VI. Armed conflict and peace processes in sub-Saharan Africa

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There were at least 11 countries with active armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa in 2018: Burkina Faso (low-intensity, subnational armed conflict), Cameroon (high-intensity, subnational armed conflict), the Central African Republic (CAR) (civil war), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (high-intensity, subnational armed conflict), Ethiopia (high-intensity, subnational armed conflict), Mali (high-intensity, subnational armed conflict), Niger (low-intensity, subnational armed conflict), Nigeria (high-intensity, subnational armed conflict), Somalia (civil war), South Sudan (civil war) and Sudan (low-intensity, subnational armed conflict).[1] In several other countries, especially Burundi and Mozambique, there were high levels of political violence. Many of these armed conflicts overlapped across states and regions as a result of the transnational activities of violent Islamist groups and other armed groups and criminal networks, and were linked to extreme poverty, instability, economic fragility, ethnic and religious tensions, and low resilience—conditions that were exacerbated by climate change, corruption, ineffective economic policies and competition over natural resources. In addition to these armed conflicts, three cross-cutting issues shaped regional security in 2018: (*a*) the continuing internationalization of counterterrorism activities in Africa, (*b*) changes in the scale and frequency of election-related violence and (*c*) water scarcity and the growing impact of climate change.

This section briefly examines these three issues and then describes developments in each of the armed conflicts in 2018. Because of the overlap among the conflicts and their regional dimension, events in Cameroon and Nigeria are discussed within the context of the Lake Chad region, while those in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are discussed in the context of the Sahel region. Events in Ethiopia are discussed in relation to the July 2018 peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Other conflicts are discussed at the country level.

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[1] For conflict definitions and typologies, see section I in this chapter. Armed conflicts in North Africa are discussed in section V.

Key general developments

The internationalization of counterterrorism and security activities

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the most multilateral peace operations.[2] However, threats from transnational jihadist and criminal networks have aggravated more traditional forms of conflict. In turn, this has led to an increase in multilateral and bilateral counterterrorism operations in Africa.[3] The threat from transnational jihadism is particularly pronounced in West Africa (see 'Armed conflict in the Lake Chad region' and 'Armed conflict in the Sahel' below) and in the Horn of Africa, from where Islamist violence is spreading into Tanzania and Mozambique.[4]

In the Horn of Africa, counterterrorism and anti-piracy efforts have been priorities for a growing number of external actors over the last decade. This has created a crowded playing field that includes China, India, the United States and other Western powers (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United Kingdom) and several Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, UAE)—with growing geopolitical tensions, rivalries and risk of destabilizing proxy conflicts.[5] In 2018 there was a noticeable shift in the US security engagement in Africa, including an announced 10 per cent cut of its 7200 personnel deployed in Africa over the next few years (despite a build-up of US forces in Somalia in 2018), increased reliance on armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and an expectation that a larger share of the burden of crisis management and counterterrorism will fall to regional and European partners, especially France.[6]

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[2] On multilateral peace operations, see chapter 3 in this volume.

[3] On the issue of multilateral counterterrorism or 'non-peace' operations, see chapter 3 in this volume.

[4] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Al-Shabab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa*, Africa Report no. 265 (ICG: Brussels, 21 Sep. 2018); and *The Economist*, 'A bubbling Islamist insurgency in Mozambique could grow deadlier', 9 Aug. 2018.

[5] See Melvin, N., 'The new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2019/2, Apr. 2019. On Japan's role in the region, see Mason, R., 'Djibouti and beyond: Japan's first post-war overseas base and the recalibration of risk in securing enhanced military capabilities', *Asian Security*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2018), pp. 339–357. On the internationalization of counterterrorism activities in sub-Saharan Africa, see Davis, I. et al., 'Armed conflict in sub-Saharan Africa', *SIPRI Yearbook 2018*, pp. 85–87.

[6] US Department of Defense, 'Pentagon announces force optimization', News Release NR-325-18, 15 Nov. 2018; de Hoop Scheffer, A. and Quencez, M., 'US "burden-shifting" strategy in Africa validates France's ambition for greater European strategic autonomy', German Marshall Fund of the United States, Transatlantic Take, 23 Jan. 2019; Ajala, O., 'US drone base in Agadez: A security threat to Niger?', *RUSI Journal*, vol. 163, no. 5 (2018), pp. 20–27; and *The Economist*, 'France may take the lead in fighting jihadists', 20 Sep. 2018.

Two countries with a growing security and economic engagement in sub-Saharan Africa are China and the UAE.[7] The UAE, for example, has expanded its interests in the Horn of Africa through political alliances, aid, investment and military base agreements—positively influencing the Ethiopia–Eritrea peace agreement, but with less constructive repercussions in Somalia and Yemen.[8]

Election-related violence

Electoral competition for state power has been the norm in sub-Saharan Africa since at least the early 1990s, and many states in the region have held more than three successive elections since then. Some have experienced little or no election-related violence, whereas others have experienced multiple violent incidents. The causes of electoral violence are multidimensional but broadly fall into two categories: (*a*) the underlying power structures in new and emerging democracies (e.g. informal patronage systems, poor governance, exclusionary politics, and the socioeconomic uncertainties of losing political power in states where most power is centralized); and (*b*) the electoral process itself (e.g. flawed elections, election fraud and weak institutional rules governing the electoral process).[9] One study on electoral violence in sub-Saharan African elections between 1990 and 2010 found that it was more likely in countries with majoritarian voting rules and small electoral districts than in proportional-representation systems, especially in situations where large ethno-political groups are excluded from power and significant economic inequalities exist.[10]

In 2018, national (presidential and/or parliamentary) elections or constitutional referendums were scheduled in 19 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Many of those states were embroiled in or emerging from conflict, or had a history of recurrent electoral strife; however, the vast majority of the elections were peaceful, although seven elections were either fully or partially postponed until after the end of the year (see table 2.5).

In 2018 at least, it would seem that elections generally provided a peaceful outlet for grievances and frustrations over governance and inequality issues, with such frustrations spiralling into violence in only a few cases. In Mali, for example, where some commentators anticipated election-related violence, the elections did not result in violence or a political crisis, despite allegations

[7] Kovrig, M., 'China expands its peace and security footprint in Africa', Commentary, International Crisis Group, 24 Oct. 2018.

[8] International Crisis Group (ICG), *The United Arab Emirates in the Horn of Africa*, Middle East Briefing no. 65 (ICG: Brussels, 6 Nov. 2018). On the UAE's role in Yemen, see section V in this chapter.

[9] Nordic Africa Institute, 'Electoral violence in Africa', Policy Notes 2012/3; and Kovacs, M. S. and Bjarnesen, J. (eds), *Violence in African Elections: Between Democracy and Big Man Politics* (Nordic Africa Institute and Zed Books: Uppsala and London, 2018).

[10] Fjelde, H. and Höglund, K., 'Electoral institutions and electoral violence in sub- Saharan Africa', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 46, no. 2 (Apr. 2016), pp. 297–320.

Table 2.5. National elections in sub-Saharan Africa, 2018

Country	Type of election	Date	Outcome
Burundi	Constitutional referendum	17 May	Some voter intimidation, low levels of violence and opposition boycott
Cameroon	President	7 Oct.	Some voter intimidation and low voter turnout
	Senate	25 Mar.	Largely peaceful election
	National Assembly	Oct.	Postponed to Oct. 2019
Chad	National Assembly	30 Nov.	Postponed to May 2019
Comoros, the	Constitutional referendum	30 July	Largely peaceful referendum; post-referendum armed clashes on island of Anjouan
Congo, Democratic Republic of the (DRC)	President/ National Assembly	30 Dec.	Peaceful elections, but accusations of electoral fraud; risk of post-election violence
Côte d'Ivoire	Senate	24 Mar.	Peaceful elections, but opposition boycott
Djibouti	National Assembly	23 Feb.	Peaceful elections
Eswatini[b]	House of Assembly	25 Aug. (primary) 21 Sep. (secondary)	Peaceful, but highly restrictive elections
Gabon	National Assembly	6 Oct. 27 Oct. (run-off)	Peaceful elections
Guinea-Bissau	National People's Assembly	18 Nov.	Postponed to Mar. 2019
Madagascar	President	7 Nov. 19 Dec. (run-off)	Peaceful elections
	National Assembly	Nov.	Postponed to May 2019
Mali	President	29 July 12 Aug. (run-off)	Peaceful elections
	National Assembly	Dec. 2018	Postponed to Apr. 2019
Mauritania	National Assembly	1 Sep. 15 Sep. (run-off)	Peaceful elections
Rwanda	House of Representatives	3 Sep.	Peaceful elections
Sao Tome and Principe	National Assembly	7 Oct.	Peaceful elections; small-scale post-election protests

Country	Type of election	Date	Outcome
Sierra Leone	President/House of Representatives	7 Mar.	Peaceful elections
	President	31 Mar. (run-off)	Peaceful election
South Sudan[a]	President/ National Legislative Assembly	July	Postponed to 2021
Togo	Constitutional referendum	16 Dec.	Postponed indefinitely
	National Assembly	20 Dec.	Peaceful elections, but opposition boycott
Zimbabwe	President/ National Assembly/Senate	30 July	Relatively peaceful elections; some post-election violence

[a] These elections were originally scheduled to be held in South Sudan by July 2015 but were postponed until July 2018.

[b] Political parties are banned in Eswatini, and almost all candidates are loyal to King Mswati III.

