

I. Global and regional trends and developments in armed conflicts

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While 2022 was a year of widespread armed conflict, there were variations in the scale, type and causes of conflict-related violence in different regions. Russia's aggression against Ukraine was the bloodiest war of the year, and the impact on food and energy prices was rapidly felt worldwide. However, it was still a rare, although not unique, example of a classic interstate war between standing armies. The majority of conflicts in 2022 continued to take place within states—or across clusters of states in regions with porous borders, such as the Sahel and the Great Lakes region in Africa—and to involve a mix of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) ranging from transnational jihadist organizations to organized criminal networks. Many countries that suffered from violence faced intersecting forms of instability. Burkina Faso, for example, witnessed both an increase in violence by jihadist groups and two military coups d'état in the course of the year. Given the complexity and diversity of the types of armed conflict between and within different regions, it is hard to generalize about *global* trends in conflict.

The challenge of taking a genuinely global view of conflict has taken on additional moral and political, as well as analytical, weight in 2022 for at least four reasons. First, many observers in the Global South, and some in the United States and Europe, have criticized the global media and Western officials for paying more attention to Russia's actions in Ukraine than fatalities and atrocities elsewhere.¹ Second, the spectre of a new cold war between the Western powers, Russia and perhaps China led many analysts to reassess conflicts in other regions as elements of this broader global competition.² The activities of the Wagner Group, a Russian 'private military company' active in Africa and Ukraine, came in for particular scrutiny as possible evidence of Russia's global reach.³ Third, the global price shocks associated with Russia's aggression, which compounded the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and already high inflation, caused some observers to fear that economic distress could cause conflict elsewhere.⁴ Fourth, the obvious failure of the United Nations to prevent Russia from breaching the UN Charter sparked a

¹ Ridgwell, H., 'Amnesty cites "double standards" in global response to Russia's war on Ukraine', *Voice of America*, 28 Mar. 2023.

² Burrows, M. and Darnal, A., 'Red cell: Is the West losing the Global South?', Stimson Center, 10 Dec. 2022.

³ See e.g. 'Russia has made worrying inroads into Africa', *Financial Times*, 4 Sep. 2022; and Tharoor, I., 'Russia deepens its influence in West Africa', *Washington Post*, 24 Oct. 2022. On the Wagner Group, see chapter 4 in this volume.

⁴ International Crisis Group, '7 Priorities for the G7: Managing the global fallout of Russia's War on Ukraine', Brussels, 22 June 2022.

Table 2.1. Estimated conflict-related fatalities by region, 2018–22

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Americas	23 290	22 339	20 205	20 582	21 247
Asia and Oceania	49 857	48 786	36 378	58 070	28 204
Europe	1 093	481	7 313	279	29 015
Middle East and North Africa	76 712	53 481	34 245	28 629	18 665
Sub-Saharan Africa	26 532	27 243	38 502	46 193	50 478
Total	177 484	152 330	136 643	153 753	147 609

Note: Fatality figures are collated from 4 event types: battles; explosions/remote violence; protests, riots and strategic developments; and violence against civilians. Figures include all conflict-related fatalities in the region, irrespective of whether the countries were engaged in armed conflict. See Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), ‘ACLED definitions of political violence and protest’, 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, ‘Dashboard’, accessed 27 Jan. 2023.

debate inside and outside the UN system on the flaws of international conflict management.⁵

In this context, the data on armed conflict in this SIPRI Yearbook is valuable as an objective touchpoint in often emotional debates about recent international events (see section III, table 2.8). This section summarizes some of the main global features of armed conflict identifiable from this data and briefly surveys diverging regional trends. The subsection on Asia summarizes conflict dynamics in Myanmar, while the subsection on Europe includes a narrative of Russia’s war on Ukraine.

Global trends in armed conflict

Data gathered by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) suggests that at least 56 countries experienced armed conflict in 2022 (see section III, table 2.8), with an estimated 147 609 conflict-related fatalities worldwide. These figures are tentative and it is noteworthy that estimates of fatalities for at least two wars, in Ethiopia and Ukraine, vary considerably.⁶ Nonetheless, ACLED’s figures are ostensibly similar to those for 2021, when 51 countries in conflict led to 153 753 related deaths. This apparent continuity is deceptive as there were major fluctuations in levels of violence in different regions over the two years (see table 2.1). Two regions—Asia and Oceania, and the Middle East and North Africa—experienced significant declines in conflict-related deaths in 2022. Africa and the Americas saw increases and Europe saw a huge leap tied to Russia’s war against Ukraine. The geography

⁵ Gowan, R., ‘The Ukraine war and UN reform’, International Crisis Group, 6 May 2022; and Friedman, U., ‘How the UN Security Council can reinvent itself’, *The Atlantic*, 7 July 2022.

⁶ See Pilling, D. and Schipani, A., ‘War in Tigray may have killed 600 000 people, peace mediator says’, *Financial Times*, 15 Jan. 2023; and Keaten, J., ‘The calculus of war: Tallying Ukraine war an elusive task’, *The Independent*, 24 Feb. 2023.

of armed conflict judged in terms of deaths rather than conflicts has altered decisively over the past five years. In 2017, Asian and Middle Eastern conflicts accounted for 71 per cent of all recorded conflict-related fatalities worldwide. In 2022, they accounted for just 31 per cent.

This rise and fall in regional death rates, however, is mainly attributable to the de-escalation and escalation of a few specific conflicts. The decline in death rates in Asia is almost entirely attributable to the decline in violence in Afghanistan after the Taliban seized power in 2021, while the slowing of the wars in Iraq and Syria are the main factors in the Middle East figures. Conversely, ACLED's data identifies three countries that experienced 'major wars' in statistical terms, where recorded conflict-related fatalities exceeded 10 000: Ukraine, Myanmar and Nigeria. In addition, reports suggest that ACLED's data under-reports fatalities in Ethiopia's Tigray province in 2022, which should probably also be regarded as a major war. ACLED further identified 16 high-intensity conflicts (1000 to 9999 fatalities) during the year: seven in Africa, four in the Americas, three in the Middle East and two in Asia (see section III, table 2.8).

Despite the major fluctuations in levels of conflict-related fatalities between 2021 and 2022, there were also notable continuities. There were no completely new wars on a significant scale in 2022 (Russia's all-out assault on Ukraine was itself an escalation of a conflict that had been running since 2014).⁷ While some bloody conflicts did pause or de-escalate in the course of the year, the resulting peace deals are tentative and easily reversible. As in recent years, most conflicts were classifiable as intrastate armed conflicts (as opposed to interstate), but this definition is of limited utility for two reasons. First, many supposedly intrastate wars are now part of regional conflict formations, such as those in the Sahel and the Great Lakes; and, second, there was a high degree of 'internationalization' of civil wars and other internal conflicts, as outside actors offered direct or indirect support to the combatants.⁸ In Africa, in particular, this regionalization and internationalization of conflict is associated with the persistence of transnational extremist jihadist organizations, although interstate competition is also a prominent factor.

Economic shocks, political instability and armed conflict

One global phenomenon that *could* have been associated with conflict trends in 2022 was the global economic turbulence associated with Russia's war on

⁷ The combined total of conflict-related fatalities in states passing the baseline for 'armed conflict' (25 deaths) in 2022 that had not done so in 2021 was just over 300.

⁸ An armed conflict is considered 'internationalized' if there is significant involvement by a foreign entity that is clearly prolonging or exacerbating the conflict, such as armed intervention in support of—or the provision of significant levels of weapons or military training to—one or more of the conflict parties by a foreign government or non-state actor, including private military companies. Multilateral peace operations are another form of internationalization of a conflict (see chapter 3 in this volume).

