



CONFLICTS AND VNSA

Lucie Konečná

GLCb2026 Africas Contemporary Security
Challenges

1/2/2022



African conflicts to watch in 2022

Fresh approaches needed to avoid disaster in worst-affected countries

Libya

- ✗ Conditions not conducive to elections
- ✗ Mercenaries' withdrawal key

South Sudan

- ✗ Last year to implement 2018 peace deal
- ✗ Political and community clashes persist

Cameroon

- ✗ Anglophone crisis led to insurgency
- ✗ Military solutions are failing

Ethiopia

- ✗ Negotiated settlement a priority
- ✗ AU mediation not showing results

Central African Republic

- ✗ Dialogue stymied by ongoing clashes
- ✗ New approach to peace essential

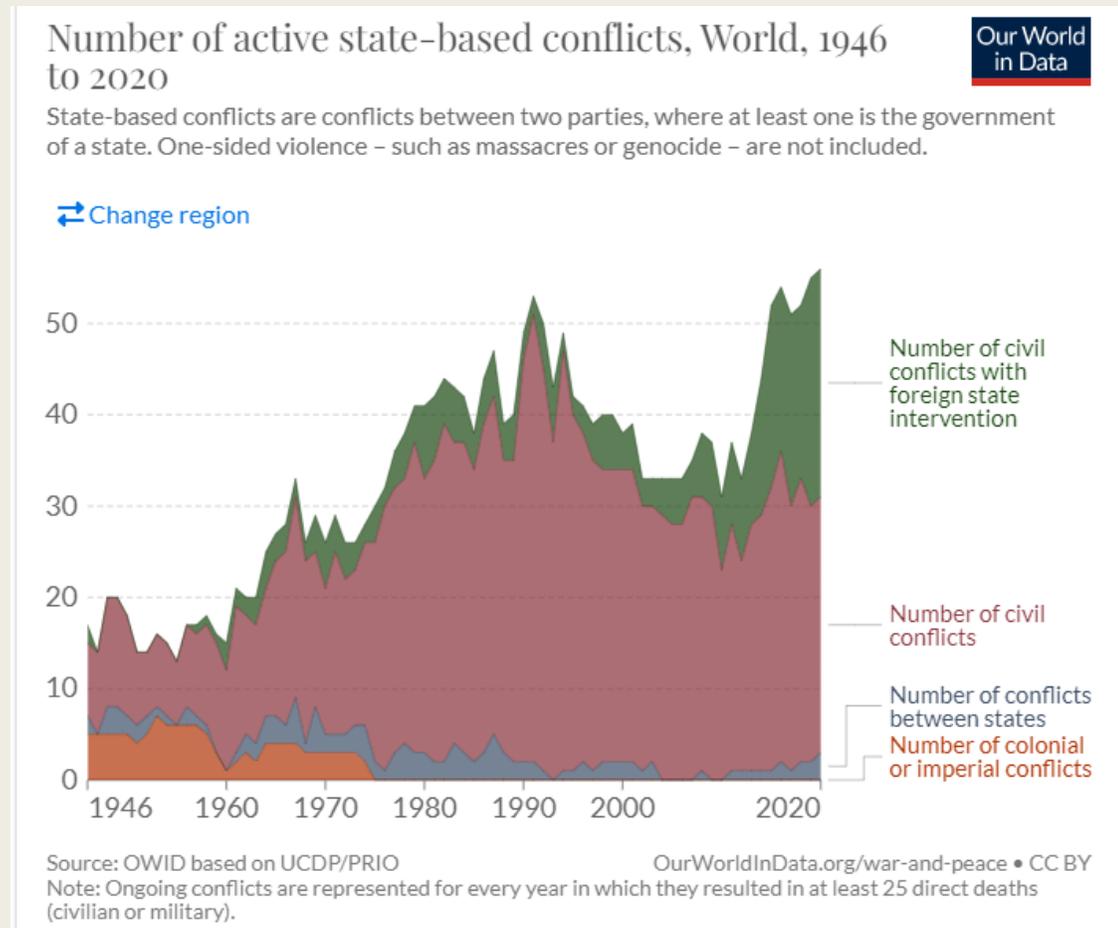
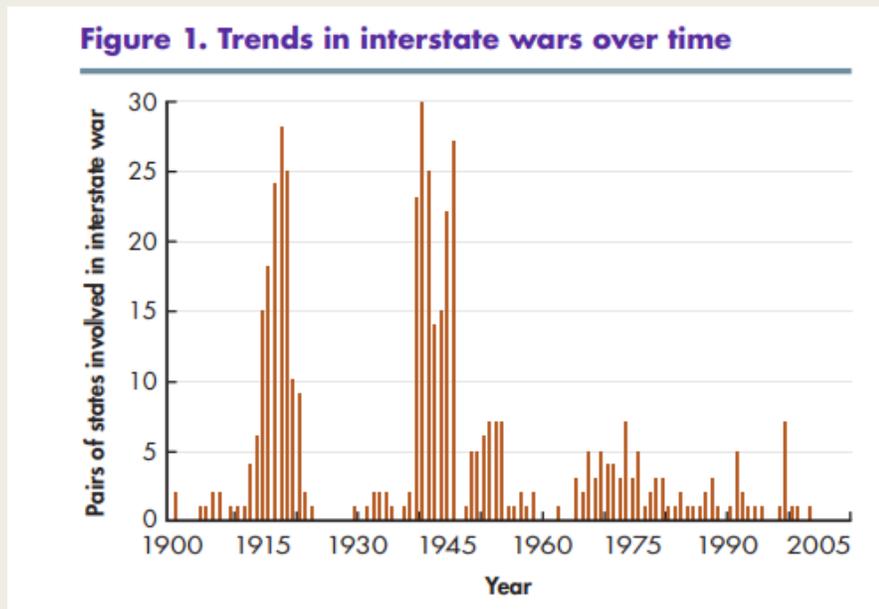
Mozambique

