VIOLENCE, CULTURE, AND HISTORY IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Violence in modern Africa is still often explained in the West as a result of persistent primitivism and tribalism in African cultures. This culturalist view of African conflict appears in some scholarly work as well as in much of popular culture, including the media. What such analysis misses is that European colonialism in Africa fostered non-modern, ethnically based societies through indirect rule, and post-colonial governments have largely relied on versions of the colonial system to maintain their power. Moreover, interventions by the West in post-colonial African affairs have only infrequently helped to reduce ethnic tensions. More commonly, Western intervention has been ineffective and self-serving and Western governments have been able to obscure their actions because of popular ignorance of African culture and history. African tribalism is real, but it is much more a result of modern historical events than age-old hatreds. Greater understanding of African history and culture and greater care for Africa can result in reduction of ethnic violence.

Of all the regions of the contemporary world, the one most commonly associated with violence is Sub-Saharan Africa. It doesn't take much effort to name ten, twenty, or even thirty recent African civil wars, genocides, coups, riots, interstate conflicts, and political murders (South Africa, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire/Congo, Zimbabwe…) and despite recent gains for democracy, regimes that maintain power through force are still common. It comes as no surprise, then, that the first four cases of the International Criminal Court, founded on 1 July 2002 and dealing only with incidents occurring since that date, were related to Africa: Congo (DRC), Uganda, Sudan, and Central African Republic. Likewise, it does not surprise us that indicators of poverty, injustice, and failed states are found widely among Sub-Saharan African countries.[1]

How should we account for the physical and structural violence in Sub-Saharan Africa and what can be done? Below I discuss two ways that are sometimes opposed in explaining African violence: culture and history. It is tragic that "traditional culture" persists in the West as a primary explanation for African violence. If violence is primarily cultural in origin and if cultures are age-old, deep, and immutable, then we can conclude that there is little that can or ought to be done to resolve Africa's conflicts. In such a case the proper response might justify isolation, neglect, or benign management of conflict. But if culture responds to history then we might take it as our responsibility to work with Africans to find cultural and historical solutions to violence. Culture is, in fact, responsive to events even if it is persistent, and caring outsiders can assist in resolution of African conflict if they improve their knowledge of culture and history.

Little more than half a century ago, a third explanation for African violence, biology, would have been debated seriously. The overt racism of the first half of the twentieth century is more or less behind us, but one suspects that some violence in Africa goes unaddressed because of covert racism. It is difficult to know, because one of the tenets of racism is that biology determines culture: inferior biology, inferior culture. In the racist era, black Africans were deemed less evolved and therefore biologically and culturally similar to children, or, in Kipling's well-known verse, "half-devil and half-child." Until the 1950s, virtually every Western academic discipline except anthropology adduced "facts" about inferior African culture that demonstrated African biological inferiority.[2] Thus some of today's cultural arguments about the inferiority of African culture sound eerily similar to racist arguments and may disguise actual racism.

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The cultural argument for the behavior of civilizations is most famously and broadly drawn by Samuel P. Huntington who proposes that the post-colonial, post Cold War world is typified by the reemergence of seven ancient civilizations characterized by common values and languages: Western, Latin American, Islamic, Sinic, Hindu, Orthodox, and Japanese. In the wake of the supposed Western victory in the Cold War and Western triumphalism, Huntington argued that belief in the universality of Western values was "false, immoral, and dangerous."[3] For Huntington, cultures were so persistent that they resisted Westernization (although not necessarily modernization), and thus competition between civilizations would be the most notable feature of the coming world order rather than the so-called end of history. Huntington's delineation of civilizations was imprecise, but he identified the Sinic and Islamic civilizations as being the most important challengers to the West. As for Sub-Saharan Africa, it is only a "possible civilization," because it doesn't have a common linguistic or religious heritage. It is, rather, a collection of cultures, of tribes. "Tribal loyalties," said Huntington, "are pervasive and intense," and the major source of persistent violent conflict.[4] Conflict over resources and power can be negotiated, but conflict over culture cannot. It is "human to hate," Huntington added, and people need enemies to define and motivate themselves.[5] For Huntington, Africa's ancient cultural divisions make violence inevitable.

