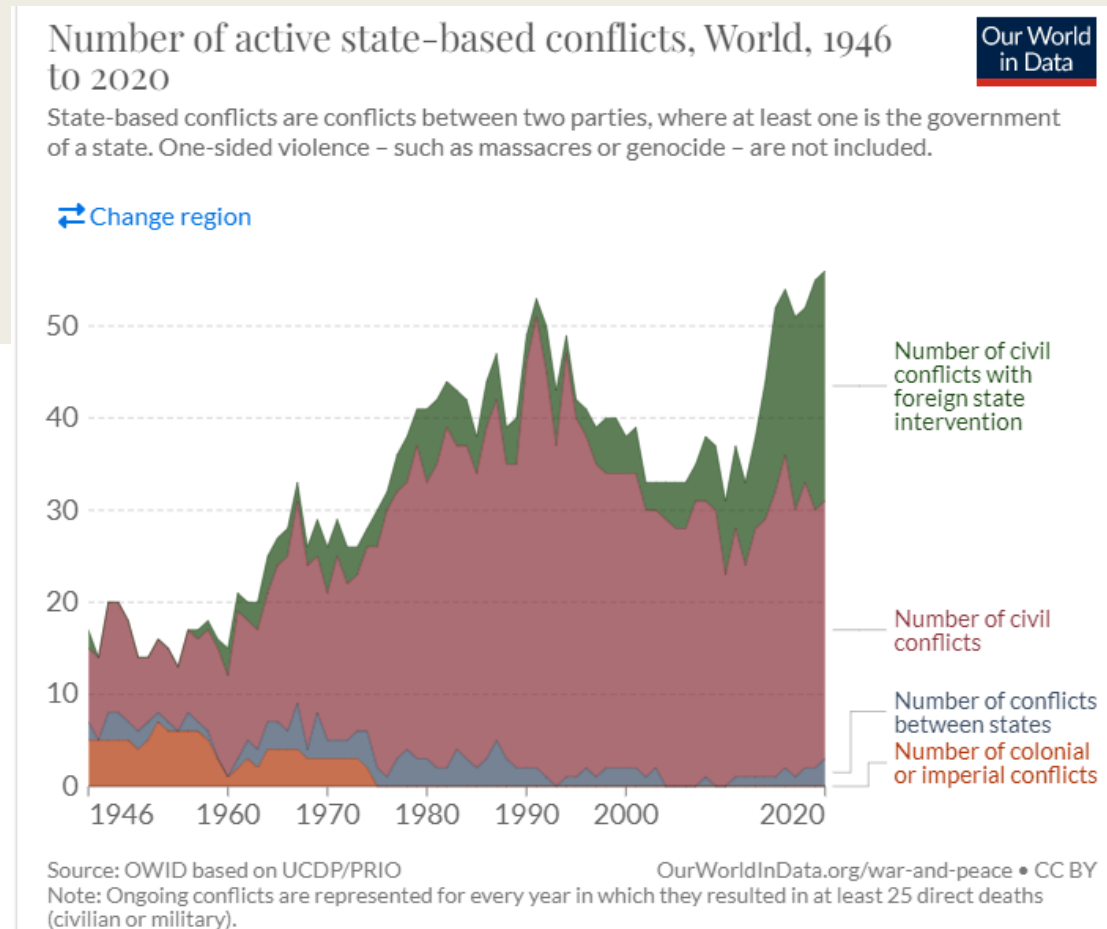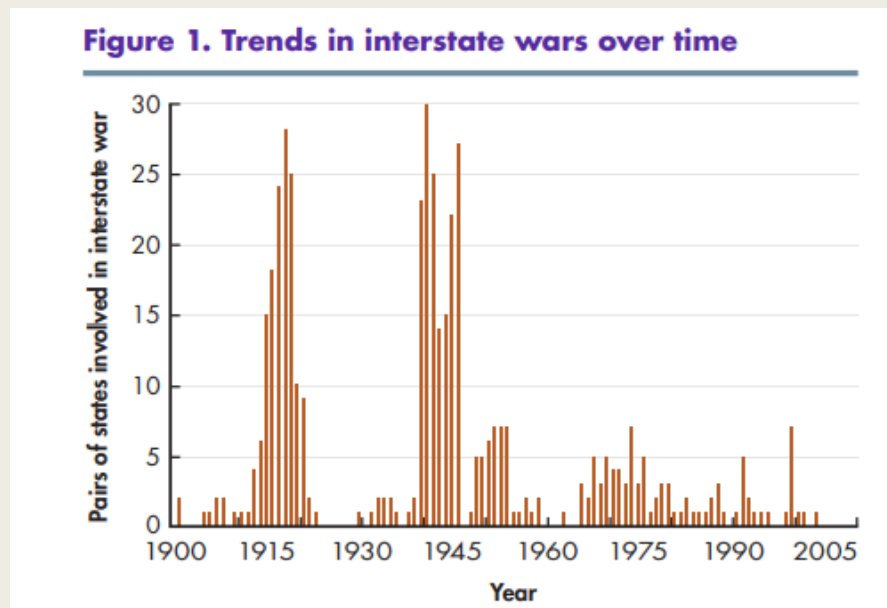# CONFLICTS AND VNSA