Sources: Freedom House, 'Freedom in the world 2019' database; International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 'Elections guide' database'; Burke, J., 'Central African leaders tweak democracy to cement power', *The Guardian*, 22 May 2018; Al Jazeera, 'Comoros: Civilians flee strife-torn city on Anjouan island', 18 Oct. 2018; and *The Economist*, 'Togo's president suffers an electoral setback', 5 Jan. 2019.

of electoral fraud. In another positive development, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and the opposition leader, Raila Odinga, met on 9 March, for the first time since the country's disputed 2017 presidential election, and issued a joint statement in which they promised to address the 'deterioration of relationships between communities' and 'aggressive antagonism and competition' that has repeatedly scarred electoral cycles in Kenya.[11]

However, local elections in Guinea in February, the first since 2005, triggered sporadic political violence throughout the remainder of the year after the opposition accused President Alpha Condé and the ruling party of manipulating the vote. At least 18 people died in the political violence.[12]

Among the most scrutinized elections in Africa in 2018 were the presidential and parliamentary elections in Zimbabwe in July, the first since President Robert Mugabe's removal from office in November 2017. Ahead of the elections, an explosion on 23 June at a rally for Emmerson Mnangagwa, the leader of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), killed two people and raised concerns about security around the

[11] International Crisis Group (ICG), *After Kenya's Leaders Reconcile, a Tough Path Ahead*, Africa Briefing no. 136 (ICG: Brussels, 13 Mar. 2018).

[12] *Africa Times*, 'Rights groups warn again on Guinea's political violence', 1 Nov. 2018.

vote.[13] Nevertheless, voting was relatively peaceful compared to the systematic violence that had marked elections in previous years. The optimism over the elections was then marred by the military's crackdown on opposition supporters two days after the vote, which killed six people.[14] The Movement for Democratic Change mounted a legal challenge to the presidential election result and accused the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission of improper conduct, but the result was upheld by Zimbabwe's constitutional court in August.[15]

It is still unclear whether the relatively peaceful elections in 2018 represent the start of a new trend in declining electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa. With tensions surrounding several parliamentary and presidential elections due to be held in 2019—in Nigeria and South Africa, for example—the picture may become clearer by the end of that year.[16]

Water scarcity and climate change

While Africa is responsible for only 4 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions, it is particularly vulnerable to the double burden of climate change and political fragility. According to one study, 12 of the 21 countries facing the highest risk from this double burden are in sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, Ethiopia, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.[17] The African Peace and Security Architecture Roadmap 2016–2020 highlights climate change as one of the cross-cutting issues affecting peace and security.[18] Frequent and severe droughts, famines and flash floods in the region have displaced millions and contributed to high levels of migration. Shifting precipitation patterns have increased water scarcity in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.[19] In 2018, the

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[13] Burke, J., 'Zimbabwe's president blames rally attack on Grace Mugabe's faction', *The Guardian*, 27 June 2018; and Pigou, P., 'Tensions rise ahead of Zimbabwe's elections', International Crisis Group, 27 July 2018.

[14] Brock, J. and Dzirutwe, M., 'Zimbabwe's Mnangagwa wins first post-Mugabe election', Reuters, 2 Aug. 2018; *The Economist*, 'A crackdown in Zimbabwe exposes the instability of the Mnangagwa regime', 9 Aug. 2018; and Pigou, P., 'After elections, Zimbabwe Government's legitimacy in limbo', Commentary, International Crisis Group, 21 Aug. 2018.

[15] Burke, J., 'Zimbabwe court rejects opposition attempt to annul election result', *The Guardian*, 24 Aug. 2018.

[16] Onishi, N. and Gebrekidan, S., 'Hit men and power: South Africa's leaders are killing one another', *New York Times*, 30 Sep. 2018.

[17] See US Agency for International Development, 'The intersection of global fragility and climate risks', Sep. 2018, pp. 11–13.

[18] African Union Commission, *African Peace and Security Architecture Roadmap 2016–2020* (African Union Commission, Peace and Security Department: Addis Ababa, Dec. 2015), pp. 20–21.

[19] *The Economist*, 'Famines are becoming more frequent in the Sahel', 25 Oct. 2018. On the links between water scarcity and food insecurity, see Besada, H. and Werner, K., 'An assessment of the effects of Africa's water crisis on food security and management', *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2015), pp. 120–133.

Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) proposed the creation of a Special Envoy for Climate and Security.[20]

Armed conflict in the Lake Chad region

Lake Chad lies to the south of the Sahara Desert, bordering Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Multiple factors including unemployment, poverty and conflict interact with environmental change and degradation in the region around the lake, which has shrunk by 90 per cent in the past 40 years.[21] The Boko Haram insurgency has spread from Nigeria across the region, causing a massive humanitarian crisis and increasing cross-border displacement of people.[22] At the beginning of 2018, about 10.7 million people across the Lake Chad region needed humanitarian assistance, including 5.8 million people who faced severe food insecurity. However, this number dropped to approximately 3 million people as security improved across many parts of the region in the second half of 2018.[23] A humanitarian conference in Germany in September, backed by the United Nations, raised about $2.17 billion in financial support, as well as about $467 million in additional concessional loans from multilateral financial institutions, for humanitarian relief, development and peacebuilding in the region.[24]

Boko Haram

The insurgent group Boko Haram emerged in Nigeria in 2002, began its violent uprising in 2009 and then spread to other countries in the Lake Chad region.[25] Although territory controlled by Boko Haram was recaptured by the Nigerian armed forces during 2015–16, and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has repeatedly claimed that the group has been defeated, it remained

[20] African Union Peace and Security, 'The 774th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council, an open session on the theme: "The link between climate change and conflicts in Africa and addressing the security implications"', 29 May 2018.

[21] Gao, H. et al., 'On the causes of the shrinking of Lake Chad', *Environmental Research Letters*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2011).

[22] 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 Angerbrandt, H., 'Nigeria and the Lake Chad region beyond Boko Haram', Nordic Africa Institute Policy Note no. 3:2017, June 2017.

[23] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Humanitarian needs and requirements overview 2018: Lake Chad Basin emergency', Feb. 2018; and European Commission, 'Lake Chad Basin crisis—food insecurity situation', Emergency Response Coordination Centre/DG ECHO daily map, 19 Dec. 2018.

[24] UN News, 'Africa's Lake Chad Basin: Over $2.1 billion pledged, to provide comprehensive crisis response', 4 Sep. 2018.

[25] On the rise of Boko Haram and the government response, see Hogendoorn, E. J., 'To help defeat Boko Haram, the EU should push for good governance and accountability', International Centre for Counter-Terrorism Policy Brief, Oct. 2018; Hickie, S., Abbott, C. and Clarke, M., 'Remote warfare and the Boko Haram insurgency', Oxford Research Group and Open Briefing, Jan. 2018; and Zenn, J. (ed.), 'Boko Haram beyond the headlines: Analyses of Africa's enduring insurgency', Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, May 2018.

a serious threat in 2018.[26] A key element in the fight against Boko Haram has been the Multinational Joint Task Force—comprising units, mostly military, from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, with a specific mandate to end the Boko Haram insurgency.[27] Private military and security companies have also been used in this fight.[28] The Nigerian authorities have increasingly acknowledged that ending the conflict will require more than a military response. However, efforts to establish a transparent disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy and deradicalization programmes remain underdeveloped.[29]

More than 20 000 people have been killed and 2.1 million displaced during the insurgency.[30] Boko Haram has repeatedly attacked educational institutions, killing some 2300 teachers and destroying about 1400 schools in Nigeria between 2009 and 2017.[31] In February 2018 the group seized 113 children from Dapchi in north-eastern Nigeria, later releasing 107 of them.[32] Human rights abuses have also been committed by the Nigerian security forces fighting Boko Haram. In some of the camps set up by the military for internally displaced people, for example, women have been the victims of violence and other serious abuses that, according to Amnesty International, could amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.[33]

A faction that split from Boko Haram in 2016, known as Islamic State West Africa Province, appeared to grow in strength with a spate of attacks in the second half of 2018.[34] In September, for example, its forces killed at least 30 Nigerian soldiers in an attack on an army base, and in a separate attack temporarily seized the town of Gudumbali.[35] In late December they seized

[26] On developments within the Boko Haram insurgency in 2017, see Davis et al. (note 5), pp. 95–96.

[27] On the Multinational Joint Task Force, see van der Lijn, J., 'Multilateral non-peace operations', *SIPRI Yearbook 2018*, pp. 141–42.

[28] Varin, C., 'Turning the tides of war: The impact of private military and security companies on Nigeria's counterinsurgency against Boko Haram', *African Security Review*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2018), pp. 144–57.

[29] Clubb G. and Tapley, M., 'Conceptualising de-radicalisation and former combatant re-integration in Nigeria', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 11 (2018), pp. 2053–68; Arai, T., 'Repatriation and reconciliation challenges in north-eastern Nigeria', African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 31 May 2018; and Brechenmacher, S., 'Achieving peace in northeast Nigeria: The reintegration challenge', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 5 Sep. 2018.

[30] *The Economist*, 'Boko Haram is becoming even more extreme', 22 Nov. 2018.

[31] UNICEF Canada, 'Education under attack in Borno, Nigeria', 5 Oct. 2017.

[32] Maclean, R., 'Boko Haram returns more than 100 schoolgirls kidnapped last month', *The Guardian*, 21 Mar. 2018; and International Crisis Group (ICG), *Preventing Boko Haram Abductions of School Children in Nigeria*, Africa Briefing no. 137 (ICG: Brussels, 12 Apr. 2018).

[33] Amnesty International, '"They betrayed us": Women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved and detained in Nigeria', 2018.

[34] Postings, R., 'Nigeria's military struggles with Islamic State: Part I—an upsurge in attacks', Defense Post, 15 Jan. 2019.

