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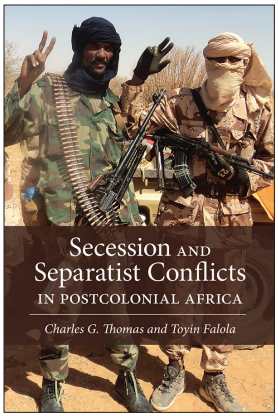

SECESSION AND SEPARATIST CONFLICTS IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA

By Charles G. Thomas and Toyin Falola

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Charles G. Thomas and Toyin Falola

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in postcolonial africa

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Secession and Separatist Conflicts
IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA

Charles G. Thomas and Toyin Falola

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Introduction

The African secessionist conflicts of the postcolonial era remain rare and in many ways exceptional phenomena, that have blended politics and violence in ways unlike any other struggles on the continent. The structure and goals of these conflicts have evolved over the course of four decades of independence and been continually shaped by the experience of the preceding separatist wars, the international reaction to their prosecution, and the broader global political trends. The main undertaking of this volume is to explain the historical context and precedents that have shaped the concept and practice of secessionist conflicts in Africa from independence to the present day.

To accomplish this goal, this introduction lays a foundation for the history of secession in Africa. It begins with an explanation of the natural intertwining of politics and warfare on the African continent in terms of both external and internal state conflicts, including a discussion of the exceptional and evolving form of secessionist wars, and then proceeds to a general overview of what secession itself entails as well as its related terms of separatism and irredentism. Following this is a brief summary of the main theoretical conceptions of the motives behind secession in the world, with an eye toward what drives this form of violence against the state. Next is a basic discussion of the relative absence of the secessionist motive in Africa and the proposed reasons for this. Finally, the introduction ends with a description of the structure of the book and how it uses the historical arc of secessionist conflicts in Africa to explain the anomalous structure of secession and separatism in terms of the African state.

War and Politics

As clichéd as it may be to begin with a quotation from an eminent voice from the past, it seems appropriate to start this section with Clausewitz's famous observation that "war is the pursuit of politics by other means." War is the ultimate expression of political violence, an organized effort to drive forward a political ideal, supported by a political body and carrying forth a conscious or unconscious ideology. Therefore, a war must of necessity carry a political goal within its execution, the grand strategy of the aggressor that then defines the rhetoric, structure, and execution of the violence, whether it be one of external projection of power against another state or an internal conflict advancing a particular political objective. Viewed in such a way, it is no surprise that Africa, which has seen such political turbulence beginning with its rapid decolonization, has also seen a subsequent abundance of conflict. The African state, like any other state, creates and maintains its prerogatives by control of the means of violence, and in this sense all conflicts can and must be viewed in their political relation to the states involved.

This relation is readily apparent when one examines the various major conflicts that have dotted the continent since independence. The most obvious of the struggles within Africa are those of state against state, which despite their visibility are generally rare upon the continent. These include the formal conflicts between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden in 1977–78, where two centralized and powerful states fought a conventional war over territory historically claimed by both nations. This conflict was followed in short order by the often overlooked struggle between Uganda and Tanzania in 1979, where the Tanzania People's Defence Force drove Amin's Ugandan Army from the Kagera salient and toppled the dictator's regime. Beyond these eastern conflicts, the multiple wars between Libya and Chad in the 1970s and 1980s fall into this category. Qaddafi's conventional Libyan forces were attempting to claim a strip of Chadian territory and were ultimately frustrated over the course of multiple incursions. The Horn even saw what might be termed a continuation of an earlier conflict in the recent Ethiopian-Eritrean War of 1998–2000, where the borders of the recently separated states became the subject of a violent disagreement. Of course, dwarfing all of these, in both political meaning for the continent and scale,

were the wars waged between the white settler regimes in southern Africa, including South Africa and Rhodesia, against the Frontline States.[1] Beginning with the earliest liberation struggles in the 1960s through to the massive Battle of Cuito Cuanavale,[2] these wars featured the military efforts of multiple independent African countries, including Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, and Mozambique, in a decades-long concerted conventional war against multiple South African and Rhodesian incursions. Despite the often-fragile state structures of Africa, these states are more than capable of prolonged conflict in pursuit of their political ends.

In state confrontations these political goals vary, but they still serve as the guiding principle of the struggle. In fact, in these struggles it is always primarily a clash of opposing political beliefs or needs that drive each side into the conflict. For the Ethiopia-Somalia struggle it was competing political claims for the Ogaden, an Ethiopian region filled with ethnic Somalis. For the Tanzania-Uganda War it was the political struggle for control of the Lake Victoria region and the stability and security of either regime. Amin needed a war and conquests to cement his increasingly tenuous control of his state, while Nyerere's Tanzania could never achieve its goals of security and peace with Amin's regime at its borders. The Chad-Libya wars were fought for the glorification of Qaddafi's Libya at the expense of the Chadian government and for the sovereignty over the Aouzou Strip in northern Chad, which Libya claimed due to a previous unratified colonial treaty. Within the clashes between the Frontline States and the settler regimes, it was the political question of decolonization and majority rule versus South Africa and Rhodesia's desire to secure their minority regimes that drove the conflict. All of these conflicts were the extension of frustrated political goals of the aggressors clashing with the status quo of their opponents. What mainly sets them apart from the greater proportion of African conflicts is their method of prosecution. Whereas the vast majority of African conflicts involve one or more stateless actors, out of definition these state confrontations involved developed logistical systems and complex political structures on both sides. This altered the conflict from one involving a protracted guerrilla struggle to a conventional war between two developed regular militaries. The simple fact that it is an external conflict for two states determines both the nature of the conflict's interaction with the states and the methods of its waging. This dynamic alters considerably