Post Cold War anxiety produced other culturalist interpretations of Africa's violence. In a widely read article, "The Coming Anarchy," Robert Kaplan warned of a future world of "scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease,"[6] not long before the publication of Huntington's book. Kaplan pointed to the horrific violence in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire as evidence that African civilization would be the first to

crumble. He noted that in Africa, animism, polygyny (leading to overpopulation), and the reciprocity expectations of communal living, provide "a weak shield against the corrosive social effects of life in cities."[7] Thus African violence can be understood as a defect in African culture.

Despite the fact that Huntington and Kaplan frame their arguments historically— as the reemergence of civilizations or the result of growing scarcity, overpopulation, and urbanization—they can be classified as culturalists because they view so-called culture rather than, say, reason or experience of the world, as the key to human action, and as more or less immutable. Huntington says that the West cannot expect other civilizations to adopt or even respect the universalist vision of Western civilization. Thus by insisting on the universal applicability of its values, such as individualism and democracy, the West is more likely to irritate than to reform other civilizations. Kaplan writes that African culture is the weakest of global cultures and therefore "*the* symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress."[8]

Since making their arguments in the 1990s, both authors extended them frequently, and their continuing commitment to culture has been evident in their arguments for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Huntington died in 2008). Kaplan, indeed, has typified the non-modern parts of the world as "injun country" (Indian country, referring to America's violent conquest of its west) and has recommended a culturalist response, that the West adopt a "pagan morality" of retribution, conquest, and Realpolitik in place of the softer Judeo-Christian morality.[9]

Huntington also co-edited a volume of essays, *Culture Matters*, which mainly supports the culturalist position toward the modern world. In that collection, a

remarkable essay asks, "Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment Program?" Author Daniel Etounga-Manguelle, a Cameroonian scholar, answers a vociferous yes: "…we can no longer reasonably blame the colonial powers for our condition." Nor can Africans blame post-colonial actions by the West. Rather, Africa needs to question its culture, which, despite belonging to fifty countries, has a generally common core. That core, says Etounga-Manguelle, is characterized by i) hierarchical distance (an elite distant from commoners because commoners can survive without elites in the salubrious tropical environment), ii) security in uncertainty (lack of concern for tomorrow because of African religion), iii) tyranny of time (the past will repeat itself; no need to plan for a different life), iv) indivisible power and authority (jealousy in interpersonal relations aimed at preventing change in social status; you must be born with power or seize it, rather than earn it), v) the community dominates the individual (there is no operative set of individual rights and responsibilities), vi) excessive conviviality and rejection of open conflict, vii) inefficient homo economicus (except for a very few well-known ethnic groups), viii) high costs of irrationalism (everyone who is successful has a witch doctor or sorcerer), ix) cannibalistic and totalitarian societies (metaphorically, Africa eats itself). Etounga-Manguelle concludes by urging Africa to keep its valuable humanistic culture while "moving into modernism" through education.[10] Etounga-Manguelle provides hope for change, but his arguments rely on essentializing African culture and placing its present in the pre-colonial past. This is culturalism. It is also the basis of tribalism as practiced by Africans who essentialize other ethnic groups.[11]

There is a fertile American field in which such culturalist arguments can flourish. Modern American popular culture is littered with evolutionist ideas about Western

exceptionalism and progress and African primitivism and backwardness. News reports, documentaries, advertisements, movies, amusement parks, mission literature, and other forms of popular culture focus on exotic Africa, wild Africa, troubled Africa, helpless Africa, unchanging Africa, and so forth.[12] News reports still frequently imply that Africa's conflicts are caused by so-called traditional cultures.[13] Most commonly, tribalism and racism are blamed for the inability of Africans to overcome African violence.[14] This is seen clearly in the reports of genocide in Rwanda and of north-south conflicts across the Sahel (desert edge) and Sudan (grasslands) stretching from Senegal to the country of Sudan. This violence, we are told, results from age-old hatreds between tribes, or from racial animosity between long-resident farmers and racially distinct newcomers. Indeed, everywhere one looks in Africa there are conflicts that are explained in the West by tribalism and racism: Rwanda (Tutsi/Nilotes-Hutu/Bantu), Sudan (Arabs-Fur/African), South Africa (white-black, Zulu-Xhosa), Kenya (Bantu-Nilotic, Kikuyu-Kamba-Luo-Kalenjin), Nigeria (Hausa-Yoruba-Igbo), Congo (Kongo-Luba-Lendu-Hema-etc.), and so on.