Table 2.2. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in the Americas, 2018–22

Country	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Brazil	6 463	4 909	5 033	5 546	6 434
Colombia	1 473	1 422	1 758	2 135	2 260
El Salvador	941	879	362	402	267
Guatemala	796	1 112	573	661	642
Haiti	229	374	520	584	1 227
Honduras	672	907	662	596	595
Jamaica	223	275	258	275	376
Mexico	9 799	9 362	8 411	8 280	7 793
Puerto Rico	124	144	114 ^a	173	202
Trinidad and Tobago	242	178	159	185	275
Venezuela	1 859	2 489	2005	1396	827
Total	22 821	22 051	19 855	20 233	20 898

Notes: Fatality figures are collated from 4 event types: battles; explosions/remote violence; protests, riots and strategic developments; and violence against civilians. See Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), ‘ACLED definitions of political violence and protest’, 11 Apr. 2019. A country is treated as being in an armed conflict if there were 25 or more battle-related deaths in a given year. The first available year for data on conflicts in the region in the ACLED database is 2018.

^a Battle-related deaths were below 25.

Source: ACLED, ‘Dashboard’, accessed 10–11 Jan. 2023.

Ukraine—and the imposition by Western powers of wide-ranging sanctions on Russia—adding to existing pressures tied to Covid-19 recovery and already rising levels of inflation. Wheat and corn prices reached record highs in the first half of the year as a collapse in Ukrainian and Russian grain and fertilizer exports compounded existing agricultural supply problems.⁹ Energy prices also rose sharply, which in turn made food exports more expensive.¹⁰ Many observers feared that this combination of shocks would hit countries that were already experiencing conflict or political instability and were heavily reliant on food imports, such as Somalia and Lebanon, particularly hard.¹¹ While global food price increases began to level off from the second quarter of 2022, concerns about economic destabilization persisted throughout the year.

In retrospect, it seems safe to say that economic factors did contribute to an increase in political instability in 2022 but that this did *not* translate immediately into a rise in armed conflict. One study based on ACLED data identifies 12 500 food- and fuel-related protests in 150 countries in 2022, with the largest number of such protests in Pakistan, Ecuador, India, Indonesia and

⁹ ‘War and drought drove food prices to a record high in 2022’, AP News, 7 Jan. 2023.

¹⁰ Guénette, J.-D. and Khadan, J., ‘The energy shock could sap global growth for years’, World Bank Blogs, 22 June 2022.

¹¹ See e.g. McGuirk, E. and Burke, M., ‘War in Ukraine, world food prices and conflict in Africa’, VoxEU, 26 May 2022; and Rahman, F., ‘Lebanon is country worst hit by food-inflation crisis’, *The National*, 4 Aug. 2022.

Nepal.¹² Although these events sometimes became violent—as when police in Sierra Leone fired on a group of protestors in August 2022, reportedly killing approximately 20 people—they did not generally escalate into larger-scale or prolonged violence.¹³ The most obvious example of this tendency was in Sri Lanka, where economic problems—largely the result of pressures that predated Russia’s invasion of Ukraine—led to a wave of protests and the fall of the government in June 2022.¹⁴ These protests did not escalate into sustained violence or the targeting of the country’s Tamil or Muslim minorities.

In some cases, such as Haiti, economically motivated protests increased instability in already violent situations, adding to the problem of gang-related violence. Haitian gangs also targeted the country’s fuel supply.¹⁵ Furthermore, it is worth noting that persistent economic deprivation and inequality is an established factor in many of the conflicts cited here. The expansion of transnational extremist jihadist groups in the Sahel, for example, is linked to a lack of economic opportunities for young men in the region, who turn to violence as a means of subsistence.¹⁶ In some conflict-affected states, such as Sudan, economic pain and surging inflation placed political actors under additional pressure throughout the year.¹⁷ While the economic fall-out from the Russian–Ukrainian War may have exacerbated these problems, it did not lead *directly* to new wars in 2022.

Regional conflict dynamics

Beneath the broad global trends noted above, a review of ACLED’s data highlights that conflict dynamics continued to vary markedly across regions in 2022.

The Americas

The overall level of violence in the Americas remained fairly constant between 2021, with 20 233 conflict-related fatalities, and 2022, with 20 898 (see table 2.2). Most of the violence in the region was linked to organized

¹² Hossain, N. and Hallock, J., *Food, Energy and Cost of Living Protests, 2022* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung: New York, Dec. 2022).

¹³ Fofana, U. and Inveen, C., ‘Freetown in shock after dozens killed in Sierra Leone protests’, Reuters, 11 Aug. 2022.

¹⁴ Keenan, A., ‘Sri Lanka’s uprising forces out a president but leaves system in crisis’, International Crisis Group, 18 July 2022.

¹⁵ Mérancourt, W. and Coletta, A., ‘Steep fuel price hikes spark violent protests in Haiti’, *Washington Post*, 16 Sep. 2022.

¹⁶ Eizenga, D., ‘Long terms trends across security and development in the Sahel’, West African Papers no. 29 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Paris, 2019).

¹⁷ Oluwole, V., ‘Top 10 African countries with the highest inflation rates in 2022’, *Business Insider Africa*, 22 June 2022.

Table 2.3. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Asia and Oceania, 2017–22

Country	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Afghanistan	36 956	43 367	41 620	31 359	42 630	3 956
Bangladesh	228	243	382	278 ^a	354 ^a	308
India	1 418	2 170	1 536	1 341	1 013	905
Indonesia	49 ^a	164	212	131	135	247
Kyrgyzstan	..	4 ^a	8 ^a	2 ^a	32 ^b	70 ^b
Myanmar	1 408	262	1 514	687	11 011	19 357
Pakistan	1 720	1 225	1 157	835	1 409	1 785
Papua New Guinea	..	..	..	..	131	223
Philippines	4 355	2 107	1 704	1 497	1 163	890
Tajikistan	..	64 ^a	66 ^a	2 ^a	20 ^b	71 ^b
Thailand	93	100	172	102	66	42 ^a
Total	46 227	49 706	48 371	36 234	57 964	27 854

.. = Data not available.

Notes: Fatality figures are collated from 4 event types: battles; explosions/remote violence; protests, riots and strategic developments; and violence against civilians. See Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019. A country is treated as being in an armed conflict if there were 25 or more battle-related deaths in a given year.

^a Battle-related deaths were below 25.

^b Combined battle-related deaths exceeded 25.

Source: ACLED, 'Dashboard', accessed 13 Jan. 2023.

crime.¹⁸ Central American governments pursued robust security operations against cartels and gangs. El Salvador declared a state of emergency in March and launched an anti-gang crackdown that made progress in weakening criminal groups but raised concerns about government repression.¹⁹ Mexico also continued to pursue a highly securitized strategy against criminal organizations, claiming progress in reducing crime (ACLED data suggests fatalities in the country fell in 2022) but surges in criminal violence remained common.²⁰ In Colombia, by contrast, newly elected President Gustavo Petro promised a conciliatory approach to conflict resolution (see section II). The most striking surge in violence in the Americas, however, was in Haiti, where heavily armed gangs took control of swathes of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and its environs.²¹ In September, the situation escalated when gang members blockaded the city's fuel terminal, cutting off gas supplies for two months.²²

¹⁸ For a discussion of gang–state violence in the Americas see 'Armed conflict and peace processes in the Americas', *SIPRI Yearbook 2022*, pp. 75–102.