when one considers the wide variety of internal state struggles, which radically outnumber the external struggles since independence.[3]

Let us examine one particular family of conflicts that have emerged in Africa in the past decades. This specific strain of conflicts is best viewed as the liberation struggles of the former colonies that had not yet been granted their own self-governance. Perhaps the first in this category was the Mau Mau in Kenya, an insurgency meant to advance the political goals of the Kikuyu in the face of an unfair system of colonization. The scale would only increase from there, including the brutal struggle in Algeria that began to unravel the French Empire in Africa, although the French sphere of influence was somewhat preserved due to their own political manoeuvring. The greatest of the decolonization struggles took place in the regions administered by the Portuguese, where the colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique all saw protracted struggles against a formal colonial power. These wars lasted from the early 1960s until 1974, when the Carnation Revolution overthrew the Portuguese government. The trailing conflicts of this sort were those of the anomalous former British colonies of Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. Rhodesia first committed its own act of political violence in its Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, severing itself from the British sphere of influence. From this point on, a struggle was waged by the white settler population against the black African popular fronts of ZANU and ZAPU, both of which clamoured for majority rule, the last step in decolonization, which finally came in 1980. As for South Africa, the struggle itself is hard to categorize because of its strange history. While the struggle of the ANC and Pan-African Congress groups against the apartheid government may be viewed as the struggle against the colonizers who had created an oppressive imperial state, they may also be viewed as reform struggles, which will be covered shortly.[4] In either case, the political aspirations of those involved were clear and the struggle was tailored to attain those goals.

In the liberation conflicts in Africa, the political goal that defined them was obvious: the national self-determination of a colonized people, free from either the control or even nominal influence of their former colonial power. Put simply, these were struggles for freedom from an established foreign state structure, and as such the struggles were often conducted against an opponent superior in arms, capital, and training. This meant

that the primary method of waging war was what would be defined by Mao Tse-Tung as a protracted conflict, one where the nascent nationalist forces avoided direct confrontation with the superior foe and instead concentrated on sapping the latter's will to fight until political circumstances forced an end to the conflict or the balance of power had shifted so as to allow a conventional war of manoeuvre to commence. To effect this struggle, the liberation movements needed to create a political framework that would serve as an alternative to the colonial rule and use this limited example as a symbol to gain popular approval. The political goal had to be compelling enough to draw in the populace in sufficient numbers to affect the protracted struggle and to eventually place that political structure into power over the newly freed nation itself. In short, liberation conflicts are defined by the political goal of freedom from an outside colonizer and are structured in such a way as to promote a domestic national government as both the basis for struggle and the end goal itself.

A second prominent strain of internal conflict on the continent is those conflicts waged to alter the ideology or form of government in control of the state. These wars have happened all over the continent, with the most common examples often following in the wake of the decolonization itself, as internal groups seek their own advantage in the new power structure. The radical Lumumbists of the Stanleyville faction in the Congo in the 1960s stand as an excellent example of these, rejecting the central Leopoldville government's sovereignty and demanding acceptance of their own power. In addition, the long civil wars faced by both Angola and Mozambique following their independence struggles may be characterized as reform conflicts, as RENAMO in Mozambique and UNITA and the FNLA in Angola all were fighting against the domestic power structures that had ascended following the liberation struggles in those lusophone countries.[5] Within the greater struggles in Ethiopia in the late 1970s through the 1990s, there were a number of reform conflicts that became embroiled in the greater Eritrean conflict against the ruling Derg, most notably the struggle of the Tigray People's Liberation Front. As a final and perhaps the clearest example, there are the myriad groups that struggled within Uganda after the fall of Idi Amin, with groups as diverse as Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Mobile Forces and Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army all seeking a hold on the domestic power structure. As long as there have been

independent domestic political power structures in Africa, there have been armed groups willing to dispute these structures.