- ✗ Rwandan and SADC troops battling an insurgency
- ✗ Developmental response and regional links key



Contemporary Conflict Trends

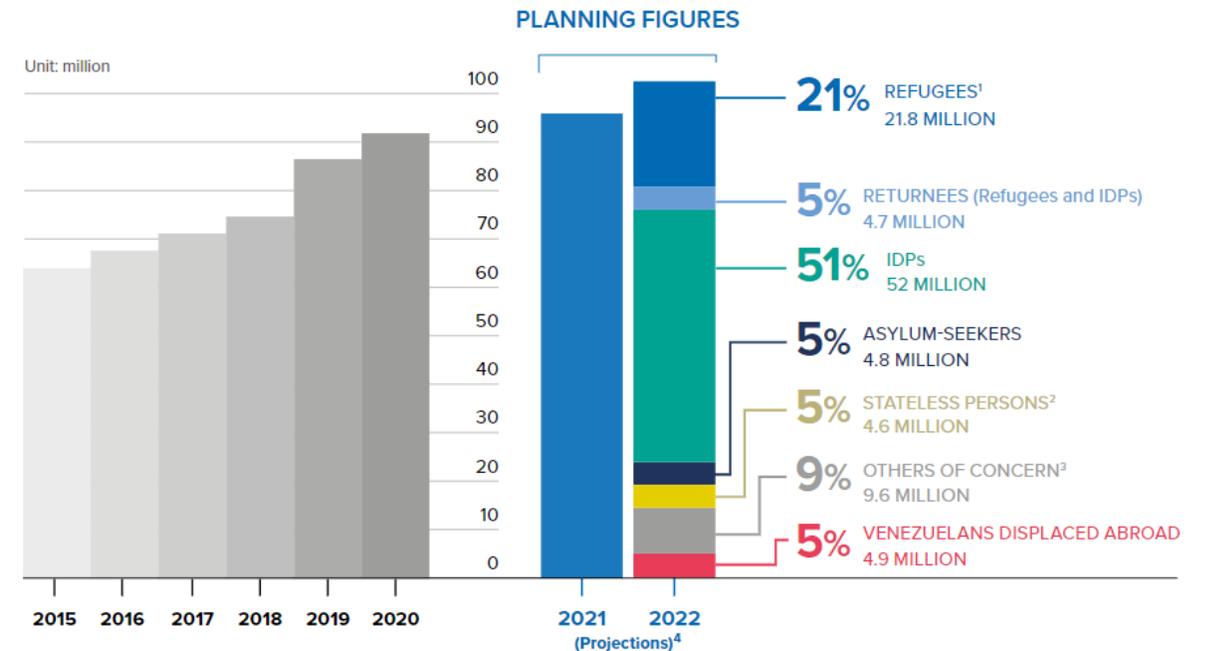
- 1. A decrease in the number of interstate wars and an increase in the number of intrastate wars,
- 2. Internationalization of national/intrastate conflicts
- 3. Engagement of foreign units that are motivated by the economic interests of their countries
- 4. An increase in identity conflicts
- 5. An increase in conflicts involving VNSA
- 6. An increase in civilian casualties



