighters, be they from the near abroad or globally (e.g., fighters from the Global North, including the United States and Norway). Fifth, all of this will also affect their fighting and military capacity and the motivation of their rank and file: Are they mainly motivated by economic opportunities, or are they more genuinely ideologically convinced? Related to this are questions concerning ideological cohesion and distinctiveness.

Sixth, this is facilitated and enabled by the fact that they operate in an environment of little state control and state legitimacy, where local livelihoods are under immense pressure due to a combination of increased climatic variability and the inability of the states in the region in question as well as the international community to react adequately to this. In this regard, it is instructive to note that the various UN humanitarian funds for the Sahel (for one example) have been underfunded for decades. This is an enabling factor for the emerging landscape of African insurgencies. Those groups realize that they operate in a state of competition, whereas the international community tends to ignore the basic facts that while "we" hide behind huge walls in these areas, the insurgents are often part and parcel

of local people's daily life. Bluntly put, they matter, whereas the UN forces are of little relevance to people's daily attempts to negotiate their livelihoods and basic security. Seven, this is a new challenge in itself, and it is made even more severe by the fact that insurgencies such as AQIM, in contrast to earlier movements such as RUF in Sierra Leone, are not seeking to capture or break away from a state, but they challenge the very notion of the modern state. Thus, there is little to no margin for a negotiated settlement, and insurgencies such as these are very hard to beat militarily.

Ultimately, we argue that examinations of contemporary African insurgencies require close readings of each unique case. As we have already noted, sensitivity should be paid to the complex (and contradictory) ways in which global and regional dynamics impact what are fundamentally localized conflicts with deep histories. The case studies included in this volume do such work, drawing from the concepts presented here while avoiding simplistic mono-causal explanations for the occurrence of violent conflict.