

VI. Armed conflict in sub-Saharan Africa

IAN DAVIS, FLORIAN KRAMPE AND NEIL MELVIN

In 2017 there were seven active armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa: in Mali, Nigeria, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan.¹ In addition, a number of other countries experienced post-war conflict and tension or were flashpoints for potential armed conflict, including Burundi, Cameroon, the Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

In Cameroon long-standing tensions within the mainly English-speaking provinces worsened in 2017 and turned violent in September, while the far north continued to be affected by the regional Islamist insurgency of Boko Haram (also known as Islamic State in West Africa).² The symbolic declaration of independence by militant anglophone secessionist groups on 1 October set the stage for further violence in Cameroon.³ The conflict is creating a growing refugee crisis, with at least 7500 people fleeing into Nigeria since 1 October.⁴ In Kenya, following serious electoral violence, the year ended with major divisions and tensions between President Uhuru Kenyatta and the opposition leader, Raila Odinga.⁵ In Zimbabwe political tensions led to a military coup during November and the replacement of President Robert Mugabe, who has ruled the country since its independence in 1980, by his former vice-president, Emmerson Mnangagwa.⁶ Burundi, the Gambia, Lesotho and Sudan each hosted a multilateral peace operation in 2017.⁷

This section reviews developments in each of the seven active armed conflicts. Before doing that, it first outlines two general trends that can be identified in armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa.

¹ This chapter discusses armed conflicts in North Africa in section V.

² Atabong, A. B., 'The crisis in Cameroon's English-speaking regions has turned violent with bombings', *Quartz Africa*, 22 Sep. 2017; and Amnesty International, 'Cameroon: Seventeen killed following protests in anglophone regions', Press release, 2 Oct. 2017.

³ Iyare, T. and Essomba, F., 'In Nigeria and Cameroon, secessionist movements gain momentum', *New York Times*, 8 Oct. 2017; and International Crisis Group (ICG), *Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads*, Africa Report no. 250 (ICG: Brussels, 2 Aug. 2017).

⁴ 'Cameroon separatists kill four gendarmes as anglophone crisis worsens', Reuters, 18 Dec. 2017.

⁵ Kenyatta, U., 'Kenya deserves a strong and credible opposition', *Washington Times*, 18 Dec. 2017; Chepkwony, M., 'US pushing for Uhuru, Raila talks', *The Standard* (Nairobi), 20 Dec. 2017; and Kisika, S., 'Ten out of 92 killed in poll chaos were kids—report', *The Star* (Nairobi), 21 Dec. 2017.

⁶ 'Will Zimbabwe's new president make things better?', *The Economist*, 25 Nov. 2017; and International Crisis Group (ICG), *Zimbabwe's 'Military-Assisted Transition' and Prospects for Recovery*, Africa Briefing no. 134 (ICG: Brussels, 20 Dec. 2017).

⁷ On peacekeeping-related developments in these countries see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

Key general trends

Given sub-Saharan Africa's complexity and diversity, it is difficult to make generalizations about trends across the region. However, two broad developments can be identified. First, many conflicts overlap across states and regions as a result of transnational activities of violent Islamist groups, other armed groups and criminal networks. In many countries, and especially those in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions, these overlapping conflicts are linked to extreme poverty, instability, economic fragility and low resilience—situations that are further exacerbated by climate change, corruption, inadequate economic policies and mismanagement. Second, there also appears to be a growing internationalization of counterterrorism activities in Africa, led primarily by two external state actors—France and the United States.

Cross-border conflicts: The Sahel and Lake Chad crises

Following the 2012 crisis in Mali, the Sahel has witnessed an escalation in violent extremist activity and a burgeoning of trafficking and migratory networks.⁸ Historically, the region has suffered from weak governance, high youth unemployment, porous borders, drought, food insecurity and paltry development progress. The presence of the Islamic State group in Africa has added to instability. Islamic State has an estimated 6000 African foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria and could be looking to the Sahel for its next safe haven.⁹ Foreign interventions have failed to provide stability in the region (see below).¹⁰

The Lake Chad crisis is an example of the increasingly complex relationship between transnational security and climate change. The Lake Chad region lies to the south of the Sahara Desert, bordering Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Multiple factors such as unemployment, poverty and conflict interact with environmental change and degradation in the region around the lake. In the past 40 years Lake Chad has shrunk by 90 per cent.¹¹ Contributing factors include mismanagement of water

⁸ De Melo, J., 'Sahel faces poverty and conflict traps: A call for international action', Brookings Institute, 1 Dec. 2016; and Walther, O. J., *Wars and Conflicts in the Sahara-Sahel*, West African Papers no. 10 (OECD: Paris, Sep. 2017).

⁹ 'L'Union africaine redoute le retour de 6 000 combattants de l'Etat islamique sur le continent' [The African Union fears the return of 6000 Islamic State combatants to the continent], *Le Monde*, 11 Dec. 2017.

¹⁰ Sieff, K., 'The world's most dangerous UN mission', *Washington Post*, 17 Feb. 2017; G5 Sahel, Permanent Secretariat, *Résolution 00-01/2017 relative à la création d'une force conjointe du G5 Sahel* [Resolution on the creation of a joint G5 Sahel force], 6 Feb. 2017; and Hickendorff, A., Tobie, A. and Van der Lijn, J., 'Success of Joint Force Sahel depends on local actor engagement', Commentary, SIPRI, 18 Aug. 2017.

¹¹ Wirkus, L. and Volker, B., 'Transboundary water management on Africa's international rivers and lakes: Current state and experiences', eds W. Scheumann and S. Neubert, *Transboundary Water Management in Africa: Challenges for Development Cooperation*, Deutsches Institut für Entwick-

resources and prolonged severe droughts. In addition, the ongoing insurgency by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria (see below) further reduces both the livelihood and security of communities in the region. These factors have resulted in diminished livelihoods, extreme poverty, and exacerbated tensions between pastoralists, farmers and fishers.¹² As the Boko Haram insurgency spread from Nigeria across the region, the security situation deteriorated causing a massive humanitarian crisis and increasing cross-border displacement of populations.¹³

In March 2017 the United Nations Security Council recognized the significance of the Lake Chad crisis and unanimously adopted a resolution on terrorism and human rights violations in the Lake Chad Basin.¹⁴ In addition to identifying the insurgency by Boko Haram as a destabilizing factor, the resolution accepted the role of climate change in exacerbating human insecurity. However, the subsequent report by the UN Secretary-General was notably silent on climate and environmental change, although it does underscore the enormity of the current crisis in estimating that about 10.7 million people across the Lake Chad region currently need humanitarian assistance. This figure includes 8.5 million people in Nigeria, and 7.2 million people who face severe food insecurity, of which 4.7 million are located in the north-eastern Nigeria.¹⁵

Internationalized counterterrorism operations in Africa

Several external state actors are building a military presence in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶ Djibouti, located in the Horn of Africa, is the epicentre of this external military presence. China, France (which also hosts troops from Germany and Spain), Italy, Japan and the USA each have military bases in Djibouti.¹⁷ However, only a few states—primarily France and the USA—play a direct role in counterterrorism.