It is not that such culturalist interpretations are completely ahistorical, for they almost always place African actors in an historical context. Rather, they presume that actors are guided primarily by their culture, which is assumed to be ancient, parochial, and immutable. It is culture itself that is understood ahistorically.

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This culturalist argument has recently been strongly challenged by a more historical argument for the causes of African violence in the work of political scientist Mahmood Mamdani. Mamdani, who grew up in Uganda, believes that European

colonialism in Africa deeply shaped African history and resulted in the tribalism, tyranny, underdevelopment, and violence we see today. For Mamdani, African conflicts are primarily historical and political, rather than cultural, and cannot be resolved unless they are understood as such. His most recent work, *Saviors and Survivors. Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*, is illustrative.[15] Trying to comprehend the recent violence in Darfur, Mamdani does not describe Fur, Arab, or Janjawiid culture, but recounts the political history of Sudan and Darfur. While that history, as told by Mamdani, is much more complex than can be quickly or adequately summarized here, a few points can give the reader a sense of how Mamdani understands the Darfur violence.

Mamdani begins with the fact that so-called Arabs in Sudan are not immigrants from Southwest Asia but rather local peoples who have converted to Islam over centuries and invented lineages that link them to prestigious Arab families. During the colonial era, the British fostered the idea of Sudanese Arabs as immigrants and settlers, and hence a separate race, because the British thought according to racial divisions and because it served their divide-and-conquer policies. In the region of Darfur, the British also sought to fragment the centralizing successes of a seventeenth and eighteenth century African empire. Thus the British "retribalized" Darfur as well as the rest of Sudan. In Darfur, the British further distinguished between "natives" and "settlers," the former gaining rights to land and tribal government posts, the latter having to give "gifts" to local chiefs in return for the use of land. Camel nomads in the north, who were neither natives nor settlers, lacked all claims to land and citizenship and cattle nomads in the south of Darfur received land and political rights only if they belonged to large groups that couldn't be ignored. "Tribe" became an administrative unit, not just a kinship unit.

At independence in 1956, the primary political struggle was not between the two major political parties, which represented regions and divisions in Islam. Rather, it was between modernizers and traditionalists, with modernization favored by the army, merchants, and intellectuals and tradition favored by both major Islamic parties and by local chiefs. Following a colonial rule that fostered so-called tribalism and custom, the modernizers saw that democracy could only result in victory for tribally oriented traditionalists. Under the circumstances, military coups were inevitable, but they could not easily solve political problems. The period of Jaffer Nimeiry's military rule from 1969-1985 saw efforts to modernize political administration, but it also saw the devolution of central power in 1972 in an effort to defuse north-south tensions. Limited autonomy was further extended to Darfur in the east and to other regions in 1980. In Darfur, this autonomy "unleashed internal political competition" and resulted in heightened ethnic politics, because citizenship continued to be defined culturally.[16]

This was the situation at the beginning of the environmental crisis of the early 1980s. Over the next two decades, the desert moved southward putting increasing pressure on the camel nomads of the north, who claimed Arab ancestry. Lybia and Chad also figure in this story, with Lybia attempting to extend its influence and with Chad torn by similar north-south ethnic tensions and trying to maneuver between Lybia, Sudan, and France. Growing tensions and the impending Sudanese government agreement to provide the non-Muslim south with autonomy and eventual independence (after a 2011 referendum), prompted the Darfurians to armed revolt in 2003. The government, unable to use the army because of its involvement in the south, began to arm the camel nomads and bandits to stop the rebels.