¹⁹ Quintanilla, J. and Phillips, T., 'El Salvador crackdown breaks the gangs: At huge cost to human rights', *The Guardian*, 20 Feb. 2023.

²⁰ 'Several violent episodes in Mexico suggest a worrying trend', *The Economist*, 1 Sep. 2022.

²¹ International Crisis Group, 'Haiti's last resort: Gangs and the prospect of foreign intervention', Crisis Group Latin America and Caribbean Briefing no. 48, Brussels, 14 Dec. 2022.

²² Isaac, H. and Ellsworth, B., 'Gang blockade cripples Haiti fuel supplies, hospitals prepare to close', *Reuters*, 27 Sep. 2022.

Asia and Oceania

In Asia, the number of conflict-related fatalities in Afghanistan fell sharply from over 40 000 in 2021 to fewer than 4000 in 2022, as the Taliban imposed its rule on the country (see table 2.3). The Taliban faced ongoing challenges from Islamic State–Khorasan Province (ISKP) and the National Resistance Front (NRF), a group based in the north of the country.²³ ISKP has carried out bombings in Kabul but neither group yet presents a serious threat to Taliban rule. Despite the much reduced level of violence, Afghans faced dire economic conditions throughout 2022. More than 24 million people required humanitarian assistance and the Taliban placed new curbs on women's rights.²⁴ While the USA and its allies have largely given up on counterterrorist operations in Afghanistan, the USA made an exception when it killed al-Qaeda leader Ayman Zawahiri in Kabul in a drone strike.²⁵ The number of attacks on Pakistan's security forces on its border with Afghanistan increased, possibly linked to the Afghan Taliban harbouring its Pakistani allies, while Pakistan endured an extended political crisis following the ousting of Prime Minister Imran Khan by parliament.²⁶

There were also varying types of instability and armed conflict across other parts of Asia in 2022. In January, widespread protests broke out in Kazakhstan over economic issues. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) deployed troops at the request of the government to help maintain order, in an operation that lasted less than two weeks.²⁷ There were border clashes between Kyrgyz and Tajik forces throughout the year, including a serious flare-up in mid September, but the two sides were able to agree cease-fires before any incidents escalated out of control.²⁸ In South Asia, there was a spike in violence in Kashmir, as anti-Indian militant groups targeted the region's Hindu minority.²⁹ China and India continued their long-standing border dispute. Chinese forces entered Indian-administered territory in Arunachal Pradesh in December but there was no flare-up equivalent to

²³ International Crisis Group, 'Afghanistan's security challenges under the Taliban', Asia Report no. 326, Brussels, 12 Aug. 2022.

²⁴ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs et al., *Humanitarian Needs Overview: Afghanistan*, Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2023, Jan. 2023.

²⁵ Plummer, R. and Murphy, M., 'Ayman al-Zawahiri: Al-Qaeda leader killed in drone strike', BBC News, 2 Aug. 2022.

²⁶ See 'Pakistan' in International Crisis Group, 'Ten conflicts to watch in 2023', Global commentary, 1 Jan. 2023.

²⁷ Hegglin, O., 'The CSTO and its deployment in Kazakhstan', Human Security Centre, 8 Feb. 2022. See also chapter 3, section I, in this volume.

²⁸ Sultanalieva, S., 'Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border clashes prove deadly for civilians', Human Rights Watch, 21 Sep. 2022.

²⁹ International Crisis Group, 'Violence in Kashmir: Why a spike in killings signals an ominous new trend', 28 June 2022.

the 2020 clash at Galwan, which resulted in fatalities on both sides.³⁰ China also increased military pressure on Taiwan, doubling the number of its air sorties into the Taiwanese Air Defence Identification Zone in the course of 2022, notably in response to the visit of US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to the island in August.³¹ In the Philippines, by contrast, the government made progress in the peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao, and the movement engaged in local elections for the first time in May.³²

Myanmar

The most dramatic surge in violence in Asia took place in Myanmar, where a patchwork coalition of armed groups and militias continued to resist the military regime that took power in a coup d'état in 2021.³³ The military State Administration Council (SAC) and its allies faced a range of opponents, which included civilian protestors, a civil disobedience movement, long-standing ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and a large number of anti-coup militias, including the People's Defence Forces (PDFs), a loose coalition of armed groups broadly loyal to the anti-junta National Unity Government (NUG). Estimates of the number of PDF groups, which one analysis describes as 'small cells of people who oppose the coup' rather than formed military units, ranged from the hundreds to the thousands in 2022.³⁴ The NUG's political control or influence over these local forces is limited. Although the NUG declared a 'people's war' against the military in September 2021, the resulting conflict has been fragmented, involving varying coalitions of armed actors in different regions.

Anti-SAC groups carried out bombings and other attacks in urban centres, including the commercial capital Yangon, but the SAC maintained control of these cities.³⁵ The majority of the violence took place in rural areas, which are home to two-thirds of Myanmar's population. PDF units largely made up of civilians were particularly active in the Dry Zone of central Myanmar, launching ambushes and improvised explosive device attacks against the pro-SAC Pyusawhti militia and the army.³⁶ While the junta ratcheted up attacks on its

³⁰ Lalwani, S. P., Markey, D. and Singh, V., 'Another clash on the India-China border underscores risks of militarisation', US Institute of Peace, 20 Dec. 2022.

³¹ AFP, 'China's warplane incursions into Taiwan air defence zone doubled in 2022', *The Guardian*, 1 Jan. 2023.

³² Engelbrecht, G., 'Ballots and bullets in Bangsamoro', International Crisis Group, 20 June 2022.

³³ International Crisis Group, 'Myanmar's coup shakes up its ethnic conflicts', Asia Report no. 319, Brussels, 12 Jan. 2022.

³⁴ Loong, S., 'Post-coup Myanmar in six warscapes', International Institute for Strategic Studies, 10 June 2022.

³⁵ Robinson, G., 'Yangon's calm masks Myanmar's pain a year after military takeover', *Financial Times*, 9 Feb. 2022.

³⁶ Loong, S., 'The Dry Zone: An existential struggle in central Myanmar', International Institute for Strategic Studies, 5 July 2022.

opponents in the first quarter of 2022—burning homes, executing detainees and allegedly using children as human shields in at least one incident—its forces failed to reassert full control and resistance attacks continued through the year.³⁷

In other parts of the country, existing EAOs continued to play a central role in the conflict. In south-eastern Myanmar, the Karen National Union (KNU) and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) allied with newer post-coup groups and have been politically supportive of the NUG.³⁸ The military and the SAC responded with similar tactics to those used in the Dry Zone, frequently resorting to air strikes against population centres. In north-eastern Myanmar, by contrast, most EAOs kept their political distance from the NUG, although a few fought independent campaigns against the SAC throughout the year.³⁹ Shan State also experienced fighting among the EAOs themselves. In Rakhine State, on the border with Bangladesh, the site of the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya in 2016–17, the Arakan Army (AA) maintained an informal ceasefire with SAC forces throughout the first half of 2022. The AA, which is seeking a quasi-independent enclave inside Myanmar, took advantage of the junta's focus on other areas to consolidate its control in rural areas.⁴⁰ However, the AA declined to enter formal peace talks with the SAC in June, and hostilities between the two sides reignited in July when the military launched air attacks on AA bases.⁴¹ The two sides agreed a new informal ceasefire in late November, which held for the remainder of the year, although there is little sign of the AA or the SAC wanting to move to more durable peace talks.⁴²

By the end of the year, Myanmar appeared to be locked in an open-ended cycle of conflict and fragmentation. While the NUG and PDFs remained splintered in most regions, they also proved durable, using online fundraising targeted at the diaspora to fund their campaigns.⁴³ Data gathered by ACLED shows the military becoming more reliant on air strikes across the country, highlighting the SAC's preference for punishment and containment rather

³⁷ Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'Myanmar junta soldiers said to have held preschoolers as "human shields" after raid', RFA Myanmar Service, 28 Feb. 2022.