Much as with the liberation struggles, the political goals of the reform conflicts are fairly obvious. These struggles are defined by the involvement of groups seeking the reform or replacement of the recognized state apparatus. In many ways, they are the cognate of the liberation struggles, except that they are political violence aimed at the postcolonial state as opposed to the colonial empire. As such, the same structures and practices are often required of them as of the national liberation movements. Due to the 1963 Organization of African Unity charter, which placed the sovereignty of the recognized government above reproach, the reform movements were often cut off from external aid and thus were at an even greater disadvantage than the liberation fronts had been (although there are exceptions, such as RENAMO and UNITA's aid from South Africa). This made the protracted struggle even more attractive following the international acceptance of the freed African nations and their sovereignty. Still, just as in the liberation struggles, the political goals of the reform movements needed to be compelling enough to enlist popular support, although as can be seen by the examples, the results of both the political programs and the military operations behind them varied considerably. However, to put a simple definition on them, the reform conflicts were internal popular struggles intended to alter the domestic political situation to one preferred by the aggressors, whether they were identified by ethnicity, ideology, or religion.

Both of these forms of conflict, along with the other plethora of conflicts featuring violence of the populace against the state,[6] feature a variety of commonalities. Both, obviously, must take the form of stateless mass movements. This is because the participants of the struggles already exist within a state that they wish to politically control and transform as opposed to dismantle. With the success of their goal, they move from mass movement to state government. Both enter the realms of African wars when the political goal may only be reached with the application of violence, and as the violence spreads, it moves from protest to conflict to war. As the previous world independence struggles had shown, the most efficacious method of pursuing these wars was that of a protracted guerrilla struggle. As such, both of these types of conflicts, having similar origins in mass discontent with the state structures and similar goals of overthrowing

these structures, took on similar forms and similar methods and often saw similar outcomes: the independence of African states or the protracted struggle between an African state and its dissidents. However, there was a third major struggle throughout this period that involved internal violence against the state, one that took on its own form and own unique structures, and one that was affected far more by international context and events than either of the previous two. These were the secession struggles of Africa.

The secession struggles must be viewed separately from the other types of internal African conflicts for a variety of reasons. The first must be that their political basis is distinctly different from that of their two internal compatriots. Whereas, as mentioned, liberation and reform conflicts looked to seize the control of the state apparatus and thereby gain sovereignty for their faction, secession conflicts looked to sever it completely and form their own sovereign body separate from the original. Whereas the previous two looked for state domination, secession struggles looked for state division. Of course, since the conflict itself is simply the pursuit of the political goal by other means, the alteration of political goals meant an alteration in structures and methods of conflict. One may look down the list of liberation and reform conflicts and see stateless mass movement after stateless mass movement, each pursuing its own protracted guerrilla struggle against the state itself. These may exist and may pursue their goals through those methods because their success means they take on the newly conquered state's legitimacy and sovereignty in the global community. It is not so simple for secessionist movements. Secessionist states are dependent upon diplomatic recognition of their existence for success, something that does not happen simply with a proclamation of independence. As such, their relationship both with their "host" state and the community of states at large is even more complex than that of liberation or reform struggles. They must pursue their conflicts in such a way as to gain the local control over the populace or territory they wish to rule and at the same time exist as a recognizable state that may be accepted into the greater global community. This is an extremely ambitious and difficult political goal, and the importance of the resulting structures and methods of secession take on increased dimensions.

It is in these structures and methods that we see the second major divergence from the other internal African conflicts. The liberation and reform

conflicts within African states could look to previous conflicts around the world that achieved similar goals. For liberation struggles, the Indochina wars and the struggles against the Japanese in Southeast Asia during the Second World War gave an obvious example, one of supposedly undeveloped people besting the industrialized world through the use of guerrilla and protracted warfare and a strong conception of national identity. For reform conflicts, the same examples offered inspiration, as did Mao's victory over the Nationalist Chinese despite the massive amount of American aid given to Chiang Kai-Shek's government. The postwar anti-colonial struggles allowed all colonized people to see the possibilities of resistance and revolution. However, for secession there was little precedent established. The European examples such as Belgium happened in a completely different century and in very different circumstances that bore little resemblance to the postcolonial world. The rest of the world offered no parallel secession examples at the time. As such, the African secession conflicts were pursued in a disjointed and evolving way, changing their form as the circumstances altered and the political goals the protagonists sought proved impossible to attain. It is this changing form that this volume is intended to address, by mapping both the attributes of the secessionist struggles and the contexts that shape them.

Secession Itself

To begin, it is perhaps most appropriate to discuss in depth exactly what secession itself is. To further refine the earlier definition given, secession is a group or territory's political removal from a sovereign and recognized state and establishment as a distinct sovereign body. What is especially important within this definition is the creation of a new and recognized sovereign body, which is the key component of understanding secession within the greater body of separatist initiatives. While secession may be achieved through a variety of means, it is rare for peaceful secessions to occur, as even those such as the separation of Somaliland occur within the context of a greater struggle within the original sovereign body.[7] This is generally unsurprising, as the removal of any members of the populace or body of territory diminishes the state and may be viewed as violence against the

state itself. It is in this complete removal that secession separates itself from the concept of separatism, of which it is a subcategory and related concept.