The total number of US troops in sub-Saharan Africa is still relatively small compared to other parts of the world—around 6000, of which about two-thirds are based in Djibouti. Although Djibouti was until recently the

lungspolitik (DIE) Studies no. 21 (DIE: Bonn, 2006), pp. 11–102; and Gao, H. et al., ‘On the causes of the shrinking of Lake Chad’, *Environmental Research Letters*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2011).

¹² United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region, S/2017/764, 7 Sep. 2017; and Thébaud, B. and Batterbury, S., ‘Sahel pastoralists: Opportunism, struggle, conflict and negotiation. a case study from eastern Niger’, *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Apr. 2001), pp. 69–78.

¹³ United Nations, S/2017/764 (note 12); and Angerbrandt, H., *Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region beyond Boko Haram*, Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) Policy Note no. 3 (NAI: Uppsala, June 2017).

¹⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 2349, 31 Mar. 2017.

¹⁵ United Nations, S/2017/764 (note 12).

¹⁶ See Sköns, E. and Ismail, O., SIPRI, *Security Activities of External Actors in Africa* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014).

¹⁷ Dahir, A. L., ‘How a tiny African country became the world’s key military base’, *Quartz Africa*, 18 Aug. 2017; and Olsen, G. R., ‘Transatlantic cooperation on terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Africa: The Franco-American axis’, *European Security*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2018), pp. 41–57.

only permanent and officially acknowledged US military base in the region, the US presence is more widespread than this suggests, largely as a result of the increased number of ‘advise, assist and train’ missions. These are low profile and ‘small footprint’ arrangements.¹⁸ The numbers and global reach of US special forces have grown considerably since the start of the ‘global war on terrorism’ in 2001, and the most significant increase in deployments in the last decade was in Africa.¹⁹ In 2017, with around 1700 US special forces soldiers operating in at least 33 African states, this was the second largest deployment of US special forces anywhere in the world, after the Middle East.²⁰ Another aspect of the increased US military presence in sub-Saharan Africa has been the stationing and use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, drones).²¹ At least two serious allegations of human rights violations in 2017 linked to the US military raised questions about oversight and the effectiveness of US counterterrorism efforts in sub-Saharan Africa.²²

French special forces and other military assets in sub-Saharan Africa are predominately dedicated to Operation Barkhane, which involves an estimated 3500–4000 troops targeting Islamic extremists in five states in the Sahel region: Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Niger.²³ France also has military personnel stationed in Djibouti (1450 personnel), Côte d’Ivoire (900 personnel), Gabon (350 personnel) and Senegal (350 personnel).²⁴

Unlike the USA and France, most external support by other states involves little or no direct engagement on the ground. Instead, these states currently focus on providing counterterrorism or counter-insurgency training and military assistance. The United Kingdom, for example, provides training and military assistance to Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, including to Kenyan forces combating al-Shabab in Somalia and Nigerian armed forces fighting Boko Haram.²⁵ China also has a growing security presence in sub-Saharan

¹⁸ Sköns, E., ‘The United States’, eds Sköns and Ismail (note 16); Myre, G., ‘The US military in Africa: A discreet presence in many places’, National Public Radio, 20 Oct. 2017; and Turse, N., ‘The US military is conducting secret missions all over Africa’, *Vice*, 25 Oct. 2017.

¹⁹ US special forces in sub-Saharan Africa fall under the responsibility of US Africa Command (AFRICOM), which also includes all of North Africa except Egypt.

²⁰ Turse, N., ‘The next Niger’, *Vice*, 29 Nov. 2017.

²¹ Cooper, H. and Schmitt, E., ‘Niger approves armed US drone flights, expanding Pentagon’s role in Africa’, *New York Times*, 30 Nov. 2017.

²² McClaughlin, E. and Martinez, L., ‘US military orders new investigation after report that special operations killed Somali civilians’, ABC News, 14 Dec. 2017; McLeary, P., ‘Pentagon investigating if US troops knew of torture at Cameroonian base’, *Foreign Policy*, 27 July 2017; and Goldbaum, C., ‘On the eve of Congressional hearings, new evidence about alleged US massacre in Somalia’, *Daily Beast*, 6 Dec. 2017.

²³ French Ministry of Defence, ‘Opération Barkhane’ [Operation Barkhane], 28 Dec. 2017.

²⁴ French Ministry of Defence, ‘Forces prépositionnées’ [Prepositioned forces], Oct. 2016.

²⁵ Tossini, J. V., ‘The British forces in Africa: The training unit in Kenya’, *UK Defence Journal*, 30 Mar. 2017; Tossini, J. V., ‘British forces in Nigeria: A long partnership in West Africa’, *UK Defence Journal*, 29 Aug. 2017; and British Government, ‘UK reiterates support to the fight against Boko Haram’, News release, 6 Oct. 2017.

Africa, which includes counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden (since 2008), the deployment of 2400 peacekeepers on UN operations, the opening of its first overseas military base, in Djibouti in 2016 (with a naval component added in 2017), and its status as one of the most important suppliers of conventional arms.²⁶ It also provides military capacity-building programmes, including in counterterrorism.²⁷

Armed conflict in the Central African Republic

The Central African Republic has experienced inter-religious and inter-communal violence and hostilities since 2013. Séléka—an armed group which consists mostly of Muslims—seized power in March 2013. It was opposed by the Anti-balaka, an armed group which consists mostly of Christians. In 2014 Séléka gave into international pressure and handed power to a transitional government. However, violence continued and the country was effectively partitioned despite the presence of a French operation (which withdrew in October 2016) and a UN peace operation, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA).²⁸ Since 2014 the country has been undergoing an internationally supervised transition involving a constitutional referendum as well as presidential and parliamentary elections.²⁹

In February 2017 fighting escalated between two rival factions within Séléka—the Popular Front for the Renaissance of CAR (Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique, FPRC) and the Union for Peace in CAR (Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique, UPC)—and a UN attack helicopter fired on a FPRC militia as it approached the town of Bambari.³⁰ In May violence involving several armed groups from both the Anti-balaka and Séléka increased in the south, east and north-west, leaving at least 300 people dead and an estimated 100 000 displaced. UN peacekeepers were also targeted in some of the attacks.³¹

²⁶ On China's arms transfers to sub-Saharan Africa see chapter 5, section I, in this volume.