³⁸ Loong, S., 'Southeast Myanmar: A shared struggle for federal democracy', International Institute for Strategic Studies, 23 Sep. 2022.

³⁹ Loong, S., 'Northeast Myanmar: Three axes of conflict', International Institute for Strategic Studies, 16 Aug. 2022.

⁴⁰ International Crisis Group, 'Avoiding a return to war in Myanmar's Rakhine State', Asia Report no. 325, Brussels, 1 June 2022.

⁴¹ Hlaing, H. W., 'Insurgents in Rakhine State return to war on the military', US Institute for Peace, 3 Oct. 2022.

⁴² Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'Myanmar military, Arakan Army halt hostilities on humanitarian grounds', RFA Burmese, 28 Nov. 2022.

⁴³ International Crisis Group, 'Crowdfunding a war: The money behind Myanmar's resistance', Asia Report no. 328, 20 Dec. 2022.

than the more difficult task of subduing its opponents—even though it vastly outguns them.⁴⁴

Peacemaking efforts led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the UN made little progress. Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia, which chaired ASEAN in 2022, visited Myanmar in January but made little impact on the political situation and faced criticism from other members for the initiative.⁴⁵ The SAC failed to make any progress on implementation of the Five-Point Consensus agreed with ASEAN in April 2021, and angered the grouping by executing four political opponents in July, despite pleas for clemency from Hun Sen. ASEAN continued its 2021 policy of excluding representatives of the junta from its key meetings, including a summit with US President Joe Biden in May.⁴⁶ Although the SAC initiated peace talks with a number of EAOs in mid 2022, most observers dismissed this as window dressing and the EAOs that are actively fighting the regime did not participate.⁴⁷ Cambodia's foreign minister and ASEAN special envoy for Myanmar, Prak Sokhonn, announced that the SAC was willing to talk to the NUG in July, but the SAC's terms, which included the NUG renouncing its opposition to military rule, were unrealistic.⁴⁸ UN envoy Noeleen Heyzer visited Myanmar in August but her meetings were unproductive and the SAC refused to let her see the jailed civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.⁴⁹

In November, ASEAN leaders agreed at their annual summit to continue to exclude SAC representatives from key meetings but stepped back from imposing further penalties on the junta.⁵⁰ The SAC made one positive gesture to the opposition on 17 November, marking Myanmar's National Day by pardoning 6000 prisoners including some high-profile political detainees.⁵¹ However, the SAC began pressing ahead with preparations for national elections in 2023, which many observers fear will be a lightning rod for further violence.⁵² In December, the UN Security Council passed its first full resolution on Myanmar (see section II) calling for an end to the violence, a

⁴⁴ Head J., 'Myanmar: Airstrikes have become deadly new tactic in the civil war', BBC News, 31 Jan. 2023.

⁴⁵ Nachemson, A., 'Misreading the room: Why Hun Sen is failing on Myanmar', Al Jazeera, 30 Mar. 2022.

⁴⁶ Widakuswara, P., 'Empty chair for Myanmar in US-ASEAN special summit', Voice of America, 12 May 2022.

⁴⁷ 'Myanmar junta seeks to divide and rule in EAO peace talks', Mizzima, 6 June 2022.

⁴⁸ Strangio, S., 'ASEAN envoy hails "some progress" on second Myanmar mission', The Diplomat, 7 July 2022.

⁴⁹ Peck, G. and Lederer E. M., 'UN envoys tells Myanmar general: End violence, seek democracy', AP News, 17 Aug. 2022.

⁵⁰ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 'ASEAN leaders' review and decision on the implementation of the five-point consensus', Statement, 11 Nov. 2022.

⁵¹ 'Some political prisoners among almost 6000 freed in Myanmar junta amnesty', The Irrawaddy, 17 Nov. 2022. The SAC announced a further mass amnesty for over 7000 prisoners in Jan. 2023.

⁵² International Crisis Group, 'A road to nowhere: The Myanmar regime's stage-managed elections', Asia Briefing no. 175, Brussels, 28 Mar. 2023.

return to democracy and cooperation with ASEAN. This was in part meant to be a signal to Indonesia, ASEAN chair in 2023, to push more actively for inclusive dialogue between the key players, including anti-coup forces.

Europe: Russia's war on Ukraine

The situation in Europe dominated international relations throughout the year. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, which was apparently planned as a short operation to oust Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky from office, morphed into the first large-scale war in Europe since the Balkan wars of the 1990s after the initial Russian offensive was repelled in March and April. The war, which increasingly pivoted around large-scale artillery battles as the conflict dragged on, raised fundamental questions about the future of the European and global security orders, including the taboo against nuclear weapon use.

The USA and its allies warned loudly of Russia's military build-up around Ukraine, including in Belarus, throughout the last quarter of 2021 and in the first months of 2022.⁵³ A series of meetings between Western and Russian officials to discuss European security issues in January bore little fruit.⁵⁴ The crisis accelerated on 21 February when the Russian government formally recognized Donetsk and Luhansk (the secessionist regions of eastern Ukraine outside Kyiv's control since 2014) as independent republics and promised to send a 'peacekeeping force' to protect them.⁵⁵ This pretext for invasion was not given long to develop. On 24 February, Russia launched a full-scale assault on Ukraine, seizing territory in the south of the country while attacking Kyiv from the north. The offensive on the capital soon stuttered as Ukrainian forces put up unexpectedly stiff resistance and the Russian army was hampered by poor planning and logistics.⁵⁶ On 29 March, Russia announced that it was reducing operations on the Kyiv front.⁵⁷ Ukrainian forces found evidence of Russian atrocities, including a massacre of hundreds of civilians in the town of Bucha.⁵⁸

The military focus shifted to Ukraine's south-eastern coast as Russian forces attempted to consolidate early gains by capturing the city of Mariupol.⁵⁹

⁵³ For a narrative on pre-war diplomacy see Harris, S. et al., 'Road to war: US struggled to convince allies, and Zelensky, of risk of invasion', *Washington Post*, 16 Aug. 2022.

⁵⁴ Pifer, S., 'After US–Russia, NATO–Russia, and OSCE meetings, what next?', Brookings Institution, 13 Jan. 2022.

⁵⁵ 'Putin orders Russian forces to "perform peacekeeping functions" in eastern Ukraine's breakaway regions', Reuters, 22 Feb. 2022.

⁵⁶ For a detailed analysis of Russia's plans and initial operations, see Zabrodskyi, M. et al., *Preliminary Lessons in Conventional Warfighting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine* (Royal United Services Institute: London, 30 Nov. 2022).

⁵⁷ Jack, V. and Gijs, C., 'Russia says that it will reduce Kyiv offensive to "increase trust" for future peace talks', Politico, 29 Mar. 2022.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, 'Ukraine: Russian forces' trail of death in Bucha', 21 Apr. 2022.

⁵⁹ 'Mariupol: Key moments in the siege of the city', BBC News, 17 May 2022.