Separatism seeks the separation of a demarcated group, be it ethnic, cultural, religious, or racial, from the pre-existing political body, but not necessarily its own recognized sovereign body completely divorced from the previous state. Instead separatism may simply seek limited or full autonomy under the existing political group without going so far as to seek total separation. This is a far less extreme option in the eyes of the existing state from which the group seeks to separate, and it means that separatism has the far greater potential of success, as the original host state may actually find the new arrangement advantageous compared with its previous system, or at least less harmful than the whole secession of a people or region. Interestingly enough, while all secessions themselves are separatist in nature, all separatisms are not necessarily secessions. They are simply defined by the end relationship between the state and the separating region.

Lastly, in terms of secession and separatism, it is important to discuss the related concept of irredentism, which is a specific form of separatism that seeks the total cleavage of a people or region from a pre-existing political body but does not create a new distinct sovereign body. Instead, the separating group is attached to or absorbed within another pre-existing political body, often one that can claim ethnic, religious, racial, or even political commonalities. Therefore, while irredentism seeks the extreme measure of complete withdrawal from a state, it does not meet the conditions of secession as it does not form its own new sovereign state and instead acquires the legitimacy and sovereignty of its new host state. Irredentism has been especially prevalent in recent years where ethnic nationalism has re-emerged and the idea of greater ethnic homelands and nation-states have become acceptable. It often takes the form of claims of a greater homeland of peoples containing the ethnic community the presumed host state represents.

Of course, all three of these concepts intersect in a variety of ways. As noted, secession is itself separatism with the distinction simply being the establishment of a new political body in the wake of the separation. Irredentism is also separatism taken to the level of complete withdrawal but without the founding of a new sovereign body. Even ideas of irredentism and secession can intersect in a variety of ways, with perhaps the most

common example being that of a transnational community which itself has no state. In these instances it often becomes common for the dispersed community to harbour desires for all of their constituent parts not only to completely separate from their current host states but also to found a new sovereign state based upon their common identity. The problematic idea of a greater Kurdistan serves as perhaps the most accessible example of the phenomenon, although it has occurred throughout the world.

While all three concepts are addressed within this volume, the majority of the focus is upon the full secessionist motive. While this is not to say that separatism and irredentism do not play their own part within the struggles discussed, it is the conflicts fought for secession and their attendant dynamics that offer the most fruitful explorations, while it will be seen that separatism and irredentism are often the byproducts of the more extreme secessionist stances. Of course, with these definitions in hand, the question must be asked, why do groups seek secession? What motivations lie behind the complete cleavage of a state and its constituent groups?

The Secessionist Motive

Numerous studies have been written upon the general secessionist motive in the postwar era, with political scientists debating the underlying motivations of secessionist and separatist motives. These studies often took the recent separatist or secessionist groups and examined their commonalities within the context of the strength of their separatist impulses. The early work was done by Donald Horowitz, who examined separatism within the intersection of ethnic identity, group development, and regional development. He sought a connection between separatist impulses and the relation between advanced and backward groups and regions. In terms of advanced groups, he defined an advanced group as appearing to have "benefited from opportunities in education and nonagricultural employment. Typically it is represented above the mean in number of secondary-school and university graduates; in bureaucratic, commercial, and professional employment; and in per capita income."[8] Those he defined as backward appeared to lack these opportunities or at least the benefits of them on the whole. His examples of these groups ranged from the "advanced" Tamils in Sri Lanka and Igbo in Nigeria to the "backward" Karens in Burma and Kurds in Iraq. These

groups were then cross-referenced with the comparable regional economic development, with per capita income being used as the main variable. This then allowed each group to be viewed within the matrix of one of four categories: an advanced group in an advanced region, an advanced group in a backward region, a backward group in an advanced region, and a backward group in a backward region. Horowitz then compared the frequency of secessions within each category to determine the effects of ethnic anxiety and economic opportunity on secession frequency and timing, determining finally that "backward" ethnic groups are the more frequent separatists while "backward" regions hasten the process of secession and separatism.

He contends that the reasons for this are rather self-evident. His "backward" groups are almost without fail separated from any positions of power or opportunities for advancement within the state. With the state structures as they exist offering little advantage to the less developed group, they see little advantage to maintaining their presence within the state itself. Meanwhile "advanced" groups are continually offered advantages and advancement within the state structures, giving them a strong inducement to remain within the state itself, although they may not always do so. When these groups do attempt to secede, it is often because of the persecution of their status by the less advantaged majority, such as Baluba in the Congo. In terms of regional advancement, Horowitz maintained that groups within less developed economic regions were offered few advantages in staying within a more advanced state and therefore would seek their separation more quickly. Inversely, those in economically advanced regions were given greater aid and inducements to stay within the state structures that offered them economic advantages and therefore would take longer to develop any sort of separatist motivations. By drawing these demarcations, Horowitz was able to trace the frequency and speed of development of secessionist motivations within a group to the advancement opportunities of the constituent groups and economic development of the regions they inhabited. However, these were purely material reasons buttressed by ethnic identity and would serve only as a stepping stone for more complex views on the secessionist motive that would emerge with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

