VIOLENT NON-STATE ACTORS (VNSA) AND CONTEMPORARY ARMED CONFLICTS

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Conflict - Definition

- **An armed conflict** is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year.

- **Conflict:** clash between two actors who have incompatible interests.

- Necessary features of conflict according to Holsti (1991):
  - a) Actors of the conflict
  - b) Area of the clash (incompatibility)
  - c) Tension
  - d) Conflict behavior

- **War**: o Intensity and duration of fighting
  o What territory and to what extent it is affected
  o The size of the involvement of the armed forces
      o The extent of the population affected by the conflict
      o Organization and continuity

- **Civil War Criteria**: a) Organized military actions
                b) At least 1000 victims per year
                c) Participation of the armed forces of the government (state actor)
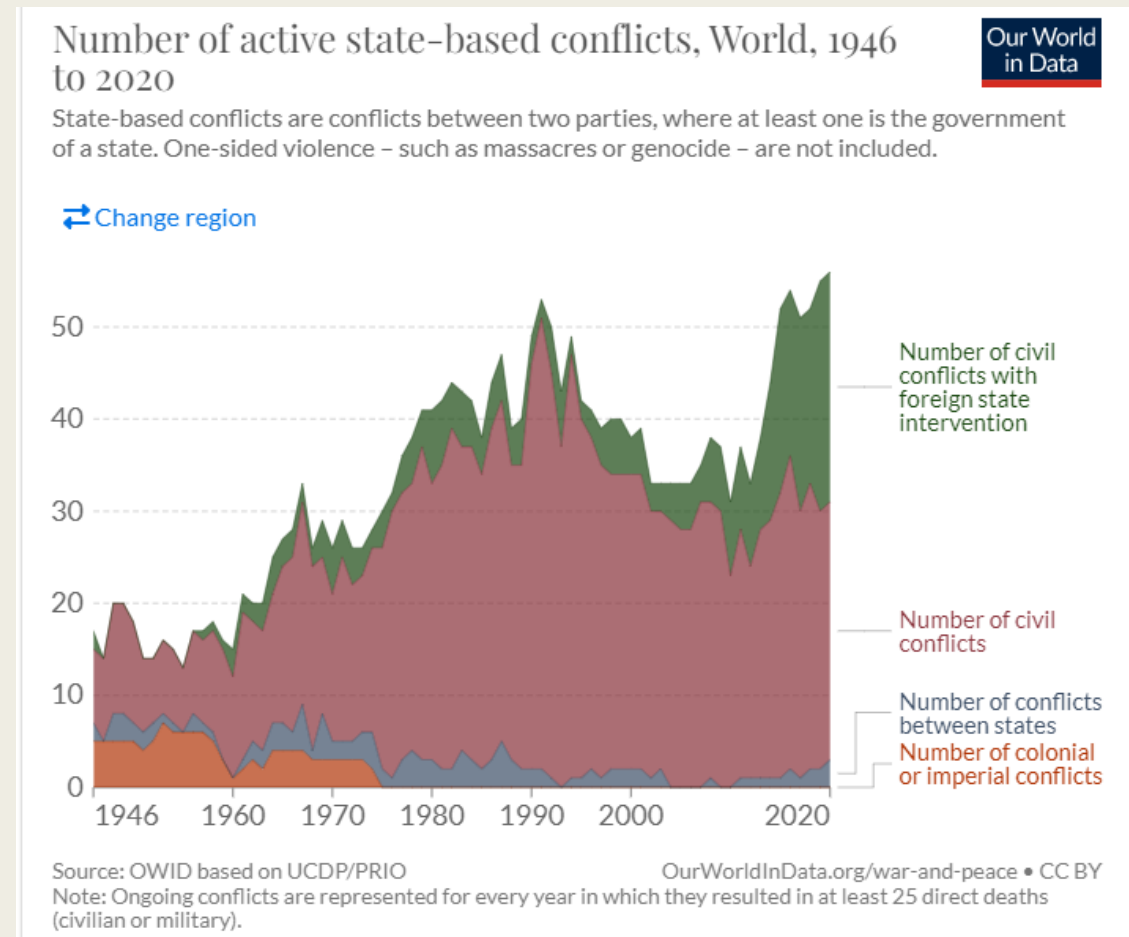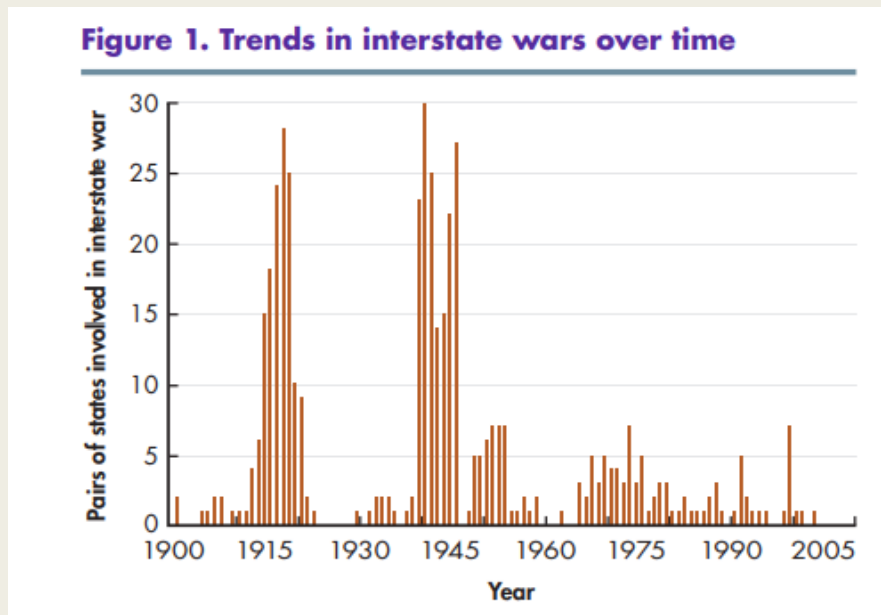   d) Effective resistance from opposition forces (5%)