²⁷ 'Djibouti: Chinese troops depart for first overseas military base', BBC News, 12 July 2017; Duchâtel, M., Gowan, R., and Lafont-Rapnouil, M., *Into Africa: China's Global Security Shift*, Policy Brief no. 179 (European Council on Foreign Relations: London, June 2016); and Nantulya, P., 'Pursuing the China dream through Africa: Five elements of China's Africa strategy', Africa Center for Strategoc Studies, 6 Apr. 2017.

²⁸ On MINUSCA see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

²⁹ 'Central African Republic country profile', BBC News, 21 Sep. 2017; and International Crisis Group (ICG), *Central African Republic: The Roots of Violence*, Africa Report no. 230 (ICG: Brussels, 21 Sep. 2015).

³⁰ 'UN air operation disperses Central African Republic militia', Reuters, 26 Feb. 2017.

³¹ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic*, Africa Report no. 253 (ICG: Brussels, 28 Sep. 2017); 'Militia violence in Central African Republic leaves 300 dead', Reuters, 25 May 2017; and 'Armed group attacks civilians, UN in Central African Republic overnight; peacekeeper killed', UN News Centre, 13 May 2017.

Among the peace processes, a series of parallel mediation efforts were launched in 2017 by the African Union (AU), some other African states, including Angola and Chad, and the Community Sant'Egidio, part of the Roman Catholic Church. As part of a merged peace process that combined the earlier parallel efforts, a meeting with armed groups in Rome resulted in a 'political peace agreement' in June 2017 between the government and 13 of the 14 armed groups.³² However, the agreement was soon disrupted by a resumption of violence.³³ In July the AU and partners (under the merged peace process) produced a new road map for peace and reconciliation in CAR.³⁴

In August 2017 violence worsened in the north and east between Anti-balaka militants and the UPC, which had now left Séléka. This violence left over 100 people dead and aid agencies suspended their operations after their workers were targeted by armed groups.³⁵ The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, warned the UN Security Council on 7 August that the situation displayed 'warning signs of genocide' and called for additional troops for MINUSCA.³⁶ In November MINUSCA's mandate was extended until 15 November 2018 and an extra 900 military personnel were added to the mission.³⁷

The conflict continued to deteriorate. By the end of October the number of internally displaced people had increased to over 600 000 and a further 538 000 people were refugees in neighbouring countries—in total about a quarter of the population had been displaced.³⁸ However, only 40.7 per cent of the \$497.3 million humanitarian response plan for CAR agreed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was funded in

³² Accord politique pour la paix en République centrafricaine [Political agreement for peace in the Central African Republic], Comunità di Sant'Egidio, [19 June 2017]; International Crisis Group (note 31), pp. 14–23; and Reuters, 'Central African Republic foes sign church-mediated peace accord', *Voice of America*, 19 June 2017.

³³ International Crisis Group (note 31).

³⁴ 'African Union adopts new crisis resolution roadmap for CAR', *Agence de Presse Africaine*, 19 July 2017.

³⁵ Ratcliff, R., '“People are dying”: Violence forces aid workers out of Central African Republic', *The Guardian*, 1 Sep. 2017.

³⁶ O'Brien, S., UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, 'Statement to member states on his 16–21 July 2017 mission to the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo', UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 7 Aug. 2017.

³⁷ 'Central African Republic: UN mission mandate extended, additional “blue helmets” authorized', UN News Centre, 15 Nov. 2017.

³⁸ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Refugees from the Central African Republic', UNHCR Operational Data Portal.

2017.³⁹ By the end of 2017, the possibility of a resumption of a civil war in CAR remained a growing possibility.⁴⁰

Armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The recent history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is dominated by civil war and corruption, fuelled by competition over the country's vast mineral wealth. The 1998–2003 Second Congo War drew in the armed forces of at least six countries and its death toll has been estimated to be as high as 5.4 million (although that is a controversial statistic), either as a direct result of fighting or because of disease and malnutrition.⁴¹ Since 2003 conflict in the DRC has persisted in the east, where there are still dozens of armed groups, and UN peace operations have been deployed since 2000.⁴² Joseph Kabila, who has been president since 2001, won two consecutive elections, in 2006 and 2011.

Elections were due to take place in December 2016, at the end of Kabila's final term. However, as a result of a deal brokered by the Catholic Church in the DRC and signed on 31 December 2016, elections did not take place. Under the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement (also known as the Saint Sylvester agreement), Kabila remained in office and elections were postponed until late 2017; he was expected to rule in partnership with the opposition in a transitional power-sharing arrangement; and an oversight mechanism and platform for further talks, the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process (Conseil National de Suivi de l'Accord et du processus électoral, CNSA), was to be created.⁴³ The uncertainty that surrounded the implementation of the agreement increased following the death of the main opposition leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, on 1 February 2017.⁴⁴ Following the failure of a new round of negotiations between the opposition and the Alliance for the Presidential Majority, the largest party in the National Assembly, in March the Catholic Church

³⁹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Central African Republic 2017 (humanitarian response plan)', Financial Tracking Service, [n.d.]; and "'Leave no stone unturned" to secure aid funding for Central African Republic, senior UN official urges', UN News Centre, 9 Nov. 2017.

⁴⁰ Vinograd, C., 'The Central African Republic could be on the brink of a bloodbath', *Washington Post*, 10 Oct. 2017.

⁴¹ The estimate of 5.4 million was made by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a humanitarian non-governmental organization. It was later challenged as being "far too high" by the Human Security Report project. International Rescue Committee (IRC), *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An Ongoing Crisis* (IRC: New York, 2006), p. 16; and 'DR Congo war deaths "exaggerated"', BBC News, 20 Jan. 2010.

⁴² On the peace operation in the DRC see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

⁴³ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Time for Concerted Action in DR Congo*, Africa Report no. 257 (ICG: Brussels, 4 Dec. 2017).

⁴⁴ Hoebeke, H. and Moncrieff, R., 'What does opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi's death mean for DR Congo's road to elections', *African Arguments*, 3 Feb. 2017.

withdrew from its mediating role.⁴⁵ Although talks continued, achieving a consensus on critical aspects of governing arrangements seemed unlikely without the involvement of religious leaders.