[35] *The Guardian*, 'Islamist militants kill up to 30 Nigerian soldiers in attack on base', 2 Sep. 2018; and *The Guardian*, 'Nigerian army claims "normalcy restored" after Boko Haram attack', 9 Sep. 2018.

the town of Baga, in north-eastern Nigeria, near the border with Chad, and overran a nearby Multinational Joint Task Force base.[36]

Both Chad and Cameroon also continued to be affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in 2018, although levels of violence generally diminished.[37]

Nigeria's multiple security challenges

Aside from the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east, insecurity in Nigeria is also fuelled by other complex security challenges, including extreme poverty, separatist aspirations in eastern Nigeria, violence between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders in the country's Middle Belt (an area that stretches across the middle third of the country from east to west) and the re-emergence of armed militant groups in the Niger Delta.[38] In 2018, the farmer–herder conflict was much deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency and posed a serious threat to Nigeria's stability and unity. Often the federal police force is unable to keep the peace and the Nigerian military is deployed to address these internal security challenges; the military was deployed across most of the country's 36 states during the year.[39] A report by the European Asylum Support Office in November 2018 detailed the persecution and rights violations experienced by individuals in Nigeria and the numerous mass atrocity crimes committed by several groups in the past few years.[40]

The armed conflict over land between mostly Christian farmers and predominantly Muslim herders—who have been migrating southwards because of desertification, insecurity and the loss of grazing land to expanding settlements—escalated in the first half of 2018, killing at least 1300 people and increasing ethnic and religious tensions in much of the Middle Belt.[41] Over 200 people are thought to have been killed in attacks and reprisals over five days in June in the state of Plateau alone. The escalation in violence has been ascribed to an increase in armed ethnic militias, the inadequate response of the federal government and the introduction in November 2017 of anti-grazing laws that pushed herders from the states of Benue and Taraba

[36] Maclean, R., 'Boko Haram launches a series of attacks in north-east Nigeria', *The Guardian*, 28 Dec. 2018.

[37] Al Jazeera, 'Boko Haram kills 18, abducts 10 in Chad', 22 July 2018; and International Crisis Group (ICG), *Cameroon's Far North: A New Chapter in the Fight Against Boko Haram*, Africa Report no. 263 (ICG: Brussels, 14 Aug. 2018).

[38] Beaumont, P. and Abrak, I., 'Oil-rich Nigeria outstrips India as country with most people in poverty', *The Guardian*, 16 July 2018.

[39] On the human rights record of the Nigerian army, see Pérouse de Montclos, M., 'The killing fields of the Nigerian army: Any lessons learned?', *African Security*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2018), pp. 110–126.

[40] European Asylum Support Office, *Country of Origin Information Report—Nigeria, Targeting of Individuals* (European Asylum Support Office: Malta, Nov. 2018).

[41] *The Economist*, 'Fighting between Nigerian farmers and herders is getting worse', 7 June 2018; and International Crisis Group (ICG), *Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer–Herder Violence*, Africa Report no. 262 (ICG: Brussels, 26 July 2018). On herdsmen militancy, see Okoli, A. C. and Ogayi, C. O., 'Herdsmen militancy and humanitarian crisis in Nigeria: S theoretical briefing', *African Security Review*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2018), pp. 129–143.

into the neighbouring states of Nasarawa and Adamawa, causing clashes with farmers there.[42]

The federal government deployed additional police and army units, and has consulted with herder and farmer leaders as well as relevant state governments on ways to end the violence. As a long-term solution, in January 2018 the Nigerian Government proposed establishing 'cattle colonies', which would set aside land for herders across the country, and on 19 June it unveiled a National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018–2027).[43] At the end of the year, however, these measures had yet to be implemented, and the violence continued.

In separate developments, at least 45 Shiite protestors were killed by Nigerian security and military forces in the capital, Abuja, and the neighbouring state of Nasarawa in September 2018, while criminal violence accelerated in December in the state of Zamfara in the north-west, where attacks left over 40 people dead.[44] There are also risks of protests and violence during and after the presidential election in 2019, in which the main candidates are incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari, leader of the ruling All Progressives Congress, and former vice president Atiku Abubakar, leader of the People's Democratic Party, which governed for 16 years until Buhari came to power. Demonstrations after the 2011 elections mutated into attacks on minorities across northern Nigeria in which more than 800 people were killed.[45]

Armed conflict in Cameroon's anglophone areas

Between 1922 and 1960, France administered most of Cameroon, but the north-west and south-west regions were ruled as a British protectorate. Today 3 million people in those two regions—about one-fifth of the country's population—speak mainly English and have their own legal and educational systems. Long-standing tensions in this part of the country—the anglophone demand for an autonomous republic called Ambazonia dates back to at least 1985—turned violent in September 2017 and were exacerbated by a largely symbolic declaration of independence by militant anglophone secessionists on 1 October 2017.[46] The confrontation, which started as protests by anglophone

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[42] International Crisis Group (note 41).

[43] Yahaya, H., Yusuf, V. A. and Buhari, S., 'Cattle colonies: How FG plans to end farmers–herders clash', *Daily Trust*, 28 Jan. 2018; and Alli, Y., 'Fed govt to build 94 ranches in 10 states', *The Nation*, 20 June 2018.

[44] *The Economist*, 'A mysterious Shia group has Nigeria worried', 15 Nov. 2018; Maclean, R., 'Nigerian soldiers shoot dozens of peaceful Shia protesters', *The Guardian*, 1 Nov. 2018; and Al Jazeera, 'Unidentified gunmen kill 17 people in Nigeria's Zamfara state', 24 Dec. 2018.

[45] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Six States to Watch*, Africa Report no. 268 (ICG: Brussels, 21 Dec. 2018).

[46] 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).

teachers and lawyers against the use of French in anglophone schools and courts, rapidly transformed into an armed insurgency by separatist militias. In 2018, the fighting killed nearly 200 members of the security forces, more than 600 separatists and at least 500 civilians.[47] According to the UN, 437 000 people from the anglophone regions are internally displaced and about 30 000 are refugees in Nigeria.[48]

A presidential election in October took place largely peacefully and was won by President Paul Biya (already in power for 36 years). The election was marred by voter intimidation and a low turnout, especially in the two anglophone regions; the official turnout in the North-West and South-West regions was about 5 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively.[49] Parliamentary and municipal elections were postponed until October 2019.[50]

It was hoped that a proposed Anglophone General Conference organized by religious leaders would be a first step towards a national dialogue and mediation process. However, the conference was postponed in August and again in November, because of the refusal of the Cameroonian Government to grant a permit for it, with no clear indication when it might do so.[51] With the government seemingly opposed to negotiations and reliant on military force to defeat the separatists, the conflict is in danger of escalating into a civil war.

Armed conflict in the Sahel

Definitions of the Sahel region vary, but here it refers to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Since the collapse of Libya in 2011 and the out-break of conflict in northern Mali in 2012, the combination of poverty, organized crime, violent extremism and weak government institutions has made the region increasingly fragile and unstable.[52] Poor economic growth (Niger is at the bottom of the UN Development Programme's 2018 Human Development Index, while Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali are near the bottom) and the impact of climate change on traditional farming and livestock practices have

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[47] Zongo, P., '"This is a genocide": Villages burn as war rages in blood-soaked Cameroon', *The Guardian*, 30 May 2018; and International Crisis Group, 'Eight priorities for the African Union in 2019', Commentary, 6 Feb. 2018.

[48] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Humanitarian response plan 2019: Cameroon (summary)', Jan. 2019.

[49] The Economist, 'Africa's oldest president, campaigns for another term in Cameroon', 4 Oct. 2018; and International Crisis Group, 'Uncertainties deepen in Cameroon after divisive election', 5 Nov. 2018.

[50] News 24, 'Cameroon parliamentary elections postponed', 3 July 2018.

[51] International Crisis Group, 'Cameroon: Proposed Anglophone General Conference deserves national and international support', Statement, 17 Sep. 2018; and *Cameroon Daily Journal*, 'Ambazonia war: Cameroon misses a golden opportunity to pull out of the Anglophone crisis', 23 Nov. 2018.

[52] Walther, O. J., *Wars and Conflicts in the Sahara-Sahel*, West African Papers no. 10 (OECD Publishing: Paris, 2017).

led to increased food insecurity and heightened conflict.[53] Violent extremists are active in large parts of Mali, and have spread to the neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso and Niger. The extremist groups are increasingly interwoven with rural insurgent groups, and both feed off communal tensions; there is a risk that they could spread to more countries in the region and beyond. As a result, the Sahel is also the location of several multilateral peace and counter-terrorism operations, including Operation Barkhane, France's 4000-strong regional counterterrorism effort, and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (JF-G5S).[54] However, the effectiveness of the JF-G5S as currently configured is highly questionable, given its limited impact on the ground, military-centric approach, poor coordination among partner countries and disagreements over its precise mandate.[55]

The rise of jihadist violence in Burkina Faso and its spread to Niger

The conflict with heavily armed jihadists in Burkina Faso was concentrated mainly in two zones: (*a*) since 2015, along its northern border with Mali; and (*b*) increasingly in 2018, in the east towards the border with Niger. In the north the main jihadist group is Ansarul Islam, which has close ties to Ansar Dine in Mali.[56] In the east, however, the identity of the combatants remains unclear. There have been more than 230 attacks in the country since January 2016, mostly on security forces, and more than 250 people have been killed.[57] Attacks in the capital, Ouagadougou, on 2 March 2018, for example, targeted the military headquarters and French embassy.[58] On 31 December 2018 a state of emergency was declared in several provinces as a result of increased attacks.[59]

In some northern and eastern areas, courts and schools were forced to close because of the insecurity, and it was too dangerous for police and customs

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[53] UN Development Programme, Human Development Indices and Indicators, 2018 Statistical Update, 2018, Table 1; and World Food Programme, 'As millions experience increased food insecurity in the Sahel, UN Food Agency Chiefs pledge to redouble efforts to reduce poverty and hunger', News release, 17 Aug. 2018.