Conflict - Typology

- Based on:

  a) **strength/intensity** - low, medium, or high intensity conflict (war).

  b) **used means**: violent, non-violent (armed, unarmed).

  c) **causes**: territorial, ethnic, religious, constitutional, ideological, economic, etc.

  d) location (**geographical level**): international, transnational, national

  e) **actor** - non-state/sub-state, intrastate, and interstate

    – intrastate conflict (civil war vs. intercommunal war)

    – extrastate conflict

- Types of conflict internationalization

- Typology of actors:

  a) primary, secondary, external (tertiary)

  b) spoilers

  c) participants vs. conflicting parties

The Bloodiest Conflicts of the 21st Century

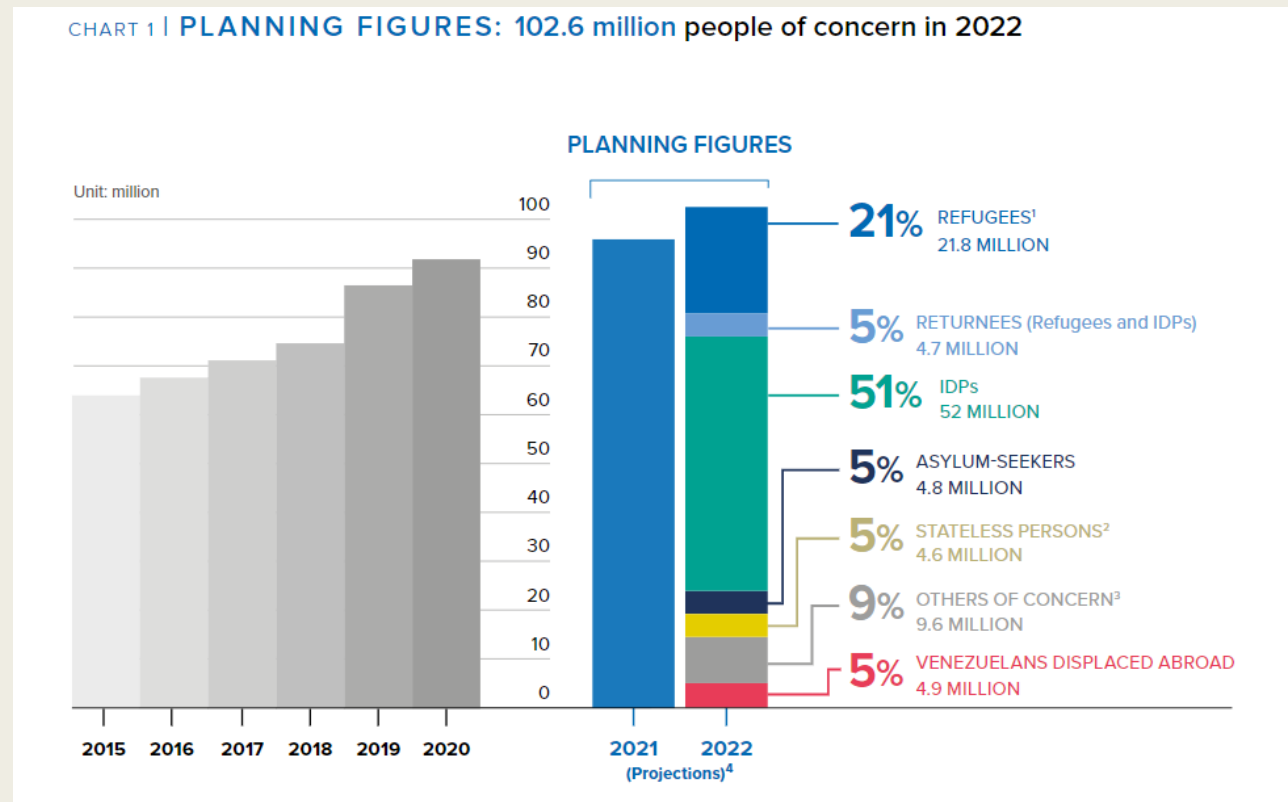| The bloodiest conflicts of the 21st century	
DRC (1998 – 2003)	2,5 – 5 mil
Afghanistan (2001-2014/21)	170 00
Iraq (2003-2011)	200 000 - 1,2 mil
Syria (2011 -)	500 000
Yemen (2014 -)	500 000
Darfur (2003 -)	400 000
Nigeria (2009 -)	200 000
Somalia (1991 -)	500 000
Tigray War (2020-2022)	400 000 – 800 000
Ukraine (2022-)	150 000 – 500 000