But, according to Mamdani, the Darfur conflict was never genocide of "Africans" by "Arabs," as was claimed by the Save Darfur movement. The central government never intended to eliminate or cleanse the Fur or any other ethnic group, nor was all of the fighting between so-called Arabs and non-Arabs. Cattle nomads who were non-Arabs in southern Darfur, for example, also fought for land during this period. Moreover, the number of those killed during the worst part of the crisis and afterwards was highly exaggerated by the Save Darfur movement. In this, they were helped by so-called "Africans" (non-Arabs) in Darfur who saw political advantage in Western support and thus promoted the Save Darfur exaggeration. The United States government, says Mamdani, was more or less forced—by Save Darfur and by guilt over Rwanda—to declare the Darfur conflict genocide. Thus Darfur became "Arabized" and part of the War on Terror, a struggle between so-called Arabs and so-called Africans rather than a localized struggle resulting from an environmental crisis, a colonial legacy of exclusivist local rule, and an incompetent government. Mamdani writes, "The War on Terror has displaced the history and politics of Darfur while providing the context to interpret and illuminate ongoing developments in Darfur. The more such an interpretation takes root, the more Darfur becomes not just an illustration of the grand narrative of the War on Terror but also a part of its justification."[17]

Mamdani has written extensively about the causes of so-called tribalism in contemporary Africa and locates African ethnic conflict primarily in European colonial indirect rule. Almost all of Sub-Saharan Africa was ruled through customary rulers who were expected to collect taxes, provide labor for colonial enterprises, and keep public order. Colony-wide laws mostly referred to the colonial sphere of economic exploitation,

small urban areas, and interethnic affairs. Citizenship was largely defined as existing

within "tribal" affiliation and local chiefs using customary law judged so-called tribal

affairs. As in Sudan, Europeans thus ruled colonies using two sets of laws and two

definitions of citizenship, one customary and one for rulers and the few African urbanites

who escaped traditional jurisdictions. In addition, where Europeans identified different

races, such as in Sudan, Rwanda, Zanzibar, and South Africa, the colonial state legislated

racial discrimination. Thus, writes Mamdani, "Racial discrimination in the civic sphere

reproduced race as a political identity, just as ethnic discrimination in the customary

sphere translated ethnicity from a cultural to a political identity."[18]

Post-independence leaders rarely departed from the colonial order. To do so

would have threatened both the stability of rural areas where "customary" rulers held

sway, and also the power of the new urban elites who largely led Africa to independence.

Thus unscrupulous tyrants and elites left the tribalized colonial formula for citizenship

intact and proceeded to manipulate it for their own benefit. Tanzania stands as a

significant and rare exception in post-colonial East, Central, and Southern Africa. There,

President Julius Nyerere attempted to delineate "a single unified citizenship, both

deracialized and deethnicized."[19] We should add, so as not to ignore other important

factors in the construction of citizenship, that Tanzania is different from most African

countries in that it has many small ethnic groups with no group or groups dominating the

others. Thus Tanzania's experience demonstrates that leadership is only one factor in

post-colonial history.

There are, of course, many accounts of Africa's crises and their resolution (or lack

of resolution) that are not culturalist. For example, there have been excellent analyses

that situate Rwanda's genocide in the late twentieth century instead of merely in racism and tribalism.[20] Likewise, for Sierra Leone, the place that Robert Kaplan said best illustrates the extreme weakness of African culture, Lansana Gberie's *A Dirty War in West Africa* provides a perspective that is neither culturalist nor hopeless.[21] Gérard Prunier's *Africa's World War* describes the recent history of Central Africa and while emphasizing the role of traditional African culture also takes ample account of outside influences and recent developments in regional culture.[22] Non-culturalist analyses are available for most African conflicts.

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The essentialist ideas of the culturalists cause more problems than they resolve. Culturalists abandon hope in African peace and thus promote Western reactions to African conflicts that sustain and perpetuate violence: barbarian morality, survival of the fittest, neo-imperialism, neglect, and unjust cultural, economic, and political adjustment regimes. In reality, African cultures respond to incentives and interests just as other cultures do. Indeed, Africans have already undergone cultural and other adjustment programs for more than a century, because Africa is not isolated from the rest of the world. While *some* of African culture is traditional, *much* has been deeply transformed by the modern world. African history and culture are shaped by the same forces that shape the rest of history, including great power politics, modern education, international markets and globalization, modern technology (guns, airplanes, radio, television, cell phones, Internet…), urbanization, personality, and so forth. And most African identities are based on multiple affiliations including kinship, religion, occupation, gender,

geography, and so on. Despite Africa's troubles, and sometimes because of them, Africa is modernizing, and is reaping the attendant benefits and ills.