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GLCb2026 Africas Contemporary Security Challenges

28/2/2024

Contemporary Conflict Trends
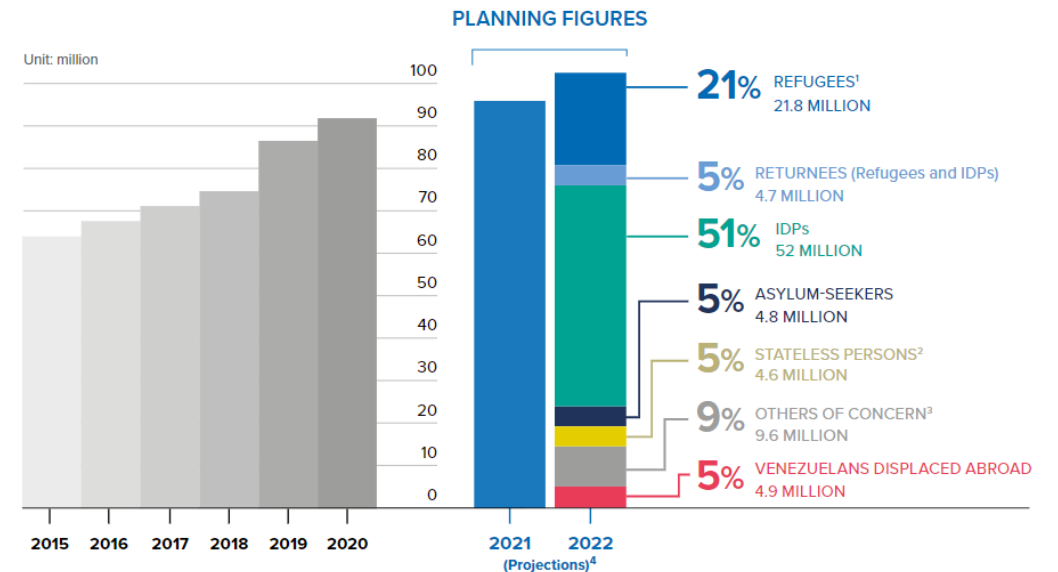
- **1. A decrease in the number of interstate wars and an increase in the number of intrastate wars:**