The siege of Mariupol, which culminated in fighting in and around the gigantic Azovstal steelworks, ended in May, leaving the city devastated. In parallel, Russia suffered an embarrassing setback at sea when Ukraine sank the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, the *Moskva*, on 14 April.⁶⁰ Russian forces secured additional territory in eastern Ukraine in the months that followed, but the pace of their advance was now grinding.⁶¹ The war increasingly involved massive artillery exchanges, with both sides expending huge quantities of munitions.⁶²

Throughout the third quarter of 2022, Ukraine signalled that it was preparing to launch a counteroffensive. Ukrainian forces retook some 12 000 square kilometres of north-eastern Ukraine around Kharkiv in under two weeks, pushing back ill-prepared Russian units.⁶³ Russia responded by announcing the annexation of the Ukrainian oblasts under its control or partial control in late September, after brief ‘referendums’ in the regions which the UN General Assembly declared illegal.⁶⁴ Ukraine also fought a protracted battle to retake the southern city of Kherson, from which Russian forces withdrew in November.⁶⁵

Russia had been carrying out missile attacks on targets across Ukraine from the first days of the war, but it began more systematic attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure in the third quarter of the year.⁶⁶ Russia accelerated these attacks after a successful Ukrainian sabotage operation against the Kerch Bridge, which connects Crimea to Russia, in October. Russia’s overarching goal appeared to be to break the Ukrainian will to fight by creating widespread power shortages over the winter.⁶⁷ In addition to its missile stocks, Russia used Iranian-made drones in this campaign, cementing ties between the two countries.⁶⁸ While the Russian campaign caused many temporary blackouts in Ukraine (which would continue into 2023), as well as

⁶⁰ Russia attributed the sinking to an unexplained fire aboard the ship. Hauser, J., ‘1 dead and 27 missing after Russian flagship *Moskva* sunk in Black Sea’, CNN, 22 Apr. 2022.

⁶¹ See e.g. ‘Russia advances in battle for key eastern Ukrainian city’, Al Jazeera, 19 June 2022.

⁶² De Luce, D., Kube, C. and Lee, C. E., ‘Who will win in Ukraine? It could hinge on which side can secure enough artillery ammunition’, NBC News, 13 Dec. 2022.

⁶³ Khurshudyan, I. et al., ‘Inside the Ukrainian counteroffensive that shocked Putin and reshaped the war’, *Washington Post*, 29 Dec. 2022.

⁶⁴ ‘Russia annexes four Ukrainian regions’, Deutsche Welle, 30 Sep. 2022; and United Nations, ‘Ukraine: UN General Assembly demands Russia reverse course on “attempted illegal annexation”’, UN News, 12 Oct. 2022.

⁶⁵ Rácz, A., ‘Russia’s withdrawal from Kherson’, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), 10 Nov. 2022.

⁶⁶ Schlein, L., ‘UN: Half of Ukraine’s energy infrastructure destroyed by Russian attacks’, *Voice of America*, 13 Dec. 2022.

⁶⁷ Glanz, J. and Hernandez, M., ‘How Ukraine blew up a key Russian bridge’, *New York Times*, 17 Nov. 2022.

⁶⁸ Grove, T., ‘Russia launches new drone attacks as partnership with Iran deepens’, *Wall Street Journal*, 10 Dec. 2022.

significant civilian casualties, there was no sign of a collapse in public morale by December.

Throughout the war, Russian President Vladimir Putin and other Russian officials, backed by voluble media commentators, signalled a willingness to use nuclear weapons in the war if North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states intervened directly.⁶⁹ While US officials consistently maintained that they saw no sign of Russia preparing for imminent battlefield nuclear weapon use, there was widespread international concern about the risks related to the fighting around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in southern Ukraine, which Russian troops used as a military base.⁷⁰ Russia's warnings of nuclear weapon use disturbed Western decision makers. President Biden warned of a risk of 'Armageddon' in October.⁷¹ Especially around the Group of Twenty (G20) summit in November, the USA and its allies lobbied hard and successfully for China and other major non-Western powers to warn against nuclear weapon use.⁷² These efforts and back-channel talks seemed to ease US concerns about Russia's intentions.⁷³

While primarily fought on the battlefield, the war was accompanied by a wider 'war of narratives' as both sides used information campaigns to shape global perceptions of the conflict—especially through social media.⁷⁴ Russia floated a series of allegations, including in the UN Security Council, that the USA had maintained a biological weapon programme in Ukraine. (The Chinese authorities were also keen to amplify these claims.)⁷⁵ In October, Russia claimed that Ukraine was working on a 'dirty bomb' using nuclear materials, although an investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) helped dispel this allegation.⁷⁶ Overall, Ukraine decisively won the battle to shape the public narrative about the war in Europe and the USA throughout 2022; although some Republican politicians continued to oppose the USA investing heavily in support of the Ukrainian government, Russia had more success in selling its narrative to non-Western audiences.⁷⁷

There were few openings for a peaceful end to the war. In the first months of hostilities, Ukrainian and Russian representatives met for talks in Belarus

⁶⁹ Horovitz, L. and Wachs, L., 'Russia's nuclear threats in the war against Ukraine', German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 20 Apr. 2022.

⁷⁰ Bachega, H., 'Russia using Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant as army base, Ukraine', BBC News, 8 Aug. 2022.

⁷¹ Blake, A., 'Biden's scary invocation of nuclear "Armageddon"', *Washington Post*, 7 Oct. 2022.

⁷² Bugos, S., 'G-20 majority condemns Russian nuclear threats', *Arms Control Today*, Dec. 2022.

⁷³ Barnes, J. E. and Sanger, D. E., 'Fears of Russian nuclear weapons use have diminished, but could re-emerge', *New York Times*, 3 Feb. 2023.

⁷⁴ Butcher, E., 'War of narratives: Russia and Ukraine', Royal United Services Institute, 16 May 2022.

⁷⁵ Rising, D., 'China amplifies unsupported Russian claim of Ukraine biolabs', AP News, 11 Mar. 2022. See also chapter 9, section II, in this volume.

⁷⁶ Borger, D., 'Russia steps up Ukraine "dirty bomb" claim in letter delivered to UN', *The Guardian*, 25 Oct. 2022.

⁷⁷ See e.g. Blankenship, M. and Ordu, A. U., 'Russia's narratives about its invasion of Ukraine are lingering in Africa', Brookings Institution, 27 June 2022.

Table 2.4. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Europe, 2018–22

Country	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Armenia	6 ^b	2 ^a	27	24 ^b	217
Azerbaijan	47 ^b	14 ^a	7 057	33 ^b	68
Russia	121	46	56	26 ^a	105 ^a
Ukraine	889	403	113	149	28 357 ^c
Total	1 063	465	7 253	232	28 747

Notes: Fatality figures are collated from 4 event types: battles; explosions/remote violence; protests, riots and strategic developments; and violence against civilians. See Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), ‘ACLED definitions of political violence and protest’, 11 Apr. 2019. A country is treated as being in an armed conflict if there were 25 or more battle-related deaths in a given year. The first available year for data on conflicts in the region in the ACLED database is 2018.

^a Battle-related deaths were below 25.

^b Combined battle-related deaths exceeded 25.

^c May be a severe underestimate (see table 2.8).

Source: ACLED, ‘Dashboard’, accessed 18 Jan. 2023.

and Türkiye.⁷⁸ Both Russian and Western sources have claimed that a deal seemed close in April—possibly involving a Ukrainian pledge not to join NATO in return for a Russian withdrawal to the lines of 23 February—but the details are unclear.⁷⁹ Early on in the war, President Zelensky floated ideas for a new system of security guarantees for Ukraine as part of a peace settlement.⁸⁰ As the war continued, however, the public positions of both sides hardened. Russia’s purported annexation of Ukrainian territory in September made the prospects for diplomacy even narrower. In November, Zelensky proposed a ten-point peace plan that included ideas—such as Russia paying reparations or the establishment of a tribunal that could in theory try Putin for the crime of aggression—that Russia would be highly unlikely ever to countenance.⁸¹ While the overall lack of progress towards peace did not stop Russia and Ukraine agreeing to some steps to mitigate the effects of the war, most notably the Black Sea Grain Initiative (see section II), both sides appeared resigned to the possibility of a long conflict by the end of 2022.