Given ignorance in the West of *both* history and culture in Africa, it is easy to be confused and to confuse. Thus Westerners have descended on Africa with quick-fix, half-considered prescriptions for Africa's problems. Or, our leaders purposefully obscure the truth with culturalism and false histories. In other words, culturalism and historical misinterpretation are not necessarily a result of ignorance and honest error. In public policy, culturalist approaches can justify poor policies and lack of care for Africa. During the Cold War, for example, the West and the Soviet Union supported African tyrants and justified their violence as a product of African culture. When the Cold War ended, however, the West quickly demanded multi-party democracy, accountability, and transparency.[23] In a few places this new policy helped foster democratic processes, but in Rwanda and elsewhere it failed precisely because it used simple formulas in situations that the West little understood. Mamdani writes, "The donor community force-fed Rwanda a reform agenda out of a textbook, without regard to the situation on the ground and secure in the knowledge that they would not have to suffer the consequences of their actions."[24] Later, when the genocide began, the West failed to intervene quickly, even when it knew what was going on. When the genocide ended, the United States supported a Tutsi regime that reproduced and reproduces the errors of the colonial past.

Similarly, President Clinton sent Jesse Jackson in 1999 to negotiate a settlement in the Sierra Leone conflict. Jackson went to Lomé instead of a senior diplomat because the Clinton administration was involved in Kosovo and because it did not take Sierra Leone seriously. Jackson—inept, ignorant, hurried, and egotistical—forced the

government to hand over wealth and power to the rebel leader, whom Jackson compared to Nelson Mandela, thus prolonging the war. In fact, the war was over diamonds and was prosecuted by bandits, not ethnic groups or liberators. Meanwhile, Clinton denied that the United States had dictated the Lomé settlement, a lie that astounded those who were present and convinced Sierra Leoneans that the United States could not be trusted. They were right. Meanwhile, Clinton was telling Americans how important Africa was to the United States.[25]

The Bush administration involvement in the 2006 Darfur negotiations in Abuja, Nigeria, had much the same character. Eager to reach an agreement, impatient with the parties, and ignorant of the situation in Darfur, the international actors, especially the United States and Britain, forced a settlement that did not include all of the major actors and could not have been the basis of a lasting peace.[26] In general, the United States government tried to do as little to resolve the Darfur conflict as possible.

Mamdani also sees the 2008 indictment of Sudan's president, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, by the International Criminal Court (ICC) as part of a United States hijacking of the Darfur conflict for the War on Terror. Under the Bush administration, the United States voted in the UN Security Council to refer al-Bashir to the ICC, which led to al-Bashir's indictment in 2008. By intervening through an international regime of justice, the ICC made Darfur more difficult to resolve because, according to Mamdani, it substituted absolutist "victors' justice" for locally based "survivors' justice." To reflect on the difference between the two, we might speculate how much more difficult it would have been to resolve apartheid in South Africa had white government officials been under indictment by the ICC. Given Sudan's historical and cultural situation, says Mamdani,

Sudan would find a more lasting peace through the mediation of "wise persons" rather than the victors' justice of the ICC.[27]

Mamdani might be both right and wrong about the ICC in Sudan. Perhaps the United States did see al-Bashir as an actor in the War on Terror. But subsequent to the indictments the government of Sudan has worked to negotiate an end to the conflict (despite also ejecting international aid organizations from Darfur), and the Obama administration has softened its stance toward the Sudan government. What remains to be seen is whether the court's actions will deter future violence in Sudan and elsewhere. If the court is allowed to be impartial and not become a tool of the big powers, then it might be useful in resolving and preventing future violent conflict.

In the ongoing conflict in Eastern Congo, the war has claimed far more lives than the war in Sudan or the genocide in Rwanda, yet the conflict is almost invisible outside of Africa.[28] With its enormous death toll, why has this conflict not become an international cause and why has the world not intervened seriously? Is our global conscience only attuned to genocide? Does this war not matter to global politics because there are no Arabs, nuclear weapons, or oil deposits involved? Does the United States ignore the war because it supports the Tutsi government in Rwanda, which participates in the war? Is it that despite the war the world can continue to purchase the rebel-mined *coltan* (columbite-tantalite; used in cell phones and other electronic devices) and other conflict minerals that fuel the war? Serious intervention would surely be messy because a post-colonial state has never really established order there, but can we truly say that the conflict doesn't matter as much as that in Sudan?