Security forces clashed with opposition groups in several provinces in February 2017, with the worst violence involving the Kamuina Nsapu militia in Kasai province, where at least 100 people were killed.⁴⁶ Violence in Kasai continued in March, with 39 police officers reportedly killed in an ambush.⁴⁷ Two UN experts investigating the violence were also killed.⁴⁸ The violence in Kasai intensified from March to August. About 5000 people were killed in the conflict in Kasai in the 12 months to the end of August, and roughly 1.5 million people were displaced (out of a total of 4.1 million displaced in the country).⁴⁹ By late October almost half of the displaced people had returned home as the violence in Kasai began to wane.⁵⁰ However, violence between government forces and militia in the areas near the DRC's eastern borders with Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda began to increase.

In November 2017 it was announced that presidential elections were rescheduled to 23 December 2018.⁵¹ By the end of the year, Kabila's regime had achieved a 'non-consensual' implementation of the Saint Sylvester agreement: it continued to control the government, the CNSA and the electoral commission.⁵² In addition to the continuing political impasse, violence was rising in several provinces, resulting in a growing humanitarian crisis.⁵³ An estimated 3.2 million people continued to suffer from severe food insecurity in Kasai and 762 000 people were internally displaced. An estimated 2 million people were internally displaced in North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika provinces.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ Catholic News Service, 'Bishops in Democratic Republic of Congo withdraw from peace talks', *Catholic Herald*, 28 Mar. 2017.

⁴⁶ 'Reported killings in DR Congo town could amount to serious rights violations—UN rights arm', UN News Centre, 14 Feb. 2017.

⁴⁷ Akwei, I, 'DRC police accuses rebels of killing 39 officers, AU calls for restraint', *Africa News*, 28 Mar. 2017.

⁴⁸ De Freytas-Tamura, K. and Sengupta, S., 'For 2 experts killed in Congo, UN provided little training and no protection', *New York Times*, 20 May 2017.

⁴⁹ Burke, J., 'Congo violence fuels fears of return to 90s bloodbath', *The Guardian*, 30 June 2017; International Crisis Group (note 43); and Oxfam, 'Congo's Cinderella crisis: Horrific suffering overlooked in largest displacement crisis of 2017', Press release, 1 Sep. 2017.

⁵⁰ 'Half of central Congo's 1.5 million displaced people have returned', Reuters, 23 Oct. 2017.

⁵¹ Congolese National Independent Electoral Commission (Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante, CENI), Décision no. 065/CENI/BUR/17 du 05 Novembre 2017 portant publication du calendrier des élections présidentielle, législatives, provinciales, urbaines, municipales et locales [Decision no. 065/CENI/BUR/17 of 5 Nov. 2017 on the publication of the calendar of presidential, legislative, provincial, urban, municipal and local elections], 5 Nov. 2017.

⁵² International Crisis Group (note 43).

⁵³ 'The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): A dangerous stalemate', Commentary, International Crisis Group, 26 Oct. 2017; and Ataman, D., 'The art of resilience in the Democratic Republic of the Congo', *Huffington Post*, 6 Oct. 2017.

⁵⁴ Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), 'Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—Conflict', ETC Situation Report no. 1, Reporting period 20 Nov. 2017–5 Dec. 2017.

In December, 12 members of a Congolese militia group, including a member of the South Kivu provincial assembly who masterminded the attacks between 2013–16, were convicted of raping young girls in a landmark case in the fight against impunity for sexual violence crimes. The trial lasted just over a month and was held in a mobile military court in Kavumu, South Kivu, where the crimes were committed, so that locals could attend.⁵⁵

Armed conflict in Ethiopia

During 2017 Ethiopia experienced a wave of ethno-political violence, which had first begun in 2014. The immediate source of the violence lies in a deterioration of interethnic relations in the country, most notably involving the largest ethnic communities: the Oromo, the Amhara and the Somali. The violence consists of conflict between these communities and the central government and paramilitary groups linked to the government. The governing Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is a coalition dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which represents the Tigray ethnic community. Violent unrest in Ethiopia may be viewed as a product of ethnic federalism introduced in 1994 by the EPRDF. Over subsequent decades, the new constitutional order promoted a politicization of ethnic identities and fostered territorial competition and disputes and conflicts over resources, water and land.⁵⁶

Oromia region has been the centre of much of this ethnic violence. This reflects the deep-seated grievances and sense of marginalization among the Oromo, the country's largest ethnic group, which is estimated to make up about one-third of the population.⁵⁷ The next largest group, the Amhara, makes up about one-quarter of the population.⁵⁸

Protests that started in western Oromia in April 2014 gained momentum and spread, notably to Amhara region in July 2016.⁵⁹ The protests also widened to combine local ethnic complaints, grievances about the political domination of the ruling EPRDF and restrictions on the majority ethnic communities.⁶⁰ Government security forces responded to the largely peaceful demonstrations with violence, leading to the deaths of an estimated

⁵⁵ Maclean, R., 'Congolese fighters convicted of raping young girls in landmark case', *The Guardian*, 13 Dec. 2017.

⁵⁶ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and Its Discontents*, Africa Report no. 153 (ICG: Brussels, 4 Sep. 2009).

⁵⁷ Woldemariam, Y., 'What is behind the Oromo rebellion in Ethiopia?', *Huffington Post*, 21 Dec. 2015.

⁵⁸ US Central Intelligence Agency, 'Ethiopia', *World Factbook*, 3 Jan. 2018.

⁵⁹ Pinaud, M., Raleigh, C. and Moody, J., 'Popular mobilisation in Ethiopia: An investigation of activity from November 2015 to May 2017', *Country Report, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)*, June 2017.

⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, 'Ethiopia', *World Report 2017* (Seven Stories Press: New York, 2017), pp. 251–56.

500 people.⁶¹ In October 2016, as clashes escalated, the government imposed a state of emergency.