Other European conflicts

The war in Ukraine also had knock-on effects on other conflicts and vulnerable states in the region (see table 2.4). Western officials were especially concerned that Russia would aim to destabilize Moldova in parallel with

⁷⁸ ‘Ukraine, Russia hold third round of talks’, Deutsche Welle, 7 Mar. 2022; and ‘Russia, Ukraine fail to make progress at “difficult” Turkey talks’, AFP, 10 Mar. 2022.

⁷⁹ Hill, F. and Stent, A., ‘The world Putin wants’, *Foreign Affairs*, Sep./Oct. 2022.

⁸⁰ Gijss, C., ‘Zelenskyy: Ukraine ready to discuss neutral status to reach Russia peace deal’, Politico, 28 Mar. 2022.

⁸¹ ‘Explainer: What is Zelenskyy’s 10-point peace plan?’, Reuters, 28 Dec. 2022.

Ukraine, although the country managed to avoid a major political crisis in 2022 despite the huge economic pressures it faced.⁸²

Having scored a significant military victory over Armenia in 2020 in their long-running struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan appears to have seen Russia's focus on Ukraine as an opportunity to put more pressure on Armenia. The two sides clashed in July, August and September.⁸³ Despite mediation efforts by Russia and the European Union (EU), tensions remained high. In December, an unofficial but probably officially blessed group of 'activists' from Azerbaijan blockaded the Lachin corridor linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenian-held territory, limiting supplies to civilians.⁸⁴

There were also tensions in the Western Balkans, and particularly in Kosovo, throughout 2022, although these did not escalate into full-scale armed conflict. A dispute over car registration created renewed frictions between the government of Kosovo and the Serb minority in the summer, and in July 2022 some Serbs started to set up roadblocks around their villages.⁸⁵ While the USA and the EU mediated a deal to ease the crisis, it escalated again in November, when ethnic-Serb police and officials resigned en masse over the registration issue, and Kosovo Serbs barricaded the main border crossing with Serbia. Serbia put its military on alert and asked NATO for permission to deploy 1000 soldiers inside Kosovo under the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 1244.⁸⁶ By the end of the month, there were signs that the crisis was starting to simmer down, and the Kosovo Serbs agreed to dismantle their barricades on 29 December.⁸⁷

Middle East and North Africa

In the Middle East and North Africa, there was a significant increase in conflict-related fatalities in Iraq from 2844 in 2021 to 4483 in 2022 (see table 2.5). A political stand-off over the formation of a new government led to factional violence in Baghdad in August, but the eventual agreement on a new cabinet in October at least temporarily eased the crisis.⁸⁸ The most significant decrease in recorded fatalities was in Yemen, where the UN succeeded

⁸² These concerns increased in Apr. and May following a series of unexplained explosions in the secessionist region of Transnistria. Pronczuk, M., 'Explosions rattle a breakaway region in Moldova, raising fears of a broader war', *New York Times*, 26 Apr. 2022.

⁸³ International Crisis Group, 'Averting a new war between Armenia and Azerbaijan', Europe Report no. 266, Brussels, 30 Jan. 2023.

⁸⁴ 'Tensions rise between Armenia and Azerbaijan over blocked supply corridor', Reuters, 15 Dec. 2022.

⁸⁵ 'Kosovo government postpones its plan for volatile north after tensions rise', Reuters, 31 July 2022.

⁸⁶ UN Security Council Resolution 1244, 10 June 1999; and Stojanovic, M., 'Serbia considering sending 1000 "security personnel" into Kosovo', *Balkan Insight*, 9 Dec. 2022.

⁸⁷ 'Kosovo: Serbs agree to dismantle barricades after talks', *BBC News*, 29 Dec. 2022.

⁸⁸ Davison, J., 'Iraqi cleric Sadr calls off protests after worst Baghdad violence in years', Reuters, 30 Aug. 2022; and Abdul-Zahra, Q., 'Iraqi Parliament approves new cabinet in long-awaited vote', *AP News*, 28 Oct. 2022.

Table 2.5. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in the Middle East and North Africa, 2017–22

Country	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Egypt	1 540	1 116	1 003	626	264	273
Iraq	32 486	5 676	3 719	2 844	2 844	4 483
Iran	182	254	480	436	221	576
Israel–Palestine	118	412	184	51 ^a	383	221
Jordan	35 ^a	6 ^a	7 ^a	7 ^a	2 ^a	38
Lebanon	391	36 ^a	25 ^a	48	74	56
Libya	1 735	1 258	2 294	1 560	115	165
Syria	54 574	30 045	15 639	8 211	5 876	5 649
Türkiye	2928	1 940	962	569	310	274
Yemen	17 872	34 348	28 051	19 753	18 404	6 736
Total	111 861	75 091	52 364	34 105	28 493	18 471

Notes: Fatality figures are collated from 4 event types: battles; explosions/remote violence; protests, riots and strategic developments; and violence against civilians. See Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), ‘ACLED definitions of political violence and protest’, 11 Apr. 2019. A country is treated as being in an armed conflict if there were 25 or more battle-related deaths in a given year.

^aBattle-related deaths were below 25.

Source: ACLED, ‘Dashboard’, accessed 18 Jan. 2023.

in negotiating a humanitarian truce between the UN-backed government and the Houthi forces in April.⁸⁹ This formally held until October. Although violence never ceased entirely, the deal allowed an increase in aid deliveries, and the level of violence remained lower even after the formal end of the truce.⁹⁰ The level of violence in both Syria and Libya remained fairly consistent with 2021. While Türkiye was widely reported to be planning a military incursion into north-east Syria, targeting Kurdish groups in the region, and Turkish aircraft carried out a series of air strikes in the region in November, it did not launch a ground operation.⁹¹

Violence between Israeli forces and Palestinians claimed 146 Palestinian lives in the West Bank in the course of 2022, the highest figure since 2004.⁹² New Palestinian armed groups unaffiliated with the Palestinian Authority emerged in the West Bank—starting in the city of Jenin—and clashed with Israeli forces.⁹³ Israel also launched air strikes on Gaza in August targeting the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) group, but Hamas—the main force in

⁸⁹ Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, ‘Timeline on the progress of the truce implementation’, Updated 3 Apr. 2023.

⁹⁰ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, ‘Violence in Yemen during the UN-mediated truce, April–October 2022’, 14 Oct. 2022.

⁹¹ PBS Newshour, ‘What’s at stake in Turkey’s military escalation in Syria?’, AP Beirut, 10 Dec. 2022.

⁹² Berger, M., ‘2022 was the deadliest year for West Bank Palestinians in almost two decades’, *Washington Post*, 29 Dec. 2022.

⁹³ International Crisis Group, ‘The new generation of Palestinian armed groups: A paper tiger?’, 17 Apr. 2023.