Since the end of the Cold War, Western governments have told their citizens that they care about helping Africa resolve its political conflicts. But if, as they claim, they have made their best efforts, then citizens in the West can conclude that Africa's political problems must be too deep-seated to solve. Such a false conclusion relies on the West's ignorance of African culture and history and can only reinforce culturalism. In much the same way, many Western efforts at African economic and social development have fostered culturalism. Frequently, development projects promote dependency and corruption and cannot be sustained by local people once the development agency moves on. Donors want quick results and new projects so that development workers rarely have time to understand thoroughly cultures and historical situations. Moreover, critics say, the development workers rather than Africans gain the skills and resources needed for development. Africa is "being developed" rather than developing; ordinary people are not learning to solve their own problems. And when projects eventually fail, it is easier to blame Africans and their cultures rather than the misunderstanding, impatience, and self-promotion of outsiders.

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"Tribalization," "retribalization," and "underdevelopment" of Africa by European colonial powers is a common theme in modern histories. Mamdani's contribution as a political scientist has been to reemphasize the way that colonial policies have carried over into post-colonial politics. Europeans established a colonial system in which white elites maintained power by conferring citizenship based on culture (and race), and modern black elites have largely reproduced this system. Thus in the context of the colonial and

post-colonial state, ethnic tension is inevitable. This tension is not, however, the age-old tension that culturalists propose.

Would it have been possible to create a colonial state on a non-cultural basis? Given the unwillingness of Europeans to invest in the political development of their colonies, probably not. Colonies were primarily economic enterprises meant to extract wealth. However, not all modern cultural tension need be attributed to the exploitative structure of colonial or post-colonial states. Integration of the many precolonial African societies into larger political and economic units was bound to cause cultural tension. Indeed, such integration and tension had been features of precolonial Africa. Thus no matter what political model colonists applied, cultural integration and conflict were inevitably features of colonialism and of post-colonialism. Indeed, one might even ask whether the cost of cultural integration in Africa has been much different from the historical costs of integration in other parts of the world. We should not forget, for example, the centuries of violent European conflict that precede our own era. To ask this question does not excuse the exploitation of colonial or post-colonial powers nor make future violence inevitable, but it admits that up to now historical change globally has often brought terrible violence.

Along with many others, outsiders and insiders alike, Mamdani insists that peace in Africa's multicultural states requires a separation of political and cultural identities. Citizenship should be based on one's place of residence, not on one's culture. Peace also requires constitutions and state-run judicial systems (not tribal courts) that protect individual rights, and, as a prerequisite for participation in government, the renunciation of violence.[29] But given its century-plus history of zero-sum tribalization and

authoritarianism, most of Africa will move much more slowly in this direction than Mamdani envisions. Just as the culturalists count too little on the flexibility of traditional cultures and the ability of modern ideas and actors to cause change, Mamdani and others seem to count too much on them. In sub-Saharan Africa, only a very few states have established successful political and judicial systems that primarily rely on individual rights and substantially exclude cultural politics. These states are special cases that are culturally homogeneous (Botswana), culturally plural with no one large group (Tanzania), or semi-modern and class-based (South Africa). A few other states have done moderately well in reducing cultural politics (e.g., Namibia) and establishing individual over cultural rights, but the path to Mamdani's ideal will not be easy or rapid.

To reduce conflict, Africans might best attempt to create multicultural states that protect both state unity *and* cultural identity, both individual *and* cultural choice. The 2004 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program provides examples from around the world of states working to protect cultural liberties (such as Spain, Belgium, India, New Zealand, and Guatemala).[30] Existing models may or may not work in situations such as Rwanda, where Tutsi and Hutu live side by side, or in Sudan, where some cultural groups do not even have access to the resources they need to survive, yet Africans should be encouraged to look for models that allow cultural choice without providing the basis for cultural chauvinism, aggression, or secession.