  - *1981-2005 –Bakassi conflict*

  - *1989-1991 - Mauritania–Senegal Border War*

  - *1996-1997 First Congo War, 1998-2003 Second Congo War, 2000 - Six-Day War*

  - *1998-2018 - Eritrean–Ethiopian War*

  - *2008 - Djiboutian–Eritrean border conflict*

- **2. Internationalization of national/intrastate conflicts**

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

- 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

- 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

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

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

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

Wagner Group

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
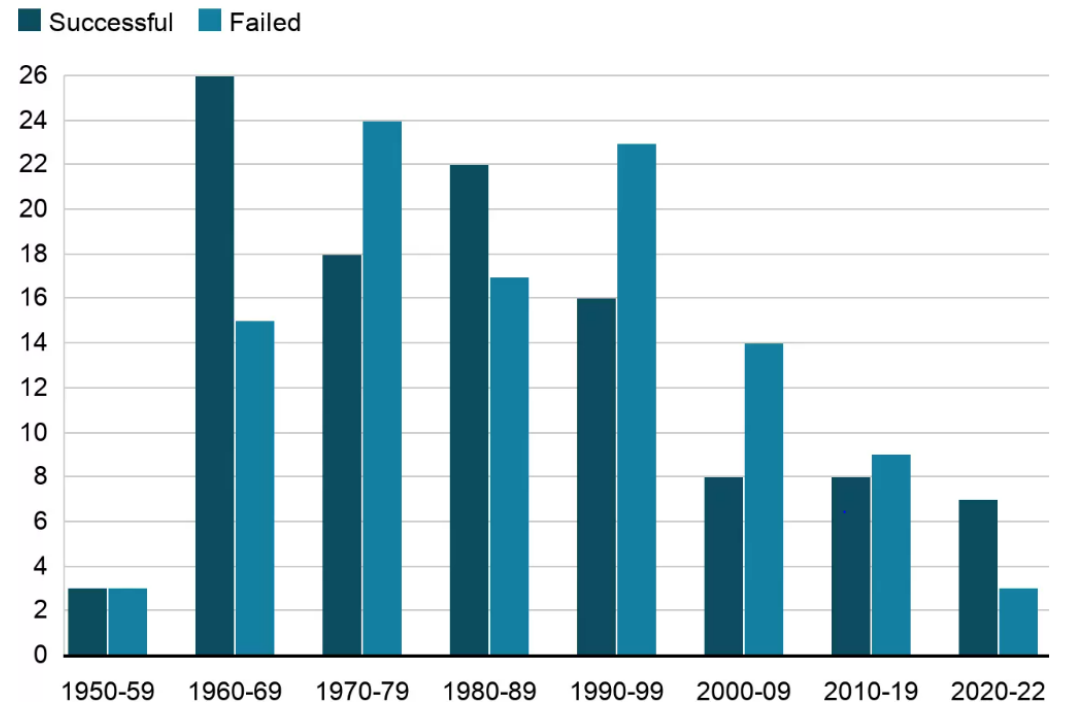
- Successful - Failed

Increase of Military Coups in Africa?

Countries in Africa with the highest number of coups since 1952*

BURKINA FASO 10
BENIN 8
GUINEA-BISSAU 9
MALI 8
NIGER 8
CHAD 7
SUDAN 17
NIGERIA 8
SIERRA LEONE 10
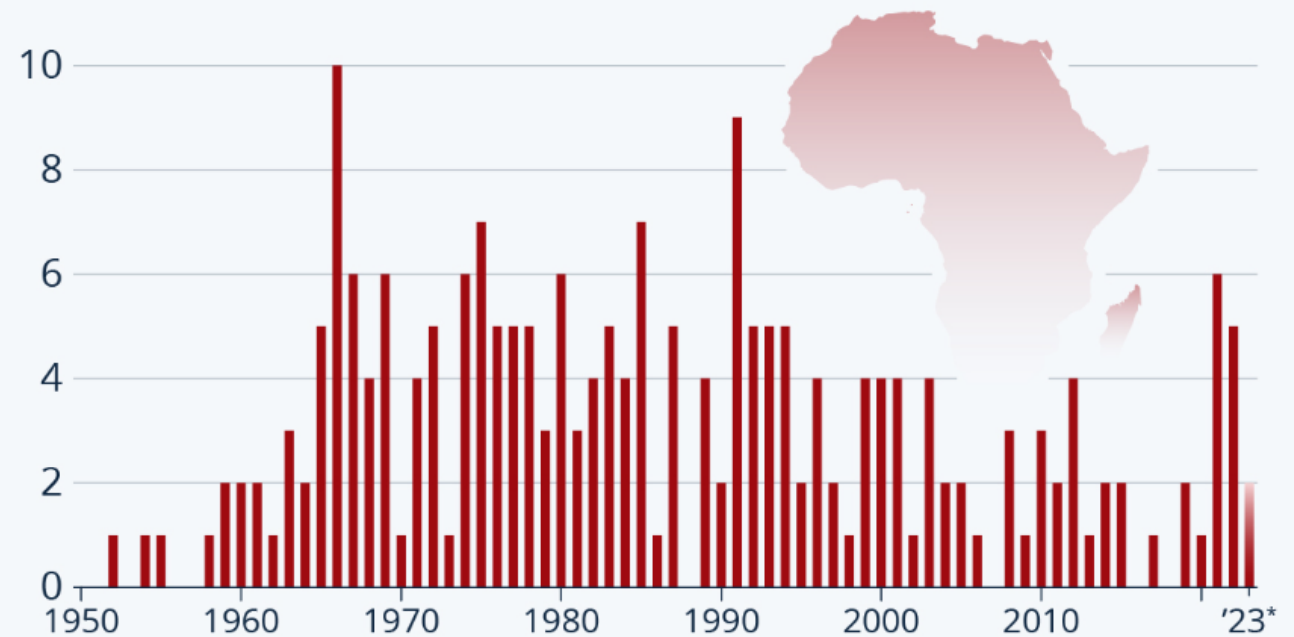GHANA 10
BURUNDI 11
COMOROS 9

*Failed and successful coups

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

BBC

A Renewed Wave of Coups in Africa?