Early in 2017 the Liyu Police, a paramilitary group affiliated with the government of Somali region in eastern Ethiopia, conducted raids in eastern and southern Oromia, leading to hundreds of people being killed.⁶² A government commission estimated that, by mid-2017, a total of 900 people had been killed since the onset of the unrest, but it blamed a lot of the violence on opposition groups.⁶³ The state of emergency was lifted in July 2017, but protests against continued paramilitary raids led to renewed violence and dozens of deaths.⁶⁴ Fighting escalated as ethnic Somali and Oromo communities along the regional administrative border clashed over an unresolved territorial dispute, reportedly leading to hundreds of deaths between October and December.⁶⁵

Tens of thousands fled Somali and Oromia regions in one of Ethiopia's largest internal population displacements.⁶⁶ OCHA reported in early 2018 that 1 million people had been displaced due to conflict along the Oromia–Somali border (nearly 700 000 in 2017 alone).⁶⁷ Amid the ongoing conflict, there were signs of a growing struggle within the EPRDF over whether to introduce political reforms in the country.⁶⁸

Armed conflict in Mali

The conflict in Mali stems from the pursuit of self-determination by the Tuareg, an ethnic group that principally inhabits the Sahara Desert in a vast area that includes south-western Libya, southern Algeria, the northern Saharan regions of Mali and parts of Niger and Burkina Faso. The Tuareg separatists form part of an armed coalition, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad, CMA), which has been involved in regularly uprisings or rebellions against the Platform, an opposing coalition that supports national unity. Rebellions in 2012, fuelled by the post-2011 influx of fighters from Libya, propelled the secular nationalist movement to evolve into an Islamist insurgency. Since then, the conflict

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch (note 60).

⁶² 'What is behind clashes in Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regions?', BBC News, 18 Sep. 2017.

⁶³ 'Report: 669 killed in Ethiopia violence since August', Al Jazeera, 18 Apr. 2017.

⁶⁴ Fuller, B., 'Ethiopia—November 2017 update', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 14 Nov. 2017; and Feleke, L., 'Analysis of rising death toll, displacement & protests in east, south & south east Ethiopia. What lies beneath?', Ethiopia Observatory, 15 Sep. 2017.

⁶⁵ Jeffrey, J., 'Ethnic violence in Ethiopia leaves deep wounds', Deutsche Welle, 5 Dec. 2017; and Schemm, P., "'They started to burn our houses': Ethnic strife in Ethiopia threatens a key US ally', *Washington Post*, 20 Oct. 2017.

⁶⁶ 'What is behind clashes in Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regions?' (note 62).

⁶⁷ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'Ethiopia'.

⁶⁸ 'Ethiopia's ruling coalition sweats over insecurity as Oromo, Amhara MPs protest', Africa News, 21 Dec. 2017.

has continued to spiral with a proliferation of armed groups in northern and central Mali seeking to pursue the interests of various ethnic, religious or criminal factions.

Operation Serval, a 2013 French military intervention in collaboration with the Malian Government, dispersed the extremist groups to remote desert strongholds. With the creation in April 2013 of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the international intervention in Mali was effectively divided between two military missions: the UN peace operation and Operation Serval (which was replaced by Operation Barkhane, a regional French-led counterterrorism effort, in September 2014).⁶⁹

Despite a UN-sponsored ceasefire and peace agreement with some Tuareg separatists in 2015—the fifth between the Malian Government and the Tuareg-led armed movement—significant challenges remained.⁷⁰ At the start of 2017 Tuareg rebels remained sporadically active, while in northern and central Mali the Islamist insurgency continued with attacks by al-Qaeda-linked militants. In January 2017 one such group, al-Mourabitoun, killed at least 47 people with a car bomb at a military camp in Gao in northern Mali, which housed government troops and former rebels brought together as part of the 2015 peace agreement.⁷¹

In February the Follow-Up Committee, an international mediation team led by the Algerian Foreign Minister, Ramtane Lamamra, gave new momentum to the peace process in three key ways. First, the committee launched a joint patrol on 23 February in Gao comprised of government forces, the Platform and the CMA.⁷² The latter two armed groups had boycotted the committee in January, citing a lack of inclusiveness. Plans for further joint patrols in Kidal, also in the north, were derailed after violence between the Platform and the CMA broke out again but were then rescheduled after a ceasefire in September.⁷³

Second, an agreement was reached on the composition of interim authorities in five regions of northern Mali. These interim authorities were installed in Kidal on 28 February (but without representatives from the Platform), in Gao and Ménaka on 2 March, and in Timbuktu and Taoudenni on 20 April.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Charbonneau, B., 'Intervention in Mali: Building peace between peacekeeping and counterterrorism', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Aug. 2017); and Sieff (note 10). On the role of MINUSMA see also chapter 3, sections I and II, in this volume.

⁷⁰ For a chronology of the crisis in Mali and the development of the peace process see Sköns, E., 'The implementation of the peace process in Mali: A complex case of peacebuilding', *SIPRI Yearbook 2016*, pp. 159–88.

⁷¹ 'Dozens killed in suicide attack on Gao military camp in northern Mali', France 24, 18 Jan. 2017.

⁷² Anara, S. A., 'Mali soldiers, armed groups hold first joint patrol in northern town', Reuters, 23 Feb. 2017.

⁷³ 'New indefinite ceasefire between CMA and GATIA', GardaWorld, 22 Sep. 2017.

⁷⁴ United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, S/2017/811, 28 Sep. 2017.

Third, the Conference for National Harmony took place from 27 March to 2 April. Some armed groups and opposition political parties initially announced that they would boycott the conference, but they later decided to participate. The participants contributed to the creation of a charter for peace, unity and national reconciliation, which records some of the key root causes of the crisis and renews commitment towards their resolution.⁷⁵

In June violence in northern Mali continued to hinder the implementation of the peace agreement and ethnic violence erupted again in central Mali. Security concerns had become as fraught as those in the north.⁷⁶ During this time, farmers from the Dogon ethnic group and pastoralist Fulani communities clashed in several villages in the Mopti region in central Mali, leaving 30 people dead.⁷⁷ In July fighting between the CMA and the Self-Defence Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies (Groupe Aurodéfense Tuareg Imghad et Alliés, GATIA), a member of the Platform, resumed in Kidal.⁷⁸

In terms of the peace process, on 5 September the UN Security Council established a sanctions regime on Mali consisting of a travel ban and assets freeze on individuals and entities deemed to be impeding the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement.⁷⁹ Soon after, on 20 September, the CMA and the Platform came to an agreement that included a ceasefire, the release of prisoners of war and other confidence-building measures. Reconciliation talks that took place on 5–11 October in Anéfis, Kidal region, established additional measures. First, the two parties agreed on a road map for the implementation of the agreement of 20 September and, second, they established reconciliation committees to visit the northern regions to disseminate details of the latest agreement.⁸⁰

At the end of the year, the peace process in Mali remained fragile, with violent Islamist extremists and armed rebel groups continuing to launch attacks on Malian Government forces and UN peacekeepers. Citing an unstable atmosphere, the government decided to postpone local and regional elections originally scheduled for December 2017 until April 2018.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Boutellis, A. and Zahar, M.-J., 'Mali: Two years after Bamako agreement, what peace is there to keep?', IPI Global Observatory, International Peace Institute (IPI), 22 June 2017; and United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, S/2017/271, 30 Mar. 2017.