One of the few complete syntheses of the increasingly complex models of secession emerged solely as a study of Soviet sovereignties following the

end of the Cold War. The author, Henry Hale, argued that the dissolving Soviet Union served as a perfect petri dish for observing the increasing calls for secession, separatism, and sovereignty within an unstable region. His study, "The Parade of Sovereignties: Testing Theories of Secession in the Soviet Setting," identified seven separate material and cultural factors purported to be involved in the creation and maintenance of secessionist motivation and searched for their actual effects in the new states emerging in the Eastern Bloc. These seven factors included regional wealth, regional autonomy, ethnic distinctiveness, group skill sets, elite upward mobility, regional historic precedents, and regional demonstrations of secession and separatism.[9] While regional wealth and group skill sets had already been covered by Horowitz's exploration into the secessionist motive, the rest were drawn from the theories of such prominent political scientists as Michael Hechter, Paul Brass, and Ted Robert Gurr. By looking at the relative characteristics of the splitting republics within these categories, Hale felt he could determine which factors were the most influential and in what way, that is, whether relative wealth of a region mattered, and if so, whether it was the richer or poorer regions that sought autonomy.

The results of his survey proved to be shocking: those factors previously thought to be influential often turned out to be of far less importance, or even to produce the opposite effect. Those factors that had the most impact upon the separatist motive were regional wealth, previous levels of autonomy, ethnic group distinctiveness, and regional demonstrations of secession. Even these proved to be slightly different than the earlier Horowitz hypotheses, as Hale discovered that as regional wealth increased, so did the chance of separatist activity, as opposed to Horowitz's contention that poorer regions tend to hasten the development of secessionist ideologies. Meanwhile, factors such as group education, elite mobility, history of independence, and past victimization proved to be statistically insignificant in the creation of separatist sentiment. These conclusions, although backed by statistical evidence, can be disputed, but serve as an interesting jumping-off point for the discussion of separatism and secession in the greater world and Africa in particular.

Accepting Hale's data as correct, ethnically distinct areas with high wealth concentrations, relative autonomy, and surrounding regions containing their own separatist sentiments should produce a relatively robust

number of secessionist movements and subsequent conflicts within a greater region. Africa over the past forty years would therefore seem to be a region ripe for such movements. Ethnicity in Africa has always been considered especially strong due to the artificial colonial state constructed to take advantage of both ethnic identities and artificial separations of ethnic groups, such as the Somalis or Yoruba. Even now the ethnic fissures in African states are often credited with the relative lack of development within African states. As to high wealth concentrations, the extremely uneven economic exploitation of Africa's natural resources has created extremely uneven economic zones, with extremely rich areas such as the province of Katanga, the diamond-producing regions of Angola and Sierra Leone, and the oil-rich regions of Cabinda and the Niger Delta existing side by side with some of the least developed regions on earth. Relative autonomy has been in constant flux as the African state has gone from a robust centralized creation modelled on the colonial blueprint and supported by the global economy to an often divided and weakened state. Lastly, with the principle of self-determination having been the keystone to the liberation of Africa from colonialism, and autonomy from external control having been seen as the central tenet of all African nations, one can definitely see the drive for self-rule and sovereignty on the continent. As such, one would expect secessionist conflicts to make up a significant portion of the wars that have wracked the continent over the past four decades. However, this conclusion could not be further from the truth.

The Absence of the Secessionist Motive in Africa

Despite the seeming abundance of factors promoting the spread of separatist and secessionist conflicts in Africa, that continent maintains the smallest percentage of secessionist conflicts of any developing region of the world. As the well-regarded research of Pierre Englebert and Rebecca Hummel notes:

> Most other regions of the world display a greater propensity for separatist activity: since 1960, 44 percent of domestic

> conflict years in the Middle East and North Africa, 47 percent of those in Asia, and 84 percent of those in Europe have had separatist content, as against 27 percent in sub-Saharan Africa.[10]

So why, despite the majority of African states playing host to an internal conflict in the forty years since independence, has there only been a handful of secessionist conflicts waged against the generally heterogeneous, young, weak, and youthful countries of Africa? The answer lies within the propensity for the disgruntled political entities to accept central governmental reform or at least modest separatist goals as opposed to outright secession, looking for an ethnic or regional autonomy within a weak state structure. This preference results from a combination of two factors, the lack of international legitimacy and the structure of the weak state within Africa.

In terms of the lack of international legitimacy, the root of the idea rests with the outcomes of the earliest attempts of secessionist struggles: those of Katanga and Biafra. As the upcoming case studies of these conflicts amply illustrate, the lack of international support or recognition for the separatist regimes as mandated by the United Nations' actions in the Congo set a precedent in favour of the African state structures in the international community. This precedent set during these first waves of was that the pre-existing state was the sole legitimate power and that any separatist movement was an internal disruption. This became codified within the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter and continued to bedevil African internal conflicts of all stripes for the remainder of the Cold War, where even such liberating insurgencies as Yoweri Museveni's were denied any and all outside aid because of the precepts adopted by the African nations. Without access to outside aid, recognition, or even diplomatic channels, secession became an impossibility on the African continent, and attempts to achieve it slowly disappeared.