Gaza—did not engage in these hostilities.⁹⁴ Palestinian attacks claimed 29 Israeli lives in 2022.⁹⁵

In North Africa, the UN's efforts to forge a unity government in Libya lost steam during the year, although the country's factions largely refrained from violence, despite a flare-up of fighting in Tripoli in August.⁹⁶ The Moroccan military and Saharawi forces continued to fight a low-level conflict in Western Sahara.⁹⁷

Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa was the continent where the highest number of countries (22 of 53) experienced conflict in 2022. More than half these involved fewer than 1000 conflicted-related deaths (see table 2.6). There was an increase in violence in the Sahel and West Africa, however, linked in part to increasing violence in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger involving a mix of transnational extremist jihadist groups and local insurgents. The combined number of conflict-related deaths in the three countries approached 10 000—the statistical definition of a major conflict—and a large percentage of these fatalities took place in the tri-border area where they meet. By one estimate, jihadists killed 5000 civilians in this area in 2022, taking advantage of the lack of state control. There was more evidence of jihadist groups spreading violence further into littoral West Africa in 2022, again taking advantage of limited state capacity and porous borders.⁹⁸ Jihadist groups attacked and kidnapped civilians in northern Benin and Togo in a series of incidents in 2022, and there were warnings of spillover risks to Ghana.⁹⁹

This expanding violence took place in parallel with a significant reconfiguration of the international security presence in the region. France wound up its regional counterterrorist force, Operation Barkhane, between March and November.¹⁰⁰ The withdrawal followed a breakdown in relations with the post-coup authorities in Mali, which ostentatiously leaned towards Russia as 2022 progressed. Task Force Takuba, a multinational military force in support of Operation Barkhane involving special forces from France's

⁹⁴ Youssef, H., 'Israel-Gaza conflict: A short confrontation with disproportionate implications', US Institute of Peace, 30 Aug. 2022.

⁹⁵ Berger (note 92).

⁹⁶ UN News, 'Libya: Political stalemate and lack of progress on elections', 30 Aug. 2022.

⁹⁷ Betteridge-Moss, M., 'Western Sahara's "frozen conflict" heats up, but world's attention elsewhere', *New Humanitarian*, 1 Feb. 2023.

⁹⁸ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 'Five zones of militant Islamist violence in the Sahel', 26 Sep. 2022.

⁹⁹ Brottem, L., 'Jihad takes root in northern Benin', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 23 Sep. 2022; and Promediation, *The Jihadist Threat in Northern Ghana and Togo: Stocktaking and Prospects for Containing the Expansion* (Abidjan: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Mar. 2022).

¹⁰⁰ Petrini, B., 'Security in the Sahel and the end of Operation Barkhane', International Institute for Strategic Studies, 5 Sep. 2022; and Vincent, E., 'After ten years, France to end military operation Barkhane in the Sahel', *Le Monde* (English edn), 9 Nov. 2022.

Table 2.6. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in sub-Saharan Africa, 2017–22

Country	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<i>West Africa</i>	6 519	8 885	10 967	15 187	16 620	21 244
Benin	18 ^a	31 ^a	37 ^a	64	93	180
Burkina Faso	117	303	2 216	2 304	2 374	4 242
Côte d'Ivoire	43 ^a	14 ^a	46 ^a	132	38 ^a	45
Ghana	89	25 ^a	48 ^a	48 ^a	38 ^a	142
Guinea	47 ^a	39 ^a	41 ^a	145	28 ^a	38 ^a
Mali	942	1 747	1 875	2 856	1 913	4 795
Niger	240	506	729	1 126	1 498	990
Nigeria	4 979	6 215	5 968	8 499	10 634	10 734
Togo	44 ^a	5 ^a	7 ^a	13 ^a	4 ^a	78
<i>Central Africa</i>	6 087	6 345	6 300	9 114	10 200	9 032
Angola	66	41 ^a	23 ^a	74	150 ^a	105
Cameroon	745	1 663	1 308	1 767	1 425	1 003
Central African Republic	1 799	1 171	596	446	1 708	839
Chad	296	259	567	738	831	696
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	3 181	3 211	3 806	6 089	6 086	6 389
<i>East Africa</i>	15 147	10 992	9 545	13 722	18 794	19 586
Burundi	290 ^a	326	305	331	304	258
Ethiopia	1 347	1 565	670	4 057	9 053	6 663 ^b
Kenya	781	410	276	311	393	551
Madagascar	218	142	350	354	304	332
Mozambique	130	224	692	1 785	1 161	928
Somalia	6 156	5 420	4 512	3 255	3 262	6 520
South Sudan	4 846	1 704	1 801	2 382	2 160	1 906
Sudan	1 313	1 055	776	959	1 650	2 065
Uganda	66	146 ^a	163	288	507	363
Total	27 553	26 222	26 812	38 023	45 614	49 862

Notes: Fatality figures are collated from 4 event types: battles; explosions/remote violence; protests, riots and strategic developments; and violence against civilians. See Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019. A country is treated as being in an armed conflict if there were 25 or more battle-related deaths in a given year.

^a Battle-related deaths were below 25.

^b Likely to be a severe underestimate (see table 2.8 and section II of this chapter).

Source: ACLED, 'Dashboard', accessed 19–26 Jan. 2023.

European allies, suspended joint operations with Malian forces in February and left Mali in June.¹⁰¹ There were also significant questions about the viability of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, which faced ongoing guerrilla attacks, losing 15 personnel to malicious acts in 2022, and tense relations with the military authorities. A number of countries, among them Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom, announced

¹⁰¹ Swedish Armed Forces, 'Task Force Takuba suspended: New challenges await the special forces', 25 Apr. 2022; and AFP, 'EU's Takuba anti-terror force quits junta-controlled Mali', Euractiv.com, 1 July 2022.

that they would leave the mission.¹⁰² Mali's withdrawal from the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) following a dispute over whether the country's government, which took power in a 2021 coup, could chair the G5 Sahel reduced the group's ability to handle jihadists. West African leaders therefore focused coordination of their struggle with the jihadists through other regional means, such as the Accra Initiative—a framework for intelligence sharing and joint military efforts.¹⁰³

The erosion of established operations in the Sahel was tied to Mali's decision to invite the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company, into the country in late 2021.¹⁰⁴ Western observers were already worried about Wagner's operations in Africa and the Middle East, but the group's direct involvement in Ukraine alongside Russian regular forces throughout 2022 raised further concerns about its activities elsewhere.¹⁰⁵ Wagner had developed a predatory reputation among the populations it was meant to protect in the Central African Republic (CAR), where it was first deployed in 2017.¹⁰⁶ In both CAR and Mali, the presence of Russian private contractors appears to have encouraged the host government to become less cooperative with the UN by, for example, limiting the movements of UN forces in areas where Wagner is undertaking operations. There have also been allegations of human rights abuses.¹⁰⁷ In March 2022, Malian and Wagner forces are alleged to have killed up to 300 civilians in the central Malian town of Moura.¹⁰⁸ In parallel, Russia has supplied arms to both countries and taken their side in UN Security Council debates. (Mali and CAR avoided voting against Russia's interests in UN General Assembly debates on Ukraine throughout 2022.)

Jihadist violence was a major factor in the high level of violence in Nigeria, although by no means the only driver of conflict in the country. Having won a brutal internecine conflict against jihadist rivals in 2021, Islamic State–West Africa Province (ISWAP, a breakaway faction of Boko Haram) continued to terrorize civilians in north-east Nigeria and neighbouring areas of Chad and Niger.¹⁰⁹ The group also organized a high-profile prison break in the capital,

¹⁰² There is data on fatalities on the United Nations Peacekeeping website. See also the discussion on MINUSMA in chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

¹⁰³ Mensah, K., 'West African leaders seek solutions to curb terrorism from Sahel region', *Voice of America*, 22 Nov. 2022.

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, J., Doxsee, C. and Bermudez Jnr, J. S., 'Tracking the arrival of Russia's Wagner Group in Mali', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2 Feb. 2022.