⁷⁶ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?*, Africa Report no. 238 (ICG: Brussels, 6 July 2016); and Tobie, A., 'Central Mali: Violence, local perspectives and diverging narratives', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2017/5, Dec. 2017.

⁷⁷ Agence France-Presse, 'Over 30 killed in ethnic violence in central Mali', *Indian Express*, 20 June 2017.

⁷⁸ Diallo, T., 'Tuareg separatists seize north Mali town in battle', Reuters, 12 July 2017.

⁷⁹ United Nations, Security Council, 'Security Council imposes sanctions on those derailing Mali peace process, unanimously adopting Resolution 2374 (2017)', SC/12979, 5 Sep. 2017; and UN Security Council Resolution 2374, 5 Sep. 2017.

⁸⁰ United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, S/2017/1105, 26 Dec. 2017, p. 2.

⁸¹ United Nations, S/2017/1105 (note 80).

Presidential elections are also due to take place in July 2018 and elections to the National Assembly in December.

Armed conflict in Nigeria

After a series of military regimes, Nigeria has had a civilian elected leadership since 1999. However, the country continued to suffer from ethnic and religious divisions. These divisions were exacerbated by the insurgent group Boko Haram, which first emerged in 2002 and began its violent uprising in 2009, and growing separatist aspirations in eastern Nigeria.⁸² In addition, Nigeria has suffered from periodic episodes of religious violence between Christians and Muslims since the country's return to democracy.⁸³

Throughout 2017 Boko Haram's eight-year-long insurgency continued, despite Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari's declaration in December 2016 that the group had been defeated.⁸⁴ In May 2017, 82 of the 276 school-girls abducted by Boko Haram from Chibok, Borno state, in 2014 were freed in a prisoner exchange.⁸⁵ With government security forces concentrating their attacks on remaining Boko Haram strongholds, the group has responded by relying more heavily on suicide attacks against security forces and civilians.⁸⁶ In November, for example, Boko Haram increased the intensity of attacks in the north-east, causing a spike in civilian casualties, including a suicide attack at a mosque in Kano that killed at least 50 people.⁸⁷ Moreover, Boko Haram has increasingly used women and children to carry out suicide attacks. Between January and August 2017, it used 83 children as suicide bombers, a fourfold increase since 2016.⁸⁸

Insecurity in Nigeria is also fuelled by growing economic difficulties. Notably, violent conflicts between nomadic herders and sedentary farming communities have escalated in recent years. Tensions deepened further in 2017 when new legislation was adopted on cattle grazing in Benue and

⁸² Obasi, N., 'Nigeria's Biafran separatist upsurge', Commentary, International Crisis Group, 4 Dec. 2015.

⁸³ Sampson, I. T., 'Religious violence in Nigeria', *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1 Apr. 2012).

⁸⁴ Gaffey, C., 'Nigeria's president says Boko Haram is finished as a fighting force', *Newsweek*, 7 Dec. 2016.

⁸⁵ 'Nigeria Chibok girls: Eighty-two freed by Boko Haram', BBC News, 7 May 2017.

⁸⁶ Ola, L. and Kingimi, A., 'Suicide bombers kill 12 in Nigeria's Borno state—police', Reuters, 19 June 2017; and Hickie, S., Abbott, C. and Clarke, M., *Remote Warfare and the Boko Haram Insurgency* (Oxford Research Group: London, Jan. 2018), p. 25.

⁸⁷ Maclean, R., 'Nigeria mosque attack: Suicide bomber kills dozens', *The Guardian*, 21 Nov. 2017.

⁸⁸ Nebehay, S. and Akwagyiram, A., 'Boko Haram Nigerian child bombings this year are quadruple 2016's: UNICEF', Reuters, 22 Aug. 2017; and ; and 'Women suicide bombers kill 27 in north-east Nigeria', *The Guardian*, 16 Aug. 2017.

Taraba states.⁸⁹ This culminated in an attack on 20 November by local vigilantes on herder settlements in Adamawa state that killed about 60 people.⁹⁰

Armed conflict in Somalia

The current phase of civil war in Somalia, which stems from 2009, involves a conflict between the Federal Government of Somalia with the support of an AU peace operation—the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)—and violent Islamist groups, notably al-Shabab.⁹¹ Somalia has also been affected by inter-clan fighting, and violence between competing clans and federal and some state governments, including the breakaway region of Somaliland and the autonomous region of Puntland.⁹²

Events in 2017 were dominated by ongoing efforts by the Federal Government and the AU, the European Union, the UN and the USA to stabilize the country politically, to improve security and to resist violent Islamist groups, notably al-Shabab. In January at least 28 people were killed in an al-Shabab attack on a hotel in Mogadishu, and over 50 Kenyan troops were killed in an al-Shabab raid on an AMISOM base in southern Somalia.⁹³ At least 34 people were killed and about 50 people were injured in early February by a car bomb at a market in Mogadishu. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, although al-Shabab militants were suspected of carrying it out.⁹⁴

Also in February, Mohamed Abdullahi ‘Farmajo’ Mohamed, a former prime minister, was elected president for a four-year term after defeating the incumbent, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The election of Farmajo was perceived as an important step towards stabilizing Somalia politically and tackling the country’s security crisis.⁹⁵ The presidential elections were held under a new parliamentary electoral college system that was introduced due to concerns about the viability of conducting a safe nationwide poll. In

⁸⁹ International Crisis Group, ‘Watch List 2017: Second update’, 20 July 2017, pp. 3–6. See also Johnson, I. and Olaniyan, A., ‘The politics of renewed quest for a Biafra republic in Nigeria’, *Defense & Security Analysis*, vol. 33, no. 4 (Oct. 2017), pp. 320–32.

⁹⁰ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Herders against Farmers: Nigeria’s Expanding Deadly Conflict*, Africa Report no. 252 (ICG: Brussels, 19 Sep. 2017); and Anwar, K. R., ‘60 Adamawa Fulani killed in suspected ethnic attack’, *Daily Trust* (Abuja), 21 Nov. 2017.

⁹¹ On the role of AMISON in Somalia see chapter 3, section II, in this volume. On the UN arms embargo on Somalia see chapter 10, section II, in this volume.