The second factor has to do with the advantages offered within what is now known as the "Weak State" in Africa.[11] Whereas state structures remained relatively robust throughout the Cold War because of outside aid and the lack of credible threats to their sovereignty, following the collapse of the Soviet Union the states faced a lack of foreign support and an increasingly turbulent world outlook. This combination produced the paradoxical

weak state, which continues to be reproduced throughout Africa due to the advantages it affords elites. With the state being the sole provider of international legitimacy and therefore international support, it becomes theoretically impossible for the state to disappear completely, and therefore it is able to be continually diminished by the ruling elite and yet persist. This possession of legitimacy also may be leveraged for personal and foreign capital aid with little oversight due to the weak regulatory structures inherent in its weak structures, while at the same time it shields personal ambitions under the thin umbrella of national sovereignty. Lastly, due to the structure of African sovereignty, it is the state and only the state that has legitimate access to markets for export, a vital attribute in the majority of African states that depend on extracted commodities for their economies. Simply put, the weak but sovereign state structures serve as a conduit to domestic and foreign aid, capital, and development that is exclusively available to those with access and is not in any real way regulated or overseen. Therefore, the weak state structure continues to be an ideal structure for elites' personal enrichment and continued control.

This combination of weak state structures, easy exploitation, limited international sovereignty and legitimacy, and tacit rejection of formal secession within Africa has produced the tendency for limited separatist or reform conflicts among the currently dispossessed or discontented political groups of Africa. Whereas ethnic Georgians could splinter themselves off from Russia and gain the international recognition and connections needed to survive, individual ethnic groups in Africa such as the Kongo or Oromo would be separating themselves from their only source of international markets and influence while not gaining even the chance of a separate sovereign nation. African dissident groups have thus found it far more practicable to struggle for autonomy under the sovereignty of a continuing weak state or even control of it, thus tapping themselves into the weak state's legitimacy at a local level while maintaining regional decision-making capabilities. This compromise tends to favour both sides of the equation well: the central state may co-opt a militant separatist movement by bringing them into the redistributive system of the state, thus relieving the pressure to project their limited power. Meanwhile, the separatist movement gains limited autonomy and self-determination while still remaining a part of a sovereign nation with all the advantages that that

entails. Within the constraints of the limited African state and conceptions of legitimacy, separatism is simply the more effective and attainable solution for ethnically distinct populations.

Of course, the question then becomes how have the secessionist conflicts of Africa come to exist in this form, and this is the greater question of the present volume. The structure of legitimacy of African states, their inability to support secessionist goals, their resistance to ethnic nationalism and other varieties of sub-nationalism, and the current resurgence of ethnic autonomy movements may all be explained through the context of the greater arc of secessionist movements and the subsequent lessons learned in their wake. This volume, then, follows the general thematic construction of the modern African secessionist conflict and how it came to take its current form, to chart out the unique structures of African insurgencies, how they came to be that way, and where these secessionist and separatist movements may proceed to.

Contents

To continue this study of the development of secessionist conflicts in Africa, the general evolution of their prosecution, and the specific cases that altered the pursuit of secessionist or separatist goals, this work splits the conflicts into three thematic areas and offers two specific case studies of each that illustrate the specific turning points in the history of African secession. Each of these thematic eras will be presented in a section with an introduction laying out the premises of that theme with the case studies to follow. Part I, "The Civil Secessions," offers an incisive view into the early attempts at secession in Africa. These were secessions that were imposed top-down upon pre-existing political entities and which generally featured a conventional struggle for the seceding territory. In particular, the introduction to this section focuses on four major points of commonality in the manifestations of Civil Secession. The first is the structure of the seceding groups, which took the form of pre-existing state governments, often already constructed as the administration or elected government of the seceding region and therefore already existing as a state framework. The second is the leadership driving these secessionist movements, which comprised almost exclusively members of the postcolonial bourgeoisie that

filled the ranks of the increasingly Africanized civil and military services following the departure of the colonial regimes—the "New Men of Africa." In particular, the introduction to this part explores their competing nationalist goals with those of the host states' New Men. The third major point of convergence is the legal justifications for their separation, something that proved to be an extremely important idea within the struggle for international recognition. Specifically, the legal justification was seen as the key to the legitimacy of the separatist state and therefore to its existence under international law. The final point explored within the general overview of Civil Secessions is the general strategy of their pursuit of independence. To put it bluntly, the forceful separation of an administrative region from a pre-existing nation could only be effected by a skillful combination of military force and diplomatic manoeuvring to gain the acceptance of both the host nation and international community. This section addresses the combination of conventional warfare and global lobbying that was tried in this type of secession. In addition, there is a brief overview of the international reactions to and ramifications of the Civil Secessionist wars.