[54] On peace operations in the Sahel, see chapter 3, section II, in this volume; and Böås, M., 'Rival priorities in the Sahel—finding the balance between security and development', Nordic Africa Institute, Policy Note no. 3, 19 Apr. 2018.

[55] Voice of America, 'G5 Sahel force struggles with funding coordination', 30 Dec. 2018; Gorman, Z. and Chauzal, G., 'Establishing a regional security architecture in the Sahel', SIPRI Commentary, 25 June 2018; and Rupesinghe, N., 'The Joint Force of the G5 Sahel: An appropriate response to combat terrorism?', African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 18 Sep. 2018.

[56] Nsaibia, H. and Weiss, C., 'Ansaroul Islam and the growing terrorist insurgency in Burkina Faso', *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Mar. 2018), pp. 21–26. For an in-depth study of Burkina Faso, see Hagberg, S. (ed.), '"Nothing will be as before!": Anthropological perspectives on political practice and democratic culture in "a new Burkina Faso"', Uppsala Papers in Africa Studies no. 3, Uppsala University, 2018.

[57] *The Economist*, 'Burkina Faso, west Africa's linchpin, is losing its war on terror', 13 Dec. 2018.

[58] Depagne, R., 'Bukina Faso's alarming escalation of jihadist violence', Commentary, International Crisis Group, 5 Mar. 2018; and Hagberg, S., 'Fragile security or fatale liaisons?', Mats Utas blog, 23 Mar. 2018.

[59] *Africa Times*, 'Burkina Faso declares state of emergency in 6 provinces', 31 Dec. 2018.

officers to carry out patrols. There have been allegations of human rights abuses by both armed jihadist groups and state security forces.[60] The Burkinan armed forces have carried out air strikes and ground operations against the armed groups. In addition, Operation Barkhane made two counterterrorism interventions in October 2018 in northern and eastern Burkina Faso.[61]

Niger has been a key transit point for armed criminal and extremist Islamist groups operating in the Sahel region.[62] Since 2015 Niger itself has been subject to increased attacks by such groups—first by Boko Haram, and since 2017 by groups near the borders with Burkina Faso and Mali. The border violence displaced 52 000 Nigeriens in 2018.[63] French Operation Barkhane and US forces have supported the Nigerien armed forces in counterterrorism operations inside the country. The USA also deployed armed UAVs to Niger in early 2018.[64]

Armed conflict in Mali

The armed conflict in Mali is complex and multidimensional, with roots in a long-running Tuareg rebellion and a 2012 crisis in the north.[65] It currently consists of two main strands: (*a*) a growing network of jihadist groups linked to the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, mainly in northern and central Mali; and (*b*) intra- and inter-community conflicts between ethnic groups—between the Peul, Bambara and Dogon ethnic groups in the Mopti and Ségou regions (central Mali), and between the Tolebe (a group of mainly pastoralist Peuls) and the Daousahaq (a Tuareg tribe) in the Ménaka region (northern Mali, near the Niger border). The conflicts in central Mali form part of a general deterioration of security in the centre of the country since the beginning of 2017.[66]

In June 2015 a peace agreement was signed by the Platform (Plateforme), a coalition of armed groups that claimed loyalty to the Malian state following the 2012 Tuareg rebellion, and an opposing armed coalition, the Coordination

[60] Human Rights Watch, '"By day we fear the army, by night the jihadists": Abuses by armed Islamists and security forces in Burkina Faso', May 2018.

[61] Kelly, F., 'France air operation in Burkina Faso confirmed after reports of strikes near Pama', Defense Post, 9 Oct. 2018.

[62] De Tessières, S., 'At the crossroads of Sahelian conflicts: Insecurity, terrorism, and arms trafficking in Niger', Small Arms Survey, Jan. 2018.

[63] UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 'Violence displaces more than 50 000 in western Niger this year', 13 Dec. 2018.

[64] Kelly, F., 'Joint France–Niger air and ground operation near Tongo Tongo kills 15 "terrorists"', Defense Post, 30 Dec. 2018; and Reuters, 'US confirms deployment of armed drones in Niger', 30 July 2018.

[65] On the evolution and complexity of the conflict in Mali, see Dal Santo, E. and van der Heide, E. J., 'Escalating complexity in regional conflicts: Connecting geopolitics to individual pathways to terrorism in Mali', *African Security*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2018), pp. 274–291; and Sköns, E., 'The implementation of the peace process in Mali: A complex case of peacebuilding', *SIPRI Yearbook 2016*, pp. 155–188.

[66] Tobie, A., 'Central Mali: Violence, local perspectives and diverging narratives', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2017/5, Dec. 2017.

of Azawad Movements (Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad, CMA), which was created in 2014 to represent the Tuareg separatists in the peace process. Following the agreement, the Malian Government, with the support of the UN, international donors and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), instigated a range of peace initiatives.[67] In September 2017 the CMA and the Platform agreed to a ceasefire, prisoner exchanges and other confidence-building measures.[68] At the beginning of 2018, however, 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.[69]

In 2018, the violence became more intense and widespread. The rise in jihadist violence was evidenced by highly visible attacks against the Malian military (on a regular basis), Operation Barkhane forces (in April) and the JF-G5S operational headquarters (in June).[70] In central Mali, attacks by community-based 'self-defence' militias against their rivals intensified, with hundreds of civilians killed.[71] One independent study warned of a growing risk of mass atrocities, while violent competition over drug and other forms of trafficking exacerbated the conflict in northern Mali.[72]

According to a panel of experts established by the UN Security Council, the humanitarian situation in Mali remained 'grave, precarious, dire and volatile', and the level of humanitarian need was higher in 2018 than at any point since the beginning of the security crisis in 2012, with 5.2 million people requiring humanitarian assistance—up from 3.8 million in 2017.[73] The number of internally displaced people more than doubled during 2018 to 140 000, and more than 137 000 Malian refugees were in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger.[74] The UN panel also found that antiterrorist operations conducted by the army in Mali had led to a 'worrying pattern of human rights violations', including

[67] On the role of MINUSMA, see also chapter 3, sections I and II, in this volume.

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

[69] On developments in Mali in 2017, see Davis et al. (note 5), pp. 92–94. On the development of the peace process, see Sköns (note 65).

[70] Economist Intelligence Unit, 'Repeated jihadi attacks on UN–French military bases', 25 Apr. 2018; and *The Guardian*, 'At least six dead in Mali after attack on regional anti-terror force base', 29 June 2018.

[71] Human Rights Watch, '"We used to be brothers": Self-defense group abuses in Central Mali', Dec. 2018.

[72] Ibrahim, I. Y. and Zapata, M., 'Regions at risk: Preventing mass atrocities in Mali', US Holocaust Memorial Museum Early Warning Country Report, Apr. 2018; International Crisis Group (ICG), 'Drug trafficking, violence and politics in northern Mali', Africa Report no. 267 (ICG: Brussels, 13 Dec. 2018).

[73] United Nations, Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) on Mali, S/2018/581, 9 Aug. 2018, p. 42.

[74] European Commission, 'European civil protection and humanitarian aid operations: Mali', 10 Mar. 2019.

civilian deaths.[75] From August to December 2018, the UN panel observed an increase in violations, especially in the Mopti and Ménaka regions.[76]

Despite rising communal violence and jihadist attacks, especially in the centre and north-east of Mali, a presidential election took place on 29 July. In a run-off election on 12 August, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita won a second five-year term, although the contest was marred by low turnout and procedural irregularities.[77] The National Assembly elections scheduled for December were postponed until 2019.[78]

Following the re-election of President Keita, the Malian Government embarked on ambitious political and institutional reforms, including a constitutional review and proposed elections at various levels, all of which are part of a road map adopted in March 2018 for the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. In addition, a Pact for Peace in Mali was concluded between the Malian Government and the UN in October, as requested in UN Security Council Resolution 2423.[79] The Pact for Peace is meant to accelerate the implementation of the road map—and to this end, in November, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process was launched and a high-level workshop on security sector reform was held.[80] However, the relevance of these agreements is being undermined by the precarious security situation in central and northern parts of the country, the ongoing food and humanitarian crisis and the slow implementation of the peace agreement.

Armed conflict in the Central African Republic

The CAR has experienced religious and communal violence since 2013, between the mainly Muslim Séléka armed group (which seized power in 2013) and the mainly Christian Anti-balaka armed group. Although the Séléka handed power to a transitional government in 2014, violence continued, and the country was effectively partitioned despite the presence of a UN peace operation, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).[81] The election of President Faustin-Archange Touadéra in 2016 was seen as a sign of progress, but in 2017 fighting escalated between two rival factions within the Séléka—the Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central Africa (Front Populaire pour la Renaissance

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[75] United Nations (note 73), p. 37. See also Reuters, 'Mali says some soldiers implicated after mass graves found', 20 June 2018.

[76] United Nations, Security Council, Midterm report of the Panel of Experts on Mali, S/2019/137, 21 Feb. 2019, pp. 20–22.

[77] Al Jazeera, 'Mali: Ibrahim Boubacar Keita wins re-election as president', 16 Aug. 2018.

[78] United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, S/2018/1174, 28 Dec. 2018.