⁹² Loubser, H-M. and Solomon, H., ‘Responding to state failure in Somalia’, *Africa Review*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2014), pp. 1–17; and ‘Galkayo and Somalia’s dangerous faultlines’, International Crisis Group, *Commentary*, 10 Dec. 2015.

⁹³ Sheikh, A. and Omar, F., ‘Somali militants ram car bomb into hotel, killing 28’, Reuters, 25 Jan. 2017; and Burke, J., ‘Witnesses say dozens killed in al-Shabaab attack on Kenyan troops’, *The Guardian*, 27 Jan. 2017.

⁹⁴ ‘Somalia Mogadishu car bomb: At least 34 people killed’, BBC News, 9 Feb. 2017.

⁹⁵ Burke, J., ‘Somalis greet “new dawn” as US dual national wins presidency’, *The Guardian*, 8 Feb. 2017; and Fantaye, D. (ed.), ‘2017 elections: Making Somalia great again?’, *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Jan–Feb. 2017).

April Farmajo negotiated an agreement between the Federal Government and Federal Member States on a new security architecture, announced a 60-day amnesty for al-Shabab militants and offered to open discussions with the movement's leadership.⁹⁶ While about 50 militants surrendered following the amnesty, the core of al-Shabab's leadership remained united. They responded with a campaign of devastating attacks in south-central Somalia and extended their reach into other regions of the country.⁹⁷ In June al-Shabab demonstrated their commitment to expand their presence from southern and central Somalia with an attack on a military base in Puntland that left at least 70 people dead.⁹⁸

President Farmajo's other policies included renewed efforts to establish a Somali National Army (SNA) in order to initiate a staged withdrawal of AMISOM. At a conference convened in London in May 2017, Somalia agreed a security pact with international donors, under which, support would be provided to train Somalia's army and police.⁹⁹

In September Turkey opened a military training base in Mogadishu to provide some of this support. It is Turkey's largest overseas military base and functions to train soldiers from the SNA.¹⁰⁰ By the end of the year, however, the replacement of AMISOM with the SNA was facing severe challenges as a result of political infighting between the federal and regional governments, widespread corruption and increased attacks by al-Shabab.¹⁰¹ In September an attack on an SNA base left 15 people dead, and al-Shabab also increased attacks in Mogadishu, most notably with a truck bomb attack on 14 October that was estimated to have killed 587 people.¹⁰²

In April the USA deployed an estimated 500 troops to Somalia to support the Somali Government's campaign against al-Shabab. This is the first time since 1994 that US regular forces have been sent to the country.¹⁰³ In May a member of US special forces was killed in combat with al-Shabab, marking

⁹⁶ 'Al-Shabab fighters offered amnesty as new Somali president declares war', BBC News, 6 Apr. 2017.

⁹⁷ Mahmood, O. S., 'Al-Shabaab holds its ground against Somalia's amnesty deal', Institute for Security Studies, 4 Aug. 2017.

⁹⁸ 'Al-Shabab attack Puntland army base leaves scores dead', Al Jazeera, 8 June 2017.

⁹⁹ British Department for International Development, British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and British Ministry of Defence, 'Security pact', London Somalia Conference, 11 May 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Hussein, A. and Coskun, O., 'Turkey opens military base in Mogadishu to train Somali soldiers', Reuters, 30 Sep. 2017.

¹⁰¹ Williams, P. D., 'Somalia's African Union mission has a new exit strategy. But can troops actually leave?', *Washington Post*, 30 Nov. 2017.

¹⁰² Omar, F. and Sheikh A., 'Militants attack Somali military base, kill at least 15', Reuters, 29 Sep. 2017. A Somali committee investigating the 14 Oct. attack initially gave a death toll of 358 before revising it to 512 in Dec. 2017. In the committee's final report the figure was raised to 587. See Sullivan, E., 'Mogadishu truck bomb's death toll now tops 500, probe committee says', National Public Radio, 2 Dec. 2017; and 'Committee: 587 dead in Oct 14 terror attack', *Hiiraan Online*, 5 Mar. 2018.

¹⁰³ 'US troops to help Somalia fight al-Shabab', BBC News, 14 Apr. 2017; and Vandiver, J., 'US escalates Somalia fight while Pentagon downplays buildup', *Stars and Stripes*, 17 Nov. 2017.

the first US casualty in combat in Somalia since 18 special forces personnel were killed in Mogadishu in 1993.¹⁰⁴ During 2017 the US also intensified its air strikes in Somalia. By early December, 30 air strikes had been carried out, twice as many as in 2016. An air strike in November is reported to have killed over 100 al-Shabab militants.¹⁰⁵ As the USA increased its military activity it assessed that it would take a further two years to defeat al-Shabab.¹⁰⁶

In March the USA relaxed its combat rules for Somalia. Principally, it identified parts of Somalia as an 'area of active hostilities', which gives US commanders greater latitude to carry out offensive air strikes and raids by ground troops against al-Shabab militants. Where such war zone targeting rules apply there is generally an increased risk of civilian casualties.¹⁰⁷ At the end of 2017 discussions were reported to be under way on further changes to the US combat guidelines as a part of the escalating conflict with al-Shabab.¹⁰⁸ Renewed focus on combat rules occurred as reports emerged of possible civilian casualties as a result of a military raid involving US forces in August.¹⁰⁹ Ongoing concerns regarding corruption within the Somali security forces also led the USA to suspend some of its food and fuel assistance to the military in December.¹¹⁰

While al-Shabab posed the largest challenge to the Somali Government, Islamic State was also viewed as a threat to the country due to a potential influx of fighters from Iraq and Syria. During 2017 Islamic State was reported by the UN to be building its operations in Somalia.¹¹¹ Most notably, it established a presence within Puntland, where it was first reported to be active in 2016.¹¹² During the year, Islamic State claimed responsibility for attacks in Somalia as it sought to displace al-Shabab.¹¹³ In November, for the

¹⁰⁴ Stewart, P. and Sheikh, A., 'US Navy SEAL killed in Somalia raid on militant compound', Reuters, 5 May 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Starr, B. and Browne, R., 'US airstrike in Somalia kills more than 100 al-Shabab militants', CNN, 21 Nov. 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Savage, C. and Schmitt, E., 'Pentagon foresees at least two more years of combat in Somalia', *New York Times*, 10 Dec. 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Savage, C. and Schmitt, E., 'Trump eases combat rules in Somalia intended to protect civilians', *New York Times*, 30 Mar. 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Savage and Schmitt (note 107).