Chapter 1, "The Secession of Katanga, 1960–1963," deals with the first major attempt as secession in postcolonial Africa, that of Katanga from the Congo. It will explore not only the specifics of the state structure of Katanga, the hybrid leadership of Tshombe and his Belgian advisors, the political and military tactics adopted by the CONAKAT and their mercenary officers, and the colonial legal justification for Katanga's separation, but also the legal precedents the Katangese Secession set in terms of secession in Africa. In particular, Katanga proved to be a defining moment in international law in terms of African sovereignty, with the United Nations creating a series of binding resolutions that defined how the international community would respond to the chaos of secession in independent Africa and a secessionist movement's arguments in favour of self-determination following decolonization. This chapter also covers how the Congo Crisis and Katangan Secession in particular then shaped the founding precepts of the Organization of African Unity, which established "Non-interference in the internal affairs of States" and "Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State and for its inalienable right to independent existence"[12] as the central tenets of the organization. These precedents set

in international law then served to radically alter the trajectory of secessionist struggles in Africa.

Chapter 2, "The Secession of Biafra, 1967–1970," follows much the same formula as the previous case study. The story of the secession is told in brief, followed by a delineation of its constituent parts. The administrative and general ethnic structure of the state, the military and administrative leadership of Ojukwu and his Igbo compatriots, the military and propaganda underpinnings of the Biafran state, and their reasoning for secession from an already divided Nigeria are discussed to maintain the commonalities established already within the overview. Following this, the more anomalous features of the secession are explored, specifically the general international denial of Biafra's legitimacy, which effectively killed the ideal of Civil Secession in Africa. From here the chapter also discusses the ramifications of this denial, including the paucity of arms, equipment, and personnel available to the Biafran state, the limitations this set on their diplomatic initiatives, the establishment of a siege mentality within the Igbo population, and the final consensus against secession on the continent of Africa.

Part II, titled "The Long Wars," examines the parallel developments of several long-term struggles at the same time as the more conventional Civil Secessions. These conflicts, explored conceptually in the introduction to this part, are not as easily defined as the Katangan and Biafran secession attempts but proved far more influential in terms of the future pursuit of separatist goals than their civil counterparts. Instead of building their struggles around pre-existing state structures, the protagonists in these wars fought on the conception of national identity and self-determination along mass movement lines. Prime examples of these are the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, and less successful but still extant groups such as the *Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance* in the Casamance region of Senegal and the *Frente para a Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda* in the Cabinda exclave of Angola. The introduction to this part examines the theoretical formation of this identity among the disparate populations of sub-Saharan Africans and the general alterations this would create in the nature of the conflicts they pursued. Of specific note is the decisive switch from a conventional campaigning war to a Maoist idea of a protracted war, which depended on the flexible boundaries of population as opposed to the rigid

borders of a state. Of course, just as was seen in the protracted conflicts in China and elsewhere, the formation of national identity as a necessary product of waging the war meant that the identity itself would evolve as the mass movement grew and evolved to effectively pursue its goals. As such, the introduction to Part II also explores how the Long Wars' length and demographic dispersal allowed for a diverse amount of political ideologies and goals to become expressed within the conflict, which in turn altered both the structures and methodologies of the separatist forces. In total, it introduces the reader to the framework of the political development of the Long War mass movements, the structure and methodologies these movements engendered, and finally the often complex manoeuvrings that were required to support these bottom-up insurgencies, as opposed to the direct paths of the Civil Secessions.

Chapter 3, "The Anomaly of Eritrean Secession, 1962–1993," explores what is currently the first successful secession in postcolonial Africa. The case study narrates the ebbs and flows of the thirty-one-year Eritrean struggle for independence, which serves as an exceptionally pertinent example of the protracted struggle in Africa. Beyond this, the chapter explores the various popular movements within Eritrea and their specific enunciations of Eritrean nationalism, their strategy and tactics during the war, their ideological grounding, and their eventual fates within the greater struggle. Of specific interest within the case study is the eventually dominant Eritrean People's Liberation Front, which eventually effected the detachment of Eritrea from Ethiopia. Following the examination of the EPLF and its struggle, the chapter offers the four reasons for its success in securing independence. The first is their successful implementation of Maoist theories of protracted warfare on both a strategic and tactical level, allowing for a husbanding of strength until a switch to a war of manoeuvre was advantageous. The second was the intense social revolution that the EPLF undertook within their occupied zones, altering the societal structures of their population to bring them into a modern and participatory public society and thereby creating both a national identity and logistical base. The third was the unique historical context of the Eritrean struggle, where the EPLF was able to use the anomalous nature of its connection to Ethiopia to argue a new precedent of self-determination within international law. The last was their pragmatic relations with the other groups in conflict with

the Ethiopian state, particularly the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front. These relations proved decisive when the TPLF seized power in Ethiopia and allowed for the unique situation of a legitimate sovereign government to bestow legitimacy and sovereignty upon a secessionist state.