[79] UN Security Council Resolution 2423 (2018), S/RES/2423 (2018), 28 June 2018.

[80] United Nations (note 78).

[81] On MINUSCA see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

de Centrafrique) and the Union for Peace in Central Africa (Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique), as well as between several armed groups from both the Anti-balaka and Séléka. A peace agreement was concluded in June 2017 by the government and 13 of the 14 armed groups; nevertheless, violence soon resumed.[82] In July 2017, the AU and partners produced a new Road Map for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR, but the situation continued to deteriorate.[83]

In 2018, about 80 per cent of the country was controlled by shifting alliances of armed groups that fought over resources (gold and diamond mining sites, transport routes and pastoralists' migration corridors). Neither MINUSCA nor the fledgling EU-trained national army could constrain the fighting. Even in the capital, Bangui, which had previously been largely free of communal violence, fighting between Muslim and Christian gangs escalated in April and May.[84] Armed groups not only fought each other, but also targeted civilians, UN peacekeepers and humanitarian workers and facilities.[85] The violence has caused severe displacement (with nearly 650 000 internally displaced and 576 000 refugees in neighbouring countries) and food insecurity (with some 2.9 million people needing humanitarian aid).[86]

Although local mediation efforts achieved some temporary truces between armed groups and calmed some communal tensions, there was little progress overall in implementation of the AU Road Map. Given the slow progress towards a political settlement, President Touadéra turned to Russia for support. In early 2018, Russia provided the CAR national army with training and small arms and ammunition, and the two countries signed several secret bilateral deals.[87] Reflecting its growing influence, Russia encouraged Sudan to initiate new peace talks in Khartoum in July and August 2018 with armed groups and government representatives from the CAR. This parallel Russian-Sudanese initiative was seen by the AU and the EU, and especially by France, as undermining the AU-led peace efforts, not least because it allowed both armed groups and government representatives to 'forum-shop'.[88] Further shipments of arms and/or military equipment to the CAR Government were

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[82] Centraafrique-presse, Accord politique pour la paix en République centrafricaine [Political agreement for peace in the Central African Republic], Blog post, 19 June 2017 (in French).

[83] On developments in the CAR in 2017, see Davis et al. (note 5), pp. 87–88.

[84] Zanoletti, G., 'Violence in Bangui, Central African Republic', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 16 May 2018.

[85] Human Rights Watch, 'Central African Republic: Rebels executing civilians', 12 Oct. 2018; and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Incidents affecting civilians and humanitarian workers on the rise in the Central African Republic', 6 Aug. 2018.

[86] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Les humanitaires touchés par l'insécurité' [Humanitarian workers hit by insecurity], Bulletin humanitaire: République centrafricaine [Humanitarian bulletin: Central African Republic] no. 41 (Jan. 2019).

[87] Vinograd, C., 'There's a new battle for influence in Central Africa, and Russia appears to be winning', *Washington Post*, 31 May 2018.

[88] Plichta, M., 'France and Russia fiddle while the Central African Republic burns', World Politics Review, 28 Nov. 2018; and International Crisis Group, 'Central African Republic: Getting from talks to peace', Commentary, 28 Jan. 2019.

made or announced during the year by China, France, Russia and the USA. A UN arms embargo on the CAR bans arms transfers to non-state armed groups but permits deliveries to the government's security forces, provided they have been approved in advance by the relevant UN Sanctions Committee.[89]

The year ended with more fighting in major towns, both between different armed groups and between the armed groups and UN peacekeepers, and with rising tensions in the capital, Bangui. Although AU and UN diplomatic efforts sought to unite the parallel peace tracks, the resumption of a broader civil war in the country in 2019 could not be ruled out.[90]

Armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The DRC is the second-largest country in Africa with a population of about 80 million. Its recent history is dominated by civil war and corruption, fuelled by competition over the country's vast mineral wealth. Since the end of the 1998–2003 Second Congo War, conflict has persisted in the eastern DRC, where there are still dozens of armed groups, and the world's largest UN peacekeeping force has been deployed since 2000.[91] Joseph Kabila, who has been president since 2001, won two consecutive elections in 2006 and 2011. Under the 2016 Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement (also known as the Saint Sylvester agreement), Kabila remained in office and elections due in December 2016 were postponed until late 2017. 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 2017 the Catholic Church withdrew from its mediating role. In November 2017, it was announced that the presidential election was rescheduled to 23 December 2018.[92]

At the start of 2018, the political impasse continued and violence intensified in several provinces, resulting in a growing humanitarian crisis. An estimated 3.2 million people continued to suffer from severe food insecurity in the Kasai area (which is made up of 5 provinces) and 762 000 people were internally

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[89] See chapter 10, section II, in this volume; Kelly, F., 'Central African Republic receives military vehicles from China and the US', Defense Post, 9 Aug. 2018; Reuters, 'Russia to send more military trainers, equipment to Central African Republic', 19 Oct. 2018; and Jeune Afrique, 'Centrafrique : Aide de 24 millions d'euros et livraison d'armes de la France' [Central African Republic: €24 million aid and arms delivery from France], 2 Nov. 2018.

[90] Ratcliffe, R., '"Killing, abuse, sexual violence beyond belief": Fears grow of all-out war in CAR', *The Guardian*, 16 Nov. 2018.

[91] On the current peace operation in the DRC, see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

[92] Congolese Independent National Electoral Commission, 'Calendrier électoral : Décision n°065/CENI/BUR/17 du 05 Novembre 2017 portant publication du calendrier des élections en RDC' [Decision 065/CENI/BUR/17 of 5 November 2017 on the publication of the calendar of elections in the DRC], 5 Nov. 2017 (in French). On developments in the DRC in 2017, see Davis et al. (note 5), pp. 89–91.
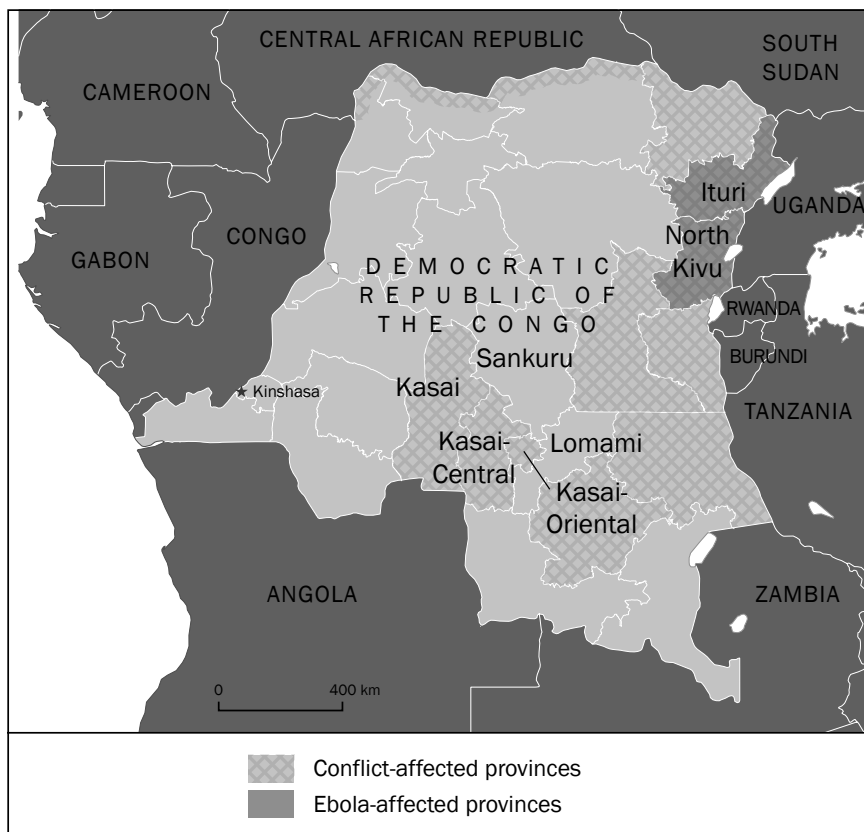
Figure 2.5. Conflict- and Ebola-affected areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2018

Credit: Hugo Ahlenius, Norpil.

displaced. An estimated 2 million people were internally displaced in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika.[93]

The security situation deteriorated further in the first half of 2018, amid collapsing government authority and armed conflict in at least 10 of the DRC's 26 provinces, with the worst clashes between multiple armed groups in the eastern Congo (see figure 2.5).[94] In the Kasai area, the legacy of earlier communal conflict and fears of resurgent violence left 2.3 million children needing humanitarian assistance.[95] A high-level humanitarian conference

[93] Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), 'Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—Conflict', ETC Situation Report no. 1, Reporting period 20/11/17 to 29/11/17.

[94] *The Economist*, 'Congo's war was bloody. It may be about to start again', 15 Feb. 2018; and Burke, J., '"The wars will never stop"—millions flee bloodshed as Congo falls apart', *The Guardian*, 3 Apr. 2018.

[95] UNICEF, 'Kasai: A children's crisis—coping with the impact of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo', Child Alert, May 2018.

Table 2.6. Cholera, measles and Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2018

	Cholera	Measles	Ebola
Cases	26 784	51 796	500
Deaths	831	711	289

Note: Cholera and measles figures are for 1 Jan.–3 Dec.; Ebola figures are for 1 Jan.–10 Dec.

Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Bulletin humanitaire: R.D. Congo' [Humanitarian bulletin: D.R. Congo]. no. 41, Nov. 2018.

on the DRC in April raised only $530 million of the $1.7 billion that the UN said was required. The Congolese Government boycotted the conference and accused aid agencies of exaggerating the extent of the crisis.[96]

In the second half of 2018, the country faced an additional crisis with a new Ebola outbreak in August in eastern DRC, as well as tensions around the December election. The new Ebola outbreak came on top of existing measles and cholera epidemics, and an earlier Ebola outbreak in the north-west of the country in May 2018, which had been quickly contained.[97] During the year, there were over 1800 deaths from these three diseases (see table 2.6). While the DRC has long experience dealing with the Ebola virus, this latest outbreak—the 10th in the country since the world's first recorded outbreak there in 1976—is proving harder to contain because its epicentre, the province of North Kivu, is enmeshed in conflict between armed militias (see figure 2.5).[98] In October, for example, militia attacks increased in and around the city of Beni in eastern DRC, triggering riots and hampering efforts to tackle the Ebola outbreak. In November, eight UN peacekeepers and at least a dozen Congolese soldiers were killed in a joint military operation in the Beni area against the Ugandan rebel group Allied Democratic Forces.[99]

President Kabila announced in August that he would not stand in December's presidential election, thus abiding by the constitution, but concerns persisted about the possible fairness and credibility of the polls.[100] The opposition failed to unite behind a single candidate, potentially harming their chances of beating the government candidate, the Interior Minister, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. The two main opposition challengers were Felix Tshisekedi of the Coalition for Change (an alliance of Tshisekedi's Union for Democracy and Social Progress and the Union for the Congolese Nation, led by Vital Kamerhe) and Martin Fayulu of the Lamuka alliance

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[96] Burke, J., 'DRC snubs aid conference, saying crisis in exaggerated', *The Guardian,* 13 Apr. 2018.
[97] Congressional Research Service (CRS), 'Ebola: Democratic Republic of Congo', CRS Insight, 4 Oct. 2018.
[98] *The Economist*, 'The struggle to get Ebola vaccine to rebel-held areas of Congo', 29 Nov. 2018.
[99] *New York Times*, '8 UN peacekeepers killed in Congo in area facing Ebola outbreak', 15 Nov. 2018.
[100] *The Economist*, 'A puppet is set to replace the president', 13 Dec. 2018; and Hoebeke, H., 'Kabila shows his hand in DR Congo's electoral poker', Commentary, International Crisis Group, 16 Aug. 2018.

(which was backed by two leading opposition figures who were both barred from being presidential candidates: Jean-Pierre Bemba, whose 2016 war crime conviction by the International Criminal Court was overturned by the court's Appeals Chamber in June 2018, and Moïse Katumbi).[101]

The vote, scheduled for 23 December, finally took place on 30 December. Although the preceding weeks saw increased violence between opposition supporters and security forces or followers of the ruling coalition, the election day itself was relatively peaceful. However, the risk of further violence persisted, especially since voting in some areas affected by Ebola and ethnic violence was postponed until March 2019, effectively disenfranchising 1.25 million potential voters (out of a 40 million electorate) from the presidential contest.[102] Felix Tshisekedi was declared the winner in early January—the first electoral transfer of power in 59 years of independence in the DRC—but the runner-up, Martin Fayulu, rejected the outcome over allegations of vote-rigging.[103]

In addition to the ongoing political uncertainty, the DRC began 2019 facing a protracted and complex humanitarian emergency, with an estimated 12.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.[104]

Armed conflict in Ethiopia and the Ethiopia–Eritrea peace agreement

In 2018, Ethiopia underwent a rapid political shift following the election of Abiy Ahmed Ali as Prime Minister. Abiy came to power against the background of an intensification of armed conflict since 2014.[105] Abiy's rise transformed the political atmosphere inside Ethiopia and the wider region. A breakthrough peace agreement with Eritrea in the summer, and further political liberalization and efforts at reconciliation with armed groups in the second half of the year, confirmed the new political dynamic in the Horn of Africa. At the same time, rising ethnic violence inside Ethiopia, an acute economic crisis and the lack of commensurate political reform in Eritrea raised questions about the prospects for the consolidation of peace in the region.

Political transformation in Ethiopia

On 27 March, the Central Committee of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) elected Abiy as EPRDF Chairman,

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[101] International Crisis Group (ICG), *DR Congo: The Memba Earthquake*, Africa Briefing no. 140 (ICG: Brussels, 15 June 2018); and Burke, J., 'Congolese finally go to the polls amid fears of fraud', *The Guardian*, 30 Dec. 2018.

[102] International Crisis Group, 'DR Congo elections: Reversing a dangerous decision', Statement, 28 Dec. 2018.

[103] Burke, J., 'Congo election runner-up rejects Tshisekedi victory as "electoral coup"', *The Guardian*, 10 Jan. 2019.

[104] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'About OCHA DRC', [n.d.].

[105] See Davis et al. (note 5), pp. 91–92.

thereby also making him Prime Minister Designate. His rise came as a result of political violence that had spread among ethnic groups across the country in previous years, notably following protests by the Oromo, the country's largest ethnic group, and the Amhara, its second largest. Discontent reflected the difficult economic conditions in the country, one of the poorest in Africa, as well as opposition to the EPRDF, which had been in power for 27 years.

Following the onset of protests in 2014, the EPRDF, which was dominated by a largely ethnic Tigrayan elite, proved unable to stem the violence, reflecting growing division inside the movement following the death in 2012 of the then prime minister, Meles Zenawi, who had dominated the organization since 1988.

In early 2018, protests and violence continued across Ethiopia. In a surprise announcement in February, Hailemariam Desalegn, who had led the movement since 2012, resigned both as prime minister and EPRDF chairman. The following day, the government declared a six-month state of emergency.[106] Despite the announcement, violence continued, further damaging the ailing national economy. On 2 April, directly following the March EPRDF Central Committee meeting, the Ethiopian Parliament confirmed Abiy as Prime Minister and he was sworn into office.

As Prime Minister, Abiy moved quickly to announce a new political agenda for the country, including economic reforms, moves towards democratization, and a broadening of the domestic political space, which included the release of thousands of political prisoners and a relaxation of political repression against opposition groups. A key step during his first months in power was to conclude a peace agreement with Eritrea.

The Ethiopia–Eritrea peace agreement

On 5 June 2018, the Executive Committee of the EPRDF announced that it would accept and fully implement the 2002 ruling of the Eritrea–Ethiopia Boundary Commission. On 8–9 July, an Eritrea–Ethiopia summit was held in Asmara, Eritrea, bringing together Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed. At the conclusion of the summit, the two leaders issued the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship, which formally ended the Ethiopian–Eritrean war (1998–2000) and border conflict (2000–2018) and restored full diplomatic relations.[107] In July, President Afwerki made a three-day official visit to Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

The summit and reciprocal high-level visits were supported by steps to resume air flights, open embassies and re-establish telecommunications connections. The USA and the UAE played important diplomatic roles in

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[106] Al Jazeera, 'Ethiopia declares state of emergency after PM quits', 16 Feb. 2018.
[107] Gebrekidan, S., 'Ethiopia and Eritrea declare an end to their war', *New York Times*, 9 July 2018.

the breakthrough.[108] On 11 September 2018, the Eritrean–Ethiopian border crossing reopened for the first time since 1998.[109]

Following the July summit, Ethiopia asked the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, to lift sanctions against Eritrea, which had been in place for nine years. In November, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to remove the sanctions.[110] In December, Ethiopia announced that it would begin moving its troops away from the border with Eritrea.[111]

The peace agreement laid the foundation for reconciliation with Ethiopian armed opposition groups, many of which had found sanctuary in Eritrea. In September, former fighters from Ginbot 7 and the Oromo Liberation Front returned to Ethiopia.[112] In October, Ethiopia concluded a peace agreement with the Ogaden National Liberation Front.[113] In December, the Front's leadership returned to Ethiopia.[114]

Challenges to consolidating regional peace

The process of political transformation in Ethiopia has been central to the peace agreement with Eritrea. The election of Abiy did not, however, lead to immediate solutions to Ethiopia's domestic problems, including ethnic violence and mass population displacement. These even grew in intensity with the proliferation of communal militias.[115] In September, ethnic violence erupted in Addis Abba and neighbouring areas, leading to up to 35 deaths and hundreds of arrests.[116] The ruling EPRDF appeared unable to reform Ethiopia's ethno-federal arrangement (the constitutional organization of the country into federated units based on ethnicity) in ways that could counter the rising violence. At the same time, Abiy faced growing nationalist demands from his own Oromo community.[117]

Despite growth, Ethiopia faced an economic crisis with foreign debt in excess of $24 billion, high levels of unemployment, low foreign currency

[108] Fick, M. and Cornwell, A., 'In peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea, UAE lends a helping hand', *Reuters*, 8 Aug. 2018.

[109] BBC News, 'Ethiopia–Eritrea border reopens after 20 years', 11 Sep. 2018.

[110] BBC News, 'Eritrea breakthrough as UN sanctions lifted', 14 Nov. 2018.

[111] Maasho, A., 'Ethiopia to move troops from Eritrean border as relations thaw', Reuters, 14 Dec. 2018.

[112] Shaban, A. R. A., 'Ethiopia's ex-rebel group Ginbot 7 returns from Eritrea base', Africa News, 3 Sep. 2018; and Shaban, A. R. A., 'Like PG7, Ethiopia govt welcomes Oromo Liberation Front back home', Africa News, 16 Sep. 2018.

[113] Maasho, A., 'Ethiopia signs peace deal with rebels from gas-rich region', Reuters, 21 Oct. 2018.

[114] Shaban, A. R. A., 'Leadership of ex-Ogaden rebels return to Ethiopia from Eritrea', Africa News, 1 Dec. 2018.

[115] Agence France-Presse, 'As Ethiopia reforms, ethnic violence spreads', *East African*, 25 Oct. 2018.

