

## Naval War College Review

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Volume 49  
Number 1 *Winter*

Article 17

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1996

# Africa's Wars and Prospects for Peace

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### Recommended Citation

Magyar, Karl P. (1996) "Africa's Wars and Prospects for Peace," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 49 : No. 1 , Article 17.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol49/iss1/17>

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I found the tone of these sections off-putting. At the very least, I would like to have seen a more developed and nuanced treatment of these claims.

However, if I were to recommend any single book to the busy military professional interested in some reflection on the ethical foundations of the profession, this would be it.

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Copson, Raymond W. *Africa's Wars and Prospects for Peace*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994. 211pp. (No price given)

Raymond W. Copson has been a lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, and at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Since 1978 he has specialized in African affairs at the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of Congress, of which he is currently head of the Europe, Middle East, and Africa section.

He offers a neat and tidy contribution to the literature on a very unfortunate and pervasive dimension of Africa, a topic not sufficiently studied. Copson's approach is balanced, well supported with solid references, and lacks the numerous, pesky, little mistakes that pepper so many books on Africa. Regrettably, it is too short.

Copson introduces Africa's wars since 1980 with a sympathetic overview of the cost of war, presenting working data on mortality rates and such social consequences as famines, injuries to and

dislocation of civilians and wildlife, violations of human rights, and the destruction of economies. His holistic presentation is a nice touch that presents the phenomenon in its true human context.

In chapter two, Copson offers a survey of eleven wars. Of these he counts five as "lesser wars" (Liberia, Namibia, Western Sahara, Chad, and Rwanda), which he discusses only briefly; there is slightly more detail, and also useful maps, on the six largest wars (Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, and Somalia). He ranks each conflict according to total casualty estimates, which is fair enough, but perhaps a system that correlates the number of casualties to the population of the respective states would have better portrayed the national damage. (Analysts generally agree that in civil wars in poor societies, 90 percent of the dead are civilians.) Following this presentation is a short but thorough list of collectively treated "related internal conflict situations." The inclusion of a table is useful, especially for classroom presentations.

The author's thesis is that although the causes for these wars were internal, the international factor contributed to raising the level of violence. (Neo-Marxists would differ, as would those who see the wars originating in colonial structures.) In his case studies, Copson devotes only short, separate paragraphs to France, Britain, and Cuba, with larger coverage of the former Soviet Union and the United States; and although the presentations are well done, still too much detail is omitted that is germane to understanding the wars.

Notwithstanding, this is a valuable section for its historical content.

The author tackles the challenging task of determining what causes Africa's wars. He states that the roots lie in "what many scholars now acknowledge to be a problem with the African state," suggesting an institutional deficiency. This approach is buttressed with a brief discourse on the widening gap between the African state and society. I would counter that the problem is human failure, and I have to point no further than to Idi Amin, Haile-Mariam Mengistu, and Sese Seko Mubutu, among others, to make my case. (However, I do realize this introduces the "chicken and egg" argument.)

The work's methodology is descriptive-historical, which is entirely appropriate. I am not encouraged with attempts to quantify such a fluid subject as war—mankind's greatest concentration of collective passion—especially Africa's bloody manifestations. However, focusing on Africa's wars since 1980 does pose a problem. A thorough review of such a complex subject would benefit from a wider perspective. After all, most of Africa's wars can be traced back to colonial machinations, and most of the current battles are recurrences of long conflicts whose origins lie in pre-independence structures.

The two concluding chapters are especially strong. They provide a useful assessment of positive attempts and proposed methods to reduce the number of Africa's wars, and although Copson sees some favorable trends, he maintains that poverty will undermine whatever progress is made through better government—a sober view.

The informed expert will find a wealth of new historical commentary in this work but will want larger elaboration of certain topics. Military advisors will find valuable records of the wars in a Third World political context but very little on competing strategies or battlefield tactics. Notwithstanding, due to its broad—albeit selective—coverage, this work would be an excellent addition to the classroom. Therein lies its greatest value.

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Wilson, Peter W. and Graham, Douglas  
*F. Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm.*  
Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 1994. 288pp.  
(No price given)

The title of this book gives the impression that this is just another book about the coming fall of the House of Saud. That is not totally inaccurate. Throughout this work the authors build up a list of indicators that point in that direction; in the end, however, Wilson and Graham hedge on their analysis. They assert in their conclusion that "since the creation of the Saudi state, obituaries of its imminent demise have been written many times. But in each case, the al-Saud survived and triumphed, a tribute to their political skills and acumen. . . . The al-Saud are by no means condemned to defeat. However, the situation calls for prompt and decisive action." The reader is left to conclude what that might be.

Both Wilson and Graham are journalists who lived and worked in Saudi Arabia. One of the book's greatest