Contemporary Conflict Trends

- 7. Increasing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons
- 8. Development of humanitarian activities and aid
- 9. Privatization of conflicts
- 10. Brutalization of conflicts
- 11. Extending the duration of conflicts

CHART 1 | PLANNING FIGURES: 102.6 million people of concern in 2022



VNSA - General Info

- Primary, secondary, and tertiary conflict actors
- Intrastate, Interstate, and Non-state/Sub-state conflicts
- Violent Non-State Actors:
 - a) use violence to achieve their goals
 - b) are not integrated within formalized state structures
- Violence that involves violent non-state actors is often described as unconventional
- Violent non-state actors involved in a low-intensity conflict may prefer the status quo over negotiation and mediation because their power is much lower

Typology of War Participants

- 1. Members of the armed forces according to international law:
 - *Combatants* – members of regular or irregular armed forces
 - *Non-combatants* - not intended for combat duties (medics, clerics).
- 2. Civilians
- Real fighters in modern wars:
 - a) Conventional soldiers/army
 - b) Insurgents, guerrillas, partisans, and rebels
 - c) Terrorists
 - d) Mercenaries, PSC/PMC
 - e) Foreign volunteers
 - f) Warlords
 - g) Child soldiers
 - h) Paramilitary units and death squads
 - i) Militias

Factors Affecting the Rise of VNSA

- Decline of bipolarity/end of Cold War and the emergence of a globalized world
- Socioeconomic factors
- Repressive politics
- Poverty and income inequality
- Weakness of security institutions
- State collapse
- Individual explanations (rural vs. urban, age, education, socio-economic status, unemployment, socio-psychological level)

VNSA Typology according to Williams

- Rebels/Insurgency
- Militia
- Paramilitary units
- Terrorist groups
- Warlords
- Criminal organizations and gangs
- Motivations and purpose
- Strength and scope
- Funding and access to resources
- Organizational structure
- Role of violence
- Relationship between VNSA and state
- Functions of VNSAs for members and supporters

VNSA Typology according to Ezrow

- Insurgencies
- Warlords and Marauders
- Paramilitary units
- Terrorist Organizations
- Private security companies
- Organized crime and gangs
- Motivation
- Strategy and tactics
- Funding and access to resources
- Organizational structure
- Scope and power
- Victims
- Legitimacy and popularity

Table III.1 Types of Violent Non-state Actors and their Key Characteristics

Group	Motivation	Strategy and tactics	Key group threatened/victim	Organizational structure	Scope and power	Legitimacy and popularity
De facto state	Political: set up a state	Provide state services and armed defence; hold territory	State	Tightly organized; hierarchical	Very powerful; territorial control	High legitimacy
Political organizations with militant wings	Political: influence policy	Provide party platform and armed defence	State	Tightly organized; hierarchical	Somewhat powerful	High legitimacy; public support
Insurgency	Political: varies	Mostly armed conflict; hold territory	State and society	Somewhat tightly organized; somewhat hierarchical	Somewhat powerful; some territorial control	Some legitimacy
Terror organization	Political: varies	Engage the media; psychological warfare; kill civilians	Society	Tightly organized; somewhat hierarchical	Not powerful	Little legitimacy
Terror network	Political: amorphous	Engage the media; psychological warfare; kill civilians	Society	Cellular/loose; somewhat hierarchical	Not powerful	Little legitimacy
Marauding rebels	Economic/ opportunistic	Loot and pillage; kill civilians	Society (state may have already collapsed)	Loose	Not powerful; temporary control of some towns or villages	Little legitimacy
Warlord	Economic/ opportunistic	Loot and pillage; predation	Society (state may have already collapsed)	Somewhat organized around charismatic warlord	Somewhat powerful; some control over territory	Little legitimacy
Organized crime	Economic/ opportunistic	Corruption, crime and violence	State, society, individuals	Tightly organized; formerly hierarchical, now flatter hierarchy	Very powerful; some territorial sphere of influence; may control transactions and flows of goods	Little legitimacy
Gang	Economic/ opportunistic	Petty crime and violence	Individuals and society	Somewhat loose; somewhat hierarchical	Not powerful but becoming more dangerous	Little legitimacy
PSC	Economic/ opportunistic	Gun-for-hire; earn profit and maintain stability	State, other violent non-state actors	Tightly organized; hierarchical	Somewhat powerful but does not control territory	Little legitimacy
Paramilitary	Economic/ political	Armed conflict; possibly hold territory	State, other violent non-state actors, individuals	Tightly organized	Somewhat powerful; sometimes controls territory	Little legitimacy