[116] Ahmed, H. and Goldstein, J., 'Thousands are arrested in Ethiopia after ethnic violence', *New York Times*, 24 Sep. 2018.

[117] Reuters, 'A problem for Ethiopia's leader: The young men who helped him to power', *East African*, 2 Nov. 2018.

reserves and reliance on Gulf financing to remain solvent.[118] With elections set for 2020, finding solutions to the spread of ethnic violence and the structural weakness of the economy will be key to consolidating regional peace and stability. Equally, reform of Eritrea's authoritarian political system will be needed to ensure that the peace process becomes rooted in the wider society and develops into something more than an elite agreement.[119]

Armed conflict in Somalia

During 2018 the Federal Government of Somalia, with the support of the international community, continued efforts to stabilize the country. Security remained the priority, notably to counter the violent Islamist movement al-Shabab. The USA stepped up its military engagement, specifically through the targeted killing of violent Islamists. Despite evidence of a considerable loss of life among the Islamist groups, Somalia continued to experience significant levels of armed violence, suggesting that the conflict was in a stalemate during 2018. Large-scale displacement continued in the country, with over 320 000 displaced in 2018 alone, and over 2.6 million Somalis remained internally displaced at the end of the year.[120] More than 1.8 million people in Somalia faced acute food insecurity, although this number had halved from late 2017 mainly as a result of large-scale humanitarian assistance.[121]

Stabilization efforts

In 2018 the Federal Government, with the support of the international community, continued to implement efforts to stabilize the country, notably from late 2017 with an intensification of military operations against violent Islamist groups.[122] On 18 January 2018 the Council of Ministers of the Federal Government endorsed a road map for inclusive politics, designed to counter the political fragmentation in the country, paving the way for elections by universal suffrage in 2020–21.[123] As agreed at a security conference in Moga-dishu on 5 December 2017, the Federal Government and international partners collaborated on the development of a comprehensive security transition plan

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[118] African Development Bank Group, 'Ethiopia economic outlook', [n.d.].

[119] Müller, T., 'Will peace with Ethiopia usher in a political opening in Eritrea?', World Politics Review, 19 Feb. 2019.

[120] UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 'Somalia', Fact Sheet, 1–31 Jan. 2019; and Norwegian Refugee Council, '320 000 Somalis fled conflict and insecurity in 2018', Press release, 28 Feb. 2019.

[121] Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP), 'Monitoring food security in countries with conflict situations: A joint FAO/WFP update for the United Nations Security Council', Jan. 2019, pp. 16–18.

[122] Voice of America, 'Officials: Somalia preparing for large-scale offensive against al-Shabab', 26 Oct. 2017.

[123] United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia, S/2018/411, 2 May 2018.

by which Somali institutions will gradually assume full responsibility for the country's security.[124]

In July, the UN Security Council renewed the mandate of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and authorized a reconfiguration of the mission to increase the number of police personnel.[125] In November, AMISON officials adopted a security transition plan for the gradual transfer of security responsibilities to Somali forces, with final withdrawal of the mission by 2021.[126] On 16–17 July, the high-level Somalia Partnership Forum was held in Brussels.[127] Alongside efforts to promote political inclusion and the security transition, particular attention was devoted to the issue of economic recovery and reforms, improving economic opportunities for women and young people, enhancing education and addressing the country's humanitarian situation.[128] International donors offered financial assistance to support these aims.[129]

US military build-up

US military engagement in Somalia was strengthened during 2018.[130] New military installations were established, notably Camp Baledogle, which became a centre for drone and special forces operations.[131] The Pentagon reported 45 strikes in Somalia in 2018, up from 35 in 2017 and 14 in 2016.[132] However, news reports suggested the attacks were more numerous and involved civilian casualties not acknowledged by US authorities.[133]

Al-Shabab

In 2018, overall violent incidents involving al-Shabab declined.[134] The intensification of AMISOM, Somali National Army and US military operations

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[124] UN Support Office in Somalia, 'Somalia holds high-level security conference to deliberate on a security transition plan', 4 Dec. 2017; and UN Support Office in Somalia, 'Communiqué of the London Conference on Somalia', 11 May 2017.

[125] United Nations, Security Council, 'Unanimously adopting Resolution 2431 (2018), Security Council extends mandate of African Union mission in Somalia, authorizes troop reduction', 30 July 2018.

[126] Oluoch, F., 'Amisom ready to withdraw', *East African*, 12 Nov. 2018.

[127] European Commission, 'International community strengthens support for Somalia's plans for stability and development', Press release, 17 July 2018.

[128] European External Action Service, 'Somalia plans for stability and development: International community strengthens support', 19 July 2018.

[129] Shaban, A. R. A., 'US announces over $900m critical investment in Somalia', Africa News, 19 Dec. 2018; and European Commission (note 127).

[130] Goldbaum, C., 'A Trumpian war on terror that just keeps getting bigger', *The Atlantic*, Sep. 2018.

[131] Goldbaum, C., 'Massive military base buildup suggests the US shadow war in Somalia is only getting bigger', Vice News, 3 May 2018.

[132] Sperber, A., 'US bombardments are driving Somalis from their homes', *Foreign Policy*, 7 Mar. 2019.

[133] Sperber, A., 'Inside the secretive US air campaign in Somalia', *The Nation*, 7 Feb. 2019.

[134] Matfess, H., 'Not with a whimper but with a bang: Al Shabaab's resilience and international efforts against the rebels', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 27 Jan. 2019.

resulted in significant losses by violent Islamist groups.[135] Nevertheless, despite the increased military pressure, al-Shabab demonstrated considerable resilience, expanding the geographic range of its attacks and conducting high-casualty attacks against hard and soft targets.[136] At the same time, violence between al-Shabab and an Islamic State-affiliated group in Somalia intensified. In December, al-Shabab announced a campaign to rid Somalia of all Islamic State-related militants.[137]

Somalia's federalism in crisis

Reflecting the fragmented nature of Somali politics after nearly three decades of civil war, the country is organized as a federal republic, with a central authority (the Federal Government) and six federal member states, which are divided into 18 administrative regions. In 1991 Somaliland declared unilateral independence, a status that is not recognized by the Federal Government.

In April the Qatar diplomatic crisis, which was triggered in 2017 when a group of states led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE severed diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed an economic blockade on the country, spilled into Somalia as relations between the Qatari-backed Federal Government and the UAE soured. Relations initially deteriorated when Somali security staff seized $9.6 million from a UAE plane at Mogadishu airport.[138] Diplomatic tensions between Somalia and the UAE continued in the following months, including over the UAE military base in the breakaway territory of Somaliland.[139] The support being provided by competing Gulf nations to different parts of the Somali federal system raised concerns over a further destabilization of the country's fragile politics.[140]

In May 2018, fighting between Somalia's semiautonomous Puntland region and Somaliland killed dozens of people.[141] In October, fighting between clans erupted in the same area as the May violence, highlighting the multi-dimensional nature of violence in Somalia.[142] In June, the UN Security Council warned that 'internal and external pressures risk undermining

[135] Burke, J., 'US airstrikes fail to weaken al-Shabaab's grip on Somalia', *The Guardian*, 11 Nov. 2018.

[136] Pavlik, M., 'Resilience: Al Shabaab remains a serious threat', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 11 Feb. 2019.

[137] Hassan, M. O., 'Somalia's Al-Shabab declares war on pro-Islamic State group', Voice of America, 21 Dec. 2018.

[138] Sheikh, A., 'Somalia disbands UAE program to pay and train hundreds of soldiers', Reuters, 11 Apr. 2018.

[139] International Crisis Group (ICG), 'Somalia and the Gulf crisis', Africa Report no. 260 (ICG: Brussels, 5 June 2018).

[140] Beevor, E., 'Somalia is becoming a pawn in a UAE–Qatar proxy war for influence', Albawaba, 17 Sep. 2018. On the rivalries within the Gulf Cooperation Council, see section V in this chapter.

[141] Hassan, A., 'Dozens killed in clashes between two Somali regions in land dispute', Reuters, 25 May 2018.

[142] Hassan, A., 'Over 50 reported killed in clan clashes in breakaway Somali region', Reuters, 23 Oct. 2018.

Somalia's political unity'.[143] In September, the federal states suspended cooperation with the Federal Government.[144]

In December, Mukhtar Robow, a former al-Shabab militant, was banned by the Federal Government from competing in a regional election and later arrested.[145] Following Robow's arrest, up to 15 people were killed in two days of clashes between security forces and his supporters.[146] On 30 December, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Nicholas Haysom, wrote to the Federal Government requesting information about actions by Somali security forces during Robow's arrest and the subsequent violence. The Federal Government then expelled the Special Representative, accusing him of interfering with internal affairs.[147]

Armed conflict in South Sudan and the September 2018 peace agreement

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 UN peace-keeping mission, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), was established on 8 July 2011.[148] Although a post-independence civil war (2013–2015) was ended by a 2015 peace agreement, the legacy of violence continued in the form of an armed conflict waged primarily between two groups—the Government of South Sudan and its allies, led by President Salva Kiir (an ethnic Dinka), and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition and the Nuer White Army, led by former vice president Riek Machar (an ethnic Nuer). Although the main division in the civil war and subsequent conflict has been between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups, underlying conflict dynamics vary considerably across the country, and opposition groups have become more fractured and localized.[149]

In May 2017, President Kiir declared a unilateral ceasefire and launched a national dialogue process, which was overseen by an eight-country regional

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[143] Lederer, E., 'UN warns that Somalia's political unity at risk', Associated Press, 7 June 2018.

