

# Call for papers

## *Urban Protest in an African Context of War*

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**Deadline Abstract Submission**

**20 November 2020**

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The urban age is at once the era of urban rage. Protests around the globe arise for different reasons; from anti-racist struggle to food riots, people take to the streets to reclaim their rights. Recent academic focus has succeeded in drawing our attention to Africa as an important site of political mass protest. Whether it be the Arab Spring that created a revolutionary momentum in North Africa or the various protests against presidents clinging onto power in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, people massively took to the streets. Whilst the reasons and outcomes differ widely, these protests have been rightly given attention in scholarly debates across academic disciplines. What remains largely unclear, however, is how these forms of urban contention relate to other forms of resistance, such as civil war and armed conflict.

The relation between protest and war, or between civic and civil conflict, is complex and difficult to grasp. Many have interpreted the rise of urban protest as a sign of the demise of armed conflict<sup>1</sup>. The two dynamics have, until now, mostly been analysed separately. Can we indeed understand the rise of urban protest in Africa as a shift ‘from the bushes to the streets’? To what extent do violent dynamics and repression during times of urban protest intersect with armed conflict? Historically, the concepts of armed conflict and civil war in Africa have been spatially situated much more in the rural hinterlands while the concept of protest is considered a predominantly urban phenomenon. At the same time, armed conflict has deeply transformed Africa’s urban societies and, consequently, its political constellations. Furthermore, many of the contexts or stages of protest and popular uprising in Africa are simultaneously characterized by armed conflict. Whilst ‘the urban question’ has already carved out a place for itself within conflict studies, the reciprocal dynamics of urban protest and war have received far less attention. In order to fully understand these emerging protest schemas, we call for a crucial interest in the often violent and/or militarised context in which these protests occur.

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This edited volume for the AEGIS Series by BRILL seeks to bridge the different viewpoints from which urban protest and armed conflict have been studied. As such, it tries to contribute to a better understanding of the intersecting dynamics of urban protest and war in Africa. One of the starting points of the volume is that armed conflict and urban protest are not necessarily separate phenomena but also can be mutually constitutive. They can be opposed to, or instead, reinforce each other. The actors may be very different or very connected, as is the case with the political repertoires they are

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Beall, J., Goodfellow, T., & Rodgers, D. (2013). *Cities and Conflict in Fragile States in the Developing World*. 50 (November), 3065–3083; Díaz, F. A. (2017). Inequality, Social Protests and Civil War. *Oasis*, 26, 25–39; Golooba-Mutebi, F., & Sjögren, A. (2017). From rural rebellions to urban riots: political competition and changing patterns of violent political revolt in Uganda. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 55(1), 22–40.

mobilising. The primary goal of the volume is thus to provide new insights in the various ways in which armed conflict and popular protest in Africa coincide and influence each other.

We call for scholars from various disciplines to submit contributions on the relation between urban protest and war in different localities of the African continent and its diasporas. We strongly aim for a multidisciplinary special issue that tackles the conflict dimension of popular protest from the perspectives of urban studies, social movement studies, African studies, conflict studies, geography, anthropology, among others. Contributions can be either of conceptual as well as empirical or analytical nature. We aim for contributions representing various geographic locations as well as diverse roles and outcomes of popular protest to fully grasp the diversity of the matter.

For applications or further information, send an email to [sam.kniknie@ugent.be](mailto:sam.kniknie@ugent.be). Please include your abstract (limited to 500 words) and a short description of your biography (limited to 100 words).

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