VNSA Typology according to Schneckener

Table 1: Types of Armed Non-State Actors

	Change vs. Status Quo	Territorial vs. Non-Territorial	Physical vs. Psychological Use of Violence	Political/Ideological vs. Profit-Driven Motivation
Rebels, Guerrillas	Change	Territorial	Physical	Political
Militias	Status quo	Territorial Non-territorial	Physical Psychological	Political
Clan Chiefs, Big Men	Status quo	Territorial	Physical	Political
Warlords	Status quo	Territorial	Physical Psychological	Profit-driven
Terrorists	Change	Non-territorial	Psychological	Political
Criminals, Mafia, Gangs	Status quo	Non-territorial	Psychological	Profit-driven
Mercenaries, PMCs/PSCs	Indifferent	Territorial	Physical	Profit-driven
Marauders, 'Sobels'	Indifferent	Non-territorial	Psychological	Profit-driven

Insurgency

- The primary raison d'être of these groups is to achieve some political goal
- Territorial control
- Strategy - irregular attacks and war of attrition
- Hierarchical structure, in recent years there has been decentralization
- A threat to the legitimacy of the state
- Four basic types: **liberationist, separatist, reformist/revolutionary, and religious/traditional.**

Summary Points

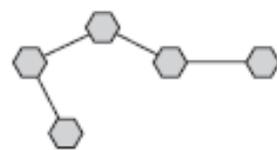
- Insurgencies have often been mistaken for terrorist groups.
- Insurgencies are much more powerful than terrorist groups, but they are also more constrained.
- Insurgencies often use terrorism as a tactic, but their primary strategy is to engage in armed struggle and to win over the hearts and minds of a constituency.
- Insurgencies have had to change how they fund themselves due to losses in state sponsorship.
- Insurgencies that want to secede from their host state and have control over a defined territory become de facto states.

Insurgency

Insurgencies that commit acts of terrorism (hold territory)	Terrorist groups (do not hold territory)
Boko Haram (Nigeria)	ETA
IS (Syria and Iraq)	Baader-Meinhof Gang
FARC (Colombia)	Weather Underground
Al-Shabaab (Somalia)	Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN)
Taliban (Afghanistan)	Red Brigades
PKK (Turkey)	Aum Shinrikyo
LTTE (Sri Lanka)	Abu Nidal Organization
Naxalites (India)	Abu Sayyaf
Haqqani Network (Afghanistan)	Jemaah Islamiyah
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (Philippines)	Japanese Red Army
Shining Path (Peru)	Egyptian Islamic Jihad

Terrorist Organizations

- A deliberate form of politically motivated violence
- Lack of territorial character
- Low threat to state legitimacy (very little public support)
- Strategy - psychological impact, shock a wide audience, attacks mainly on civilians
- Structure - currently mainly network
- Arquilla a Ronfeldt (2001) - Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy
- Zelinsky a Shubik (2008) - hierarchy, franchise, venture capital, a brand



Chain network



Star or hub network



All-channel network

Figure 3.11 Basic types of networks (Arquilla and Ronfeldt).

Warlordism

- Primarily economically motivated violence
- Strong territorial character
- Hierarchical structure - headed by a charismatic leader
- A threat especially to weak states
- Strategy - marauding terror, unpredictable and random violence

Summary Points

- Warlords and rebels emerge in states that are failing or have collapsed; they emerge in post-conflict zones.
- Warlords and rebels offer few political benefits and mostly prey on their populations.
- Warlords and rebels undermine state legitimacy but have no ability to administer.
- Warlords and rebels create tremendous security and instability though they claim to offer protection.
- Warlords and rebels have an interest in prolonging a low-intensity conflict to take advantage of the war economy.

Organized Crime and Gangs

- Economic motivation
- Often transnational
- Hierarchical and network structure
- Strategy - use of violence to achieve economic goals, attempt to avoid media attention, violence especially in times of uncertainty
- The effort to subvert the structures of the state - they do not want to completely destroy the state
- *„Organized criminal groups are structured groups of three or more persons that exist for a certain period of time and whose aim is to regularly commit more serious crimes in order to obtain material benefit.“*

Summary Points

- Organized criminal groups are capable and complex organizations.
- Gangs have evolved and become much more violent and powerful, but they are not as sophisticated as organized criminal groups.
- While gang members are incredibly young and seek out gangs due to a need for camaraderie, organized criminals are often older and more skilled.