In the same way, the West and others who say they want to help Africa need to modify their reactions to African conflict. In Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Congo, and elsewhere the West has generally prolonged violent conflict through slow, inappropriate, half-hearted, and self-serving interventions. In some cases, such as

Sierra Leone and Liberia, the international community eventually found a combination of international force and aid that helped build peace, but the overall record of peacemaking by the West and others is dismal. Given the ignorance of African culture and history in the West and among outsiders in general, it is still possible for those who say they are trying to resolve African conflict to obscure their lack of care or incompetence with false pictures of culture and history. Thus we cannot yet hold our governments, international organizations, development agencies, churches, multinational corporations, and media accountable for actually helping Africa.

While traditions of small-scale and regionalized cultures still exist in African states, we must not abandon Africa or any other part of the world to culturalist pessimism and ahistoricism. The events of the twentieth century taught some people in Africa how to gain power and wealth by emphasizing cultural difference, but no culture is inevitably tribalist or violent. Indeed, the twentieth century should also have taught us that in a technologically advanced age the emotions of tribalism and nationalism must be abandoned everywhere so that we do not destroy ourselves. To survive, we must build global and local cultures and structures that promote care, cooperation, and justice rather than conflict and self-interest. Fortunately, all cultures have resources—traditions, creative individuals, outside influences—that allow them to respond to history in peaceful as well as violent ways. It is our responsibility—that of the West, Africa, and the rest of world—to develop the cultural and structural resources for peace.

Endnotes

[1] Fund for Peace, "Failed States Index 2009," Accessed 9 September 2009 at http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=140.

[2] Curtis A. Keim, *Mistaking Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 51-59.

[3] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 310.

[4] Ibid., 47.

[5] Ibid., 120-130.

[6] Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 273, no. 2, (February 1994): 44.

[7] Ibid., 46.

[8] Ibid., 46.

[9] Robert Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

[10] Daniel Etounga-Manguelle, "Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment Program?" in Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, *Culture Matters. How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 65-77

[11] See, for example, Binyavanga Wainaina, "In Gikuyu, for Gikuyu, of Gikuyu," *Granta* Accessed 30 July 2009 at www.granta.com/Magazine/Granta-103/Letter-From/1. I normally do not use the words "tribe" and "tribalism" because they usually misrepresent what actually is happening in Africa. Here, however, the words are appropriate because they are used by my sources and/or indicate certain values imputed to Africans by Westerners. See Curtis A. Keim, "Africans Live in Tribes, Don't They" in Curtis A. Keim, *Mistaking Africa. Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 113-127.

[12] Keim, *Mistaking Africa*, 51-59.

[13] I wonder whether ordinary Asians also see Africa this way. If Chinese popular images of Africa are indicative, the Chinese may see African cultures as even more primitive than Westerners do.

[14] See, for example, Julie Hollar, "'Tribal' Label Distorts African Conflicts," *Extra!* May/June 2008. Accessed 9 August 2009 at www.fair.org/index.php?page=3409.

[15] Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors. Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (New York: Pantheon, 2009).

[16] Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors,* 188.

[17] Ibid., 71.

[18] Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 29.

[19] Ibid., 32. See also Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[20] See, for example, recent works by Rene Lemarchand, *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa. National and Ethnic Conflict in the 21st Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) and Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors. Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). Also see a work produced immediately after the genocide by Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

[21] Lansana Gberie. *A Dirty War in West Africa. The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.

[22] Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War. Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[23] This was not true everywhere. For example, the United States still purchases oil from Equatorial Guinea despite the fraudulent election of the president, Teodoro Obiang, a tyrant from the mold of many African dictators. Although the CIA might have assisted in a coup attempt, the United States puts little pressure on Obiang to resign or hold fair elections.

[24] Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers,* 214

[25] Ryan Lizza, "Where Angels Fear to Tread," *The New Republic*, 223, no. 4 (24 July 2000): 22-27.

[26] Julie Flint and Alex de Waal, *Darfur. A New History of a Long War* (London: Zed Books, 2008), 200-229.

[27] Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, 282-300.

[28] See, for example, Howard W. French, "Kagame's Hidden War in the Congo," *The New York Review of Books*, 56, no. 14 (September 24, 2009): 44-47.

[29] Ibid. and Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 264-282.

[30] United Nations Development Program, "World Development Report, 2004. Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World." Accessed 8 September 2009 at http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2004/chapters/

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