¹⁰⁹ Vandiver, J., 'AFRICOM seeks probe into civilian deaths in Somalia raid', *Stars and Stripes*, 13 Dec. 2017; and Kelley, K. J., 'US lawmaker presses Pentagon on reports of civilian massacre in Somalia', *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 9 Dec. 2017.

¹¹⁰ Houreld, K., 'US suspends aid to Somalia's battered military over graft', Reuters, 14 Dec. 2017.

¹¹¹ 'Islamic State "significantly growing" in Somalia: UN report', *The New Arab*, 11 Nov. 2017; and United Nations, Security Council, Report on Somalia of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, S/2017/924, 2 Nov. 2017.

¹¹² 'The Islamic State threat in Somalia's Puntland state', Commentary, International Crisis Group 17 Nov. 2016.

¹¹³ Gaffey, C., 'ISIS claims Somali suicide attack as it vies with al-Shabab for recognition', *Newsweek*, 24 May 2017.

first time, the US military conducted two air strikes against Islamic State in Puntland.¹¹⁴

As 2017 came to an end, efforts to stabilize the country were further disrupted by attacks by al-Shabab. In December at least 18 police officers were killed by an assault on the police academy in Mogadishu.¹¹⁵ As a result of the violence during the year, Somalia was the most conflict-affected country in sub-Saharan Africa in the first nine months of 2017, with twice as many violent incidents as South Sudan, the next most violent state.¹¹⁶ In December a UN report highlighted the high level of violence towards civilians, mostly from al-Shabab, but also involving AMISOM forces.¹¹⁷

Armed conflict in South Sudan

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011 after a 2005 agreement that ended one of Africa's longest-running civil wars. A post-independence civil war in 2013–15 displaced 2.2 million people and, despite a 2015 peace agreement, which stipulated a power-sharing government, the legacy of conflict continues to threaten one of the world's newest countries.

The armed conflict is waged primarily between two groups—the Government of South Sudan and its allies, led by Salva Kiir (an ethnic Dinka), and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) and the Nuer White Army, led by former vice-president Riek Machar (an ethnic Nuer). Although the civil war has been fought largely between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups, underlying conflict dynamics vary considerably across the country and opposition groups have become more fractured and localized.¹¹⁸

In February 2017 the UN declared a famine in South Sudan as a result of the ongoing armed conflict and collapsing economy.¹¹⁹ As of April 2017 the conflict among the different factions had resulted in over 1.9 million internally displaced people, with 224 000 fleeing to bases of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and 1.6 million refugees in neighbouring countries. This

¹¹⁴ 'US launches air strikes against Isis fighters in Somalia for first time', *The Independent*, 3 Nov. 2017.

¹¹⁵ 'Somalia suicide bomber kills police at Mogadishu academy', BBC News, 14 Dec. 2017.

¹¹⁶ As well as the highest number of organized violent events (1537 events), Somalia had the highest number of fatalities (3287 fatalities) in 2017. South Sudan had 686 organized violent events. Kishi, R., 'Somalia—September 2017 update', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 22 Sep. 2017.

¹¹⁷ Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Somalia conflict exacting terrible toll on civilians—UN report Al Shabaab responsible for most civilian casualties', 11 Dec. 2017; and Kelley, K. J., 'Kenya disputes UN claim that KDF killed 40 Somali civilians', *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 11 Dec. 2017.

¹¹⁸ Kalpakian, J. V., 'Peace agreements in a near-permanent civil war: Learning from Sudan and South Sudan', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2017), p. 11; and International Crisis Group, 'Instruments of pain (II): Conflict and famine in South Sudan', Crisis Group Africa Briefing no. 124, 26 Apr. 2017.

¹¹⁹ Quinn, B., 'Famine declared in South Sudan', *The Guardian*, 20 Feb. 2017.

represents the largest national exodus in sub-Saharan Africa in 20 years.¹²⁰ According to Payton Knopf of the United States Institute of Peace, five civil wars are now unfolding within the country's broader conflict: 'a war of resistance against Kiir's regime in Juba by the population of the surrounding Greater Equatoria region; a land contest between the Dinka and the Shilluk in Upper Nile; an intra-Nuer war in Unity; a drive to establish Dinka primacy in Greater Bahr el Ghazal; and diversionary "crises of convenience" in Lakes and Jonglei that have been exploited by Kiir and his allies'.¹²¹

In May President Kiir declared a unilateral ceasefire and launched a national dialogue process.¹²² Nevertheless, in response to continued fighting and harassment of UN peacekeepers and aid workers, in November the USA threatened to place additional sanctions against the country, having already imposed sanctions against three senior South Sudanese officials in September. Within the UN Security Council, however, no agreement could be reached on imposing a UN arms embargo on South Sudan.¹²³ In October Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, warned the UN Security Council that the country was sliding into chaos and escalating violence.¹²⁴

As negotiators convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for another round of peace talks in December, government forces captured the town of Lasu, Central Equatoria state, which was the southern headquarters of the SPLA-IO. The fall of Lasu further splintered the opposition groups that had lost significant ground to the government in recent months.¹²⁵ Despite the continued fighting, the government and opposition armed groups signed a ceasefire agreement in Addis Ababa on 21 December.¹²⁶ The UK, Norway and the USA, which form a 'troika' that supported the 2005 agreement that led to the independence of South Sudan, welcomed the agreement. The next phase of the negotiations is expected to focus on a revised power-sharing arrangement in the lead up to new elections.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ International Crisis Group (note 118). On UNMISS see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

¹²¹ Knopf, P., 'South Sudan's conflict and famine', Testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy, United States Institute of Peace, 26 July 2017.

¹²² 'South Sudan's Kiir declares unilateral ceasefire, prisoner release', Reuters, 22 May 2017.

¹²³ Nichols, M., 'US threatens South Sudan action, Russia warns against UN measures', Reuters, 28 Nov. 2017. On threats to impose a UN arms embargo see chapter 10, section II, in this volume.

¹²⁴ Gladstone, R., 'UN peacekeeping chief issues warning on South Sudan', *New York Times*, 17 Oct. 2017.

¹²⁵ Patinkin, J. and Moore, J., 'South Sudan army makes push against rebels as peace talks begin', *New York Times*, 19 Dec. 2017.

¹²⁶ Maasho, A., 'South Sudan government, rebel groups sign ceasefire', Reuters, 21 Dec. 2017.

¹²⁷ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'The Troika statement on South Sudan', 21 Dec. 2017.