Private Military Companies

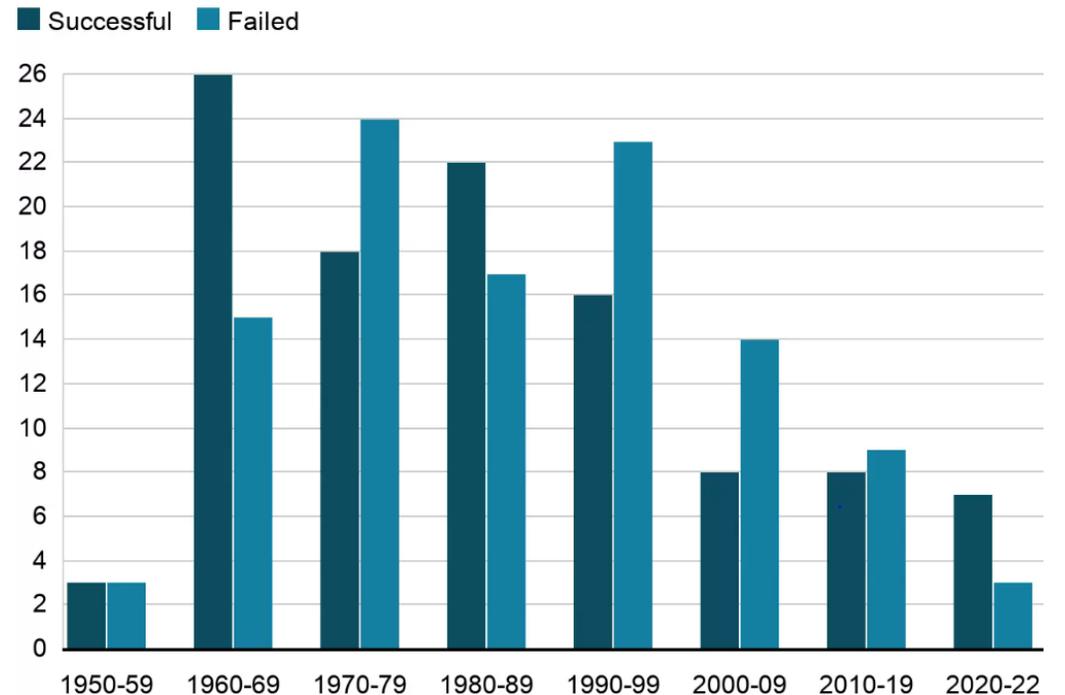
- Economic motivation
- Territoriality is related to the type of task/contract
- Hierarchical structure
- Strategy - they do not have long-term strategies, it always depends on the contract
- Can threaten the state's monopoly on the use of violence, ineffective as a long-term solution
- Executive Outcomes, Blackwaters/Academi, Wagner Group
- United Nations Mercenary Convention 2001 (The convention extends on the Geneva Conventions Protocol I which in Article 47(1) states that a mercenary cannot be a lawful combatant or prisoner of war)
- Mercenaries: foreigner, independence – not a member of the army, economic motivation, obscure recruitment, short-term/ad hoc tasks, engaged in combat
- Military Providing Firms, Military Consulting Firms, Military Supporting Firms

Increase of Military Coups in Africa?

- Coup - an illegal and overt attempt by the military - or other civilian officials - to unseat sitting leaders.
- Cultural pluralism, soldiers' greed and grievances, poor governance, corruption, autocracy, limited economic growth, low-income levels, increase in insecurity, and **fragile democracy**.
- Neocolonialism

SPECIFICALLY, THESE AFRICAN LEADERS REALISED THAT THEY HAD POLITICAL BUT NOT ECONOMIC CONTROL OF THEIR STATES, DESPITE ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE FROM THE COLONISERS

Military coups in Africa over the decades



Increase of Military Coups in Africa?

Countries in Africa with the highest number of coups since 1952



Source: Jonathan Powell, Uni of Central Florida and Clayton Thyne, Uni of Kentucky

Increase of Military Coups in Africa?

Year	State
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2019 Gabonese coup d'état attempt• 2019 Sudanese coup d'état• 2019 Amhara Region coup d'état attempt (Ethiopia)
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2020 Malian coup d'état• 2020 Sudanese coup d'état attempt• 2020–21 Central African Republic coup d'état attempt
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2021 Nigerien coup d'état attempt• 2021 Malian coup d'état• 2021 Guinean coup d'état• 2021 Chad's covert coup• September 2021 Sudanese coup d'état attempt• October–November 2021 Sudanese coup d'état
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• January 2022 Burkina Faso coup d'état• 2022 Guinea-Bissau coup d'état attempt• September 2022 Burkina Faso coup d'état

Thank you for your
attention