[144] Hassan, M. O., 'Somali regional states suspend ties with federal government', Voice of America, 8 Sep. 2018.

[145] International Crisis Group, 'Somalia's South West State: A new president installed, a crisis inflamed', Commentary, 24 Dec. 2018.

[146] France24, 'Somalia orders top UN envoy to leave over Robow detention criticism', 2 Jan. 2019.

[147] Sheikh, A., 'Somalia orders top UN official to leave', Reuters, 2 Jan. 2019.

[148] On the current UN peace operation in South Sudan, see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

[149] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Instruments of Pain (II): Conflict and Famine in South Sudan*, Africa Briefing no. 124 (ICG: Brussels, 26 Apr. 2017). On the role of territory, borders and identities in the conflict, see Justin, P. H. and De Vries, L., 'Governing unclear lines: Local boundaries as a (re) source of conflict in South Sudan', *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2019), pp. 31–46. On the role of the Fertit, a minority ethnic community in South Sudan, see Vuylsteke, S., 'Identity and self-determination: The Fertit opposition in South Sudan', Small Arms Survey Briefing Paper, Dec. 2018.

trade bloc, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).[150] Despite continuing chaos and escalating violence, the government and opposition armed groups signed a ceasefire agreement in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 21 December 2017.[151] However, this quickly broke down, as had at least eight others since 2013.

Although fighting diminished from its height in early 2014, violence remained pervasive in 2018.[152] More than 19 000 children have been recruited as child soldiers by both the government's armed forces and the armed opposition groups, and around 2300 cases of sexual violence were reported in the first half of 2018.[153] Since the conflict started in December 2013, one independent study estimates that there have been nearly 400 000 conflict-related deaths (about half directly due to violence and the other half indirectly). South Sudanese officials assert a much smaller estimate of 20 000 deaths, which is in keeping with an estimate by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) of just over 22 500 conflict-related deaths in total, including 1541 recorded in 2018.[154] Some 4.6 million people have been displaced, including about 2.3 million as refugees in neighbouring countries—the largest refugee crisis in Africa, and the third largest in the world (after Syria and Afghanistan).[155] In addition, over 7.1 million people were severely food insecure in 2018.[156]

In February 2018, the USA imposed unilateral arms restrictions on South Sudan in an attempt to pressure President Kiir to end the civil war, and the UN Security Council followed with its own arms embargo in July 2018.[157] The latter was contested within the Security Council, not least because of its uncertain impact on peace negotiations and the national dialogue initiative. The dialogue initiative started in November 2017 at local and regional levels and was due to culminate in a single national conference in late 2018,

[150] Reuters, 'South Sudan's Kiir declares unilateral ceasefire, prisoner release', 22 May 2017. For details on the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, see annex B, section II, in this volume.

[151] Maasho, A., 'South Sudan government, rebel groups sign ceasefire', Reuters, 21 Dec. 2017. On developments within South Sudan in 2017, see Davis et al (note 5), pp. 99–100.

[152] Beaumont, P., 'Born out of brutality, South Sudan, the world's youngest state, drowns in murder, rape and arson', *The Guardian*, 24 June 2018.

[153] Human Rights Watch, 'South Sudan: Warring parties break promises on child soldiers', 5 Feb. 2018; and UNICEF 'Statement on the situation in Bentiu, South Sudan', 3 Dec. 2018.

[154] Checchi, F. et al., 'Estimates of crisis-attributable mortality in South Sudan, December 2013–April 2018: A statistical analysis', London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Sep. 2018; 'South Sudan's civil war: Nearly 400 000 estimated dead', Congressional Research Service (CRS) Insight, 28 Sep. 2018; and Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 'Data export tool'.

[155] UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 'South Sudan situation 1–31 Jan. 2019', [n.d.].

[156] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'South Sudan: Humanitarian snapshot', Aug. 2018.

[157] US Department of State, 'US arms restrictions on South Sudan', Press Statement, 2 Feb. 2018. On the UN arms embargo, see chapter 10, section II, in this volume.

although this was subsequently revised to four conferences: three regional (in February and March 2019) and one national (at an unspecified later date).[158]

In June, President Kiir and Machar signed an initial framework agreement to enact another ceasefire and work towards a new transitional government.[159] Further peace negotiations led to the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 12 September.[160] Brokered by Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, this agreement led to significant reductions in violence across much of the country.[161] An African-led body, the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, is responsible for overseeing implementation of the agreement. Another mechanism, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, investigates ceasefire violations and reports to both the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and IGAD.

However, the new peace deal remains contested and partial. It requires further negotiations to form a unity government, transitional security arrangements and a unified national army, and, after a three-year transition period, to hold a presidential election in 2022. Despite the national dialogue initiative, there is a risk that future negotiations may become too focused on the Kiir–Machar rivalry at the expense of broader community engagement— an approach that has failed in the past to form the basis for a sustainable peace.[162] A similar agreement in 2016 led to the creation of a unity government that collapsed after only a few months.

Corruption also risks undermining the agreement, as does the USA's diminished engagement in the country.[163] As the de facto head of a troika (Norway, the UK and the USA) which was formed to support the 2005 agreement that led to the independence of South Sudan, the USA might have been expected to play an important diplomatic role, but it has had no senior envoy

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[158] Vhumbunu, C. H., 'The National Dialogue Initiative in South Sudan: Assessing progress and pitfalls', African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 31 May 2018; and the South Sudan National Dialogue website, <https://www.ssnationaldialogue.org/>.

[159] International Crisis Group, 'Improving prospects for peace in South Sudan at the African Union Summit', Statement, 30 June 2018; and *The Economist*, 'Ceasefires in South Sudan seldom last', 5 July 2018.

[160] Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 'Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan', 12 Sep. 2018. See also Vhumbunu, C. H., 'Reviving peace in South Sudan through the Revitalised Peace Agreement: Understanding the enablers and possible obstacles', African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 11 Feb. 2019.

[161] United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 2 September to 30 November 2018), S/2018/1103, 10 Dec. 2018.

[162] Westendorf, J.-K., 'Peace negotiations in the political marketplace: The implications of women's exclusion in the Sudan–South Sudan peace process', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 5 (2018), pp. 433–454.

[163] *The Economist*, 'South Sudan's neighbours help launder the loot from its civil war', 13 Dec. 2018.

to the country since 2016.[164] A prolonged crisis in Sudan could also add to the instability in South Sudan (see 'Armed Conflict in Sudan' below).

At the end of 2018, it remained unclear whether the September 2018 agreement would turn out to be a lasting solution to the conflict in South Sudan. The final UN report of 2018 described continued, albeit limited and localized, clashes between some of the armed groups associated with the signatories, and there were continuing incidents of sexual violence in the last three months of 2018.[165]

Armed conflict in Sudan

Sudan has been affected by conflict for most of its recent history. In 2018, the Government of Sudan remained involved in two overlapping low-intensity armed conflicts: in Darfur and in the southern states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. In Darfur, the government is fighting two armed groups—the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement—in a conflict that started in 2003. According to the UN–AU Mission in Darfur, there was a significant reduction in the scale and distribution of violence in Darfur in 2018, although attacks by Sudanese Government forces on rebels in the Jebel Marra area between March and May were reported in which at least 23 civilians were killed.[166]

The armed conflict in the border states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, between the Sudanese Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (which has split into two factions), entered its seventh year in 2018, but with little or no significant fighting reported during the year. In July, the Sudanese Government extended a 2015 unilateral ceasefire with all rebel groups until the end of 2018.[167] In November, it was reported that South Sudan's President Kiir would mediate peace talks between the Sudan Government and the rebel groups.[168]

Although ACLED estimated a total of 1046 conflict-related fatalities in Sudan in 2018, many of these are likely to have been from growing political violence, rather than armed conflict (levels of which are declining).[169] Political repression and corruption continue to undermine peace and

[164] Boswell, A., 'South Sudan: Peace on paper', Commentary, International Crisis Group, 14 Dec. 2018.

[165] United Nations (note 161); and United Nations, Security Council, 'Security Council press statement on sexual violence in South Sudan', SC/13611, 7 Dec. 2018.

[166] Henry, J., 'Latest Sudanese attacks on Darfur show protection needs', Human Rights Watch, 10 May 2018; and United Nations, Security Council, African Union–United Nations hybrid operation in Darfur, report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/44, 14 Jan. 2019.

[167] Reuters, 'Sudan extends ceasefire with rebels until year-end: Statement', 12 July 2018.

[168] Agence France-Presse, 'President of war-torn South Sudan to mediate Sudan peace talks', *East African*, 6 Nov. 2018.

[169] Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'Data export tool'.

prosperity throughout Sudan. Towards the end of the year, President Omar al-Bashir, who came to power in a military coup in 1989, faced the most serious challenge to date from widespread economic-related protests. Security forces responded with force, reportedly killing dozens of protesters.[170] Over 5.5 million Sudanese were in need of humanitarian assistance at the end of 2018; almost 1.9 million people remained displaced internally and 1.2 million were refugees in neighbouring countries, including 270 000 in South Sudan and 340 000 in Chad. Sudan itself hosted over 900 000 refugees, most from South Sudan.[171]

[170] Taylor, M., 'Can Sudan manage economic discontent amid volatile geopolitics?', Commentary, International Crisis Group, 23 Feb. 2018; and , International Crisis Group (ICG), 'Improving prospects for a peaceful transition in Sudan', Africa Briefing no. 143 (ICG: Brussels, 14 Jan. 2019).

[171] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Sudan: Humanitarian snapshot', 1 Dec. 2018; and Refugee Consultation Forum, 'Sudan: South Sudanese refugee response, 1–30 November 2018', 20 Dec. 2018.