Contemporary Conflict Trends

- 1. A decrease in the number of interstate wars and an increase in the number of intrastate and substate wars,

- 2. Internationalization of national/intrastate conflicts

- 3. Engagement of foreign units that are motivated by the economic and strategic interests of their countries

- 4. An increase in identity conflicts

- 5. An increase in conflicts involving VNSA

- 6. An increase in civilian casualties

Figure 1. Trends in interstate wars over time

Number of active state-based conflicts, World, 1946 to 2020

State-based conflicts are conflicts between two parties, where at least one is the government of a state. One-sided violence – such as massacres or genocide – are not included.

⇄ Change region

- Number of civil conflicts with foreign state intervention
- Number of civil conflicts
- Number of conflicts between states
- Number of colonial or imperial conflicts

Source: OWID based on UCDP/PRIO
OurWorldInData.org/war-and-peace • CC BY
Note: Ongoing conflicts are represented for every year in which they resulted in at least 25 direct deaths (civilian or military).

Contemporary Conflict Trends

- 7. Increasing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons

- 8. Development of humanitarian activities and aid

- 9. Technologization of war and information warfare

- 10. Privatization of conflicts

- 11. Brutalization of conflicts

- 12. Extending the duration of conflicts

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

PLANNING FIGURES

Unit: million

21% REFUGEES[1]
21.8 MILLION

5% RETURNEES (Refugees and IDPs)
4.7 MILLION

51% IDPs
52 MILLION

5% ASYLUM-SEEKERS
4.8 MILLION

5% STATELESS PERSONS[2]
4.6 MILLION

9% OTHERS OF CONCERN[3]
9.6 MILLION

5% VENEZUELANS DISPLACED ABROAD
4.9 MILLION

2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 (Projections)[4]

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

Factors Affecting the Rise of VNSA

- End of Cold War and the emergence of a globalized world

- Socioeconomic factors and absence of goods and services

- 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)

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 and rebels/partisans

c) Terrorists

d) Mercenaries, PSC/PMC

e) Foreign volunteers

f) Warlords

g) Child soldiers

h) Paramilitary units and death squads

i) Militias

j) Marauders

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 VNSAs fulfill for members and supporters

VNSA Typology according to Ezrow

- Insurgents
- 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

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 and rebels

- 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
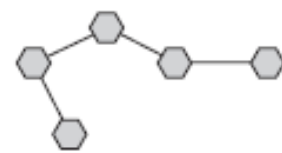
Chain network   Star or hub network   All-channel network

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

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

Class Participation- Discuss the following points:

- Which factors do you think have contributed to the increase in the deployment of Private Military Companies?

- What type of VNSA do you think represents the biggest threat to the Czech Republic? Why?

- Do you know some examples of interstate conflicts after 1990 from Asia, America, Africa, and Europe?

- Do you know any other contemporary conflict trends that have not been mentioned?

Thank you for your attention