¹⁰⁵ Serwat, L. et al., 'Wagner Group operations in Africa', *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project*, 30 Aug. 2022.

¹⁰⁶ Bax, P., 'Russia's influence in the Central African Republic', *International Crisis Group*, 3 Dec. 2021.

¹⁰⁷ Druet, D., 'Wagner Group poses fundamental challenges for the protection of civilians by UN peacekeeping operations', *IPI Global Observatory*, 20 Mar. 2023. On the role of the Wagner Group in CAR and Mali, see chapter 3, section III, and chapter 4, section II, in this volume.

¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch, 'Mali: Massacre by army, foreign soldiers', 5 Apr. 2022.

¹⁰⁹ International Crisis Group, 'After Shekau: Confronting jihadists in Nigeria's north-east', *Africa Briefing* no. 180, Brussels, 29 Mar. 2022.

Abuja, in July, suggesting that its reach is growing.¹¹⁰ Nigeria faced multiple other sources of violence, including separatism in the south-east of the country and widespread criminality and gang violence, and the authorities have become increasingly reliant on vigilantes to handle threats as substitutes for state security services.¹¹¹ This tactic raises concerns about the reliability and discipline of such vigilantes. There were also violent incidents in late 2022 linked to campaigning in Nigeria's February 2023 national elections, although the level of violence appeared to be below that connected to previous polls.¹¹²

African forces scored some successes in fighting extremist jihadist groups in other regions. There was a decline in the number of conflict-related deaths in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province—where Rwandan troops and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), which helped contain insurgents linked to the Islamic State in 2021, continued to provide security support throughout 2022.¹¹³ In Somalia, the national army and clan militias succeeded in driving al-Shabab out of large parts of the centre of the country in an operation that ran from August to December 2022.¹¹⁴ While the African Union (AU) retains a large mission in Somalia, it did not take a direct role in this offensive. The UN Security Council and the AU agreed in March 2022 that the mission will close in 2024.¹¹⁵

In Central Africa, the March 23 Movement (M23) rebel group—widely alleged to be supported by Rwanda—launched a new offensive against government forces and UN peacekeepers in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in March 2022.¹¹⁶ The UN representative in the country, Bintou Keita, warned the Security Council that M23 was a 'conventional army' with the capacity to defeat the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO).¹¹⁷ Public discontent with the UN's response spilled over into violence against the peacekeepers.¹¹⁸ The Congolese government has invited the East African Community Regional Force in the DRC (EACRF-DRC) to deploy a new security force to quell armed groups in the east, including M23.

¹¹⁰ Samuel, M., 'Kuje prison break: Is Nigeria out of security options?', ISS Today, 11 July 2022.

¹¹¹ Okoli, A. C., 'Nigeria insecurity: 2022 was a bad year and points to the need for major reforms', *The Conversation*, 28 Dec. 2022; and International Crisis Group, 'Managing vigilantism in Nigeria: A near-term necessity', Africa Report no. 308, Brussels, 21 Apr. 2022.

¹¹² International Crisis Group, 'Mitigating risks of violence in Nigeria's 2023 elections', Africa Report no. 311, Brussels, 10 Feb. 2023.

¹¹³ Cheatham, A., Long, A. and Sheehy, T. P., 'Regional security support: A vital first step for peace in Mozambique', US Institute of Peace, 23 June 2022. Also see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

¹¹⁴ International Crisis Group, 'Sustaining gains in Somalia's offensive against Al-Shabaab', Africa Briefing no. 187, Brussels, 21 Mar. 2023.

¹¹⁵ AFP, 'From Amisom to Atmis: Will new AU mission in Somalia succeed?', *The East African*, 1 Apr. 2022. See also chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

¹¹⁶ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 'Actor profile: The March 23 Movement', 23 Mar. 2023.

¹¹⁷ Lederer, E. M., 'UN envoys warns Congo's M23 rebels are acting like an army', AP News, 30 June 2022.

¹¹⁸ On developments with MONUSCO see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

The first unit deployed in August, but the violence has not subsided, despite rebels withdrawing from some areas temporarily.¹¹⁹ There was persistent conflict in Cameroon and CAR, although with fewer recorded fatalities than 2021. In Chad, the authorities responded to pro-democracy protestors with deadly violence.

In the Horn of Africa, the Ethiopian Civil War initially eased in the early months of 2022, and the government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) agreed a truce in late March.¹²⁰ The government and Eritrea, its ally, launched a new attack on the TPLF in August, however, scoring significant military successes before the AU brokered a peace agreement in Pretoria, South Africa, on 2 November (see section II).¹²¹ In Sudan, protestors frequently took to the streets to demand a reversal of the October 2021 seizure of power by the armed forces, which had participated in a tenuous power-sharing agreement with civilian officials since the overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019. The security forces frequently used deadly force against protestors, even though the military had promised a return to civilian rule in August.¹²² There was also widespread violence in Darfur, West Kordofan and Blue Nile state—all locations of long-running local conflict—that resulted in the displacement of 300 000 people in the course of 2022.¹²³ In South Sudan, political leaders agreed in August to the extension of a 2018 peace agreement that supposedly marked the end of the country's civil war. As in previous years, however, widespread localized violence persisted in large parts of the country.¹²⁴ UN officials and independent analysts noted that shifting weather and flood patterns linked to climate change were increasing displacement and intercommunal friction in South Sudan, exacerbating conflict risks.¹²⁵

There were also three attempted and two successful coups d'état in Africa in 2022.¹²⁶ (There were no similar incidents in other regions, although Myanmar faced worsening violence arising from its 2021 coup, as outlined above.) This compares to two attempted and four successful coups or other

¹¹⁹ van de Walle, N., 'East Africa's DR Congo force: A case for caution', International Crisis Group, 25 Aug. 2022. On the deployment of the Eastern African Community Regional Force to the DRC see chapter 3, section I, in this volume.

¹²⁰ AFP in Addis Ababa, 'Ethiopia: Tigray rebels agree "cessation of hostilities" after government truce', *The Guardian*, 25 Mar. 2022.

¹²¹ AFP in Addis Ababa, 'Fighting in Ethiopia shatters months-long truce', *The Guardian*, 24 Aug. 2022; and International Crisis Group, 'Turning the Pretoria deal into lasting peace in Ethiopia', 23 Nov. 2022.

¹²² International Crisis Group, 'A critical window to bolster Sudan's next government', 23 Jan. 2023.

¹²³ Ochab, E. U., 'Sudan: Between violence, humanitarian crisis and protests', *Forbes*, 30 Dec. 2022.

¹²⁴ Human Rights Watch, 'South Sudan: Use peace deal extension for reforms', Nairobi, 18 Aug. 2022.

¹²⁵ de Coning, C. et al., Climate, peace and security fact sheet, 'South Sudan', Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Oslo, Mar. 2022; and International Crisis Group, 'Floods, displacement and violence in South Sudan', Brussels, 27 Oct. 2022.

¹²⁶ Mwai, P., 'Are military takeovers on the rise in Africa?', BBC News, 4 Jan. 2023.

unconstitutional attempts to change the government in 2021. The three unsuccessful coup attempts in 2022 were in Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe. Military officers successfully seized power twice in Burkina Faso, first in January and then in September. These coups did not precipitate significant violence in their own right. In the Burkinan case, as previously in Mali, there was support for the removal of elected leaders.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Powell, J., 'Burkina Faso coup: Latest sign of a rise in the ballot box being traded for bullets', *The Conversation*, 25 Jan. 2022.