Chapter 4, "The Secession of South Sudan, 1955–2011," is so named because the case study of the Sudan offers the best vantage point on the complexities engendered by the Long Wars template of secession and separatism. The chapter follows the multiple revolts in the Southern Sudan against the authority of the North, making particular note of the leadership, membership, and structure of each rebellion and the consequent alteration of their political goals and military methods of pursuing them. This approach allows for the exploration of the complex and evolving values of secession, separatism, reform, and even inter-ethnic conflict that both emerge and submerge as the Southern Sudanese movements change from the Anya-nya days to those of Anya-nya II and the SPLA. In particular, the benefits and limitations of the amalgamation of ethnic ambitions inherent in the SPLM are explored, along with the identity fostered, its fracture along Dinka/Nuer lines, and the components of its final achievement of secession from the North.

Part III, "The New Wave of Secessions," moves the narrative forward in time to study the massive geopolitical changes wrought by the end of the Cold War. The introduction to the thematic section explores two simultaneous developments in Africa beginning in the 1990s in the greater context of global politics. The first was the weakening of African states following the fall of the Soviet Union. So many states of Africa had been bolstered as proxies of either Soviet or capitalist ambitions on the continent that they existed in their current robust form only so long as outside aid was offered to support them. With the ending of the Cold War these states, from Mobutu's Zaire to Mengistu's Ethiopia, began to weaken and lose their ability to hold their own populaces in check. The second was the re-emergence of the nation-state as both a desirable and acceptable goal. Since the terrors of nationalism gone awry in the world wars, the idea of states based upon ethnic identity had fallen out of favour in international quarters and the idea of ethnic self-determination had been laid by the wayside. However, in the 1990s the United States' enthusiastic acceptance of the breakup of the former Soviet Union into ethnically self-determined states brought the idea

back into mainstream acceptability and the forces of ethnic nationalism re-emerged on the world stage. While these ideas would be tarnished by the bloody clashes within and between the successor states to Yugoslavia, the genie of ethno-nationalism had been let out of the bottle. The combination of weakened states and resurgent ethnic nationalism set off a wave of secessionist and separatist movements in Africa, of which the general structure, again including general ideology, mannerisms, methodology, and composition, will be examined in the introduction to this part. This introduction also explores the interaction of this new wave of African secessions, the weak states, and the existing precedents of state sovereignty to trace the increasing predilection for separatism and de facto autonomy instead of de jure secession on the continent in light of the continuing paramountcy of the existing state structures in terms of international relations. While the ensuing chapters will explore the role of autonomy in keeping together the de jure state in Mali and Somalia, this phenomenon has also been seen within the increasingly weak Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo and even in a novel form in Northern Nigeria.

Chapter 5, "De Facto Secession and the New Borders of Africa: Somaliland, 1991–Present," integrates the unique experience of the breakaway republic of Somaliland into the greater narrative of the new wave of secessions. Since 1991, Somaliland has been separated from the failed state of Somalia and in that time has established itself as a stable and democratic country with a constitution that manages to combine both traditional and progressive elements. However, despite the existence of a functioning state apparatus for nearly two decades, Somaliland has yet to be recognized by any other nation. The inclusion of this case study is necessary insofar as it allows the discussion of the continued pitfalls for the concept of secession in the regional, continental, and global contexts. Therefore, beyond the examination of the structures of the separatist government and its popular roots, this chapter focuses primarily on both Somaliland's example of a successful and thriving state within a turbulent region and the international difficulties of statehood that the case continues to illustrate.

Chapter 6, "Transnational Communities and Secession: The Azawad Secessionists, 1990–1996 and Beyond," is the last case study of the book and illustrates the culmination of the limitations set on secession in the 1960s and their interaction with the current ideas of ethnic self-determination

and secession in Africa. The case study expands on the general structure, ideology, and methods used by the transnational Tuareg communities to attempt to establish an ethnically Tuareg state out of the Azawad region of Niger and Mali. In addition, the case study of the Azawad conflicts explores not only the increasingly important conception an ethnic nation-state but also the complex mixture of goals and ideologies involved in the attempt to make such a state a reality. In addition, the Azawad movement illustrates the transnational character of ethnic separatism and the increasingly transnational character of secession, separatism, and irredentism. Finally, by looking at the final settlement of the Azawad conflict and its subsequent resurrection, the case study examines the interaction between ethnic separatist ambitions with the weakening states of Africa and the limits of ethnic nationality in the face of regional power structures.

The Conclusion then brings the reader full circle and reiterates the historical evolution of African secession and the actions and contexts that have shaped it throughout the past five decades. Of especial importance are the trends moving from the secession of a state to the secession of a nation and the increasing recourse to separatism as opposed to secession. The Conclusion also discusses how the emergent US-led Global War on Terror has reimposed many of the structures that had propped up weaker African states during the Cold War, eroding the gains that secessionist and separatist groups had seen during the initial post–Cold War years. Finally, it ties together the various political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of the past secessionist conflicts and weaves them into the greater history of postcolonial Africa and its future.