Number of coups d'état (successful and unsuccessful) per year in Africa since 1950

1950 — 1960 — 1970 — 1980 — 1990 — 2000 — 2010 — '23*

* As of July 31, 2023

Increase of Military Coups in Africa?

Year	State
2019	• 2019 Gabonese coup d'état attempt • 2019 Sudanese coup d'état • 2019 Amhara Region coup d'état attempt (Ethiopia)
2020	• 2020 Malian coup d'état • 2020 Sudanese coup d'état attempt • 2020–21 Central African Republic coup d'état attempt
2021	• 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	• January 2022 Burkina Faso coup d'état • 2022 Guinea-Bissau coup d'état attempt • May Malian coup d'état attempt • September 2022 Burkina Faso coup d'état • December 2022 – Gambian coup d'état attempt
2023	• July – Nigerien coup d'état • August – Gabonese coup d'état • September Burkina Faso coup d'état attempt • November Sierra Leone coup attempt • November Guinea-Bissau coup d'état attempt

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) – Conflicts to watch 2024
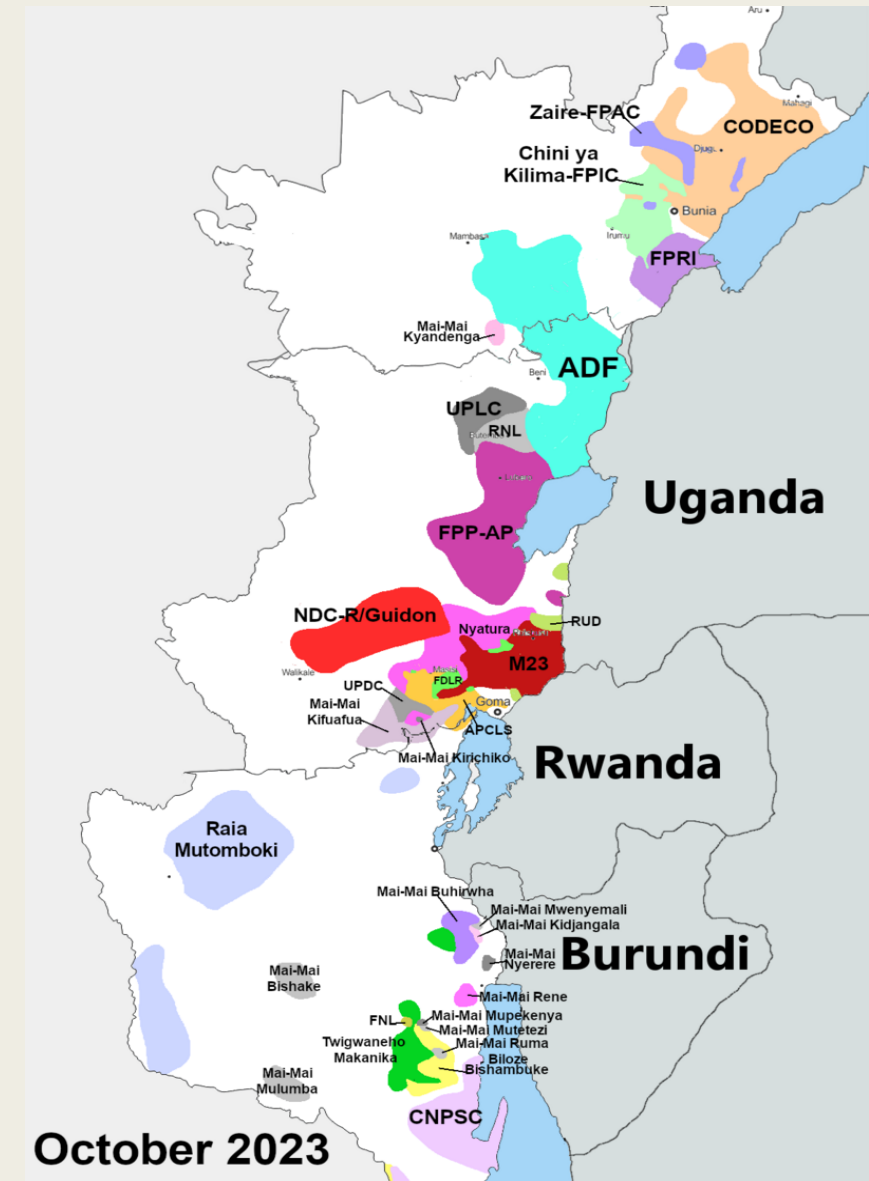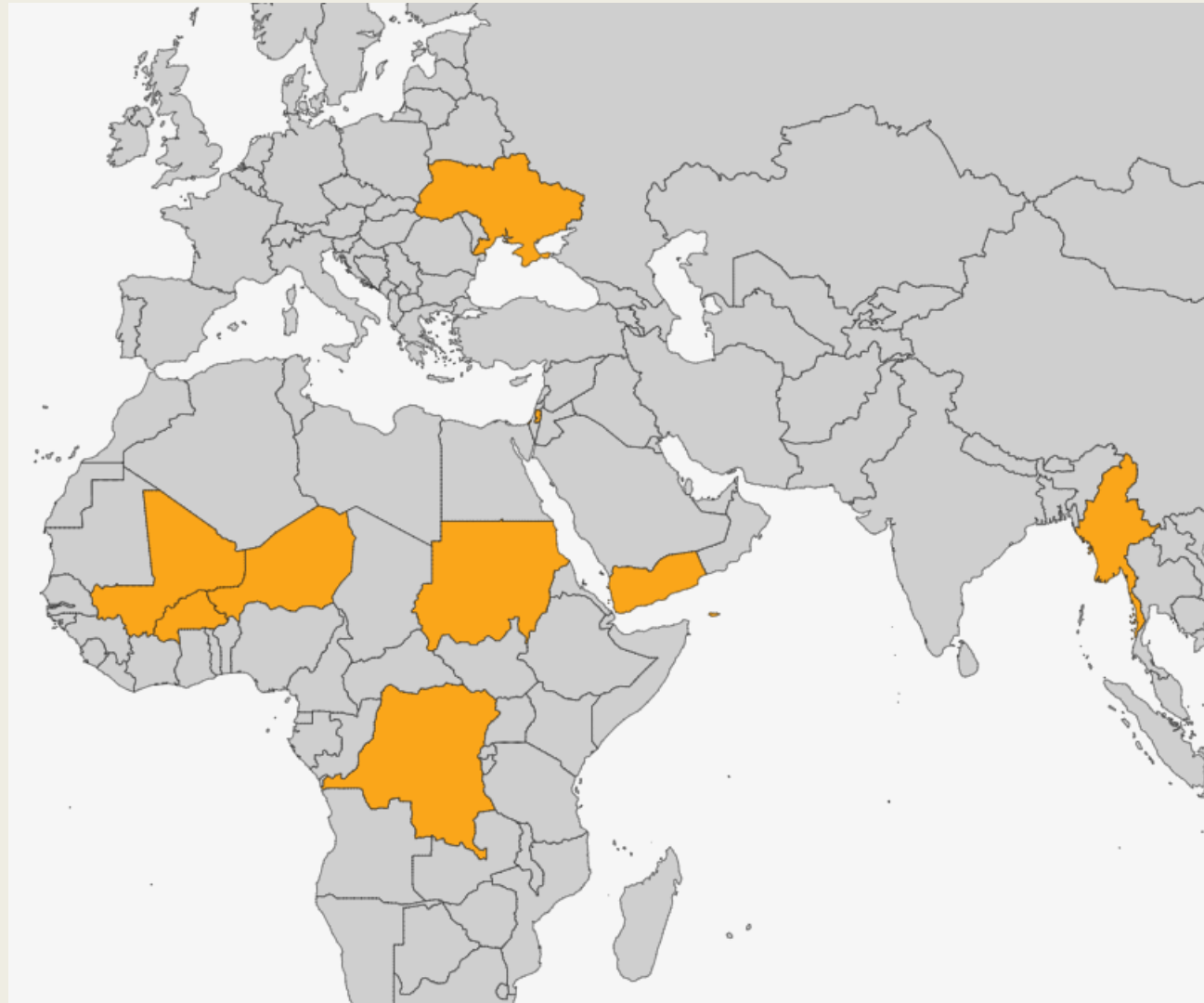
Recent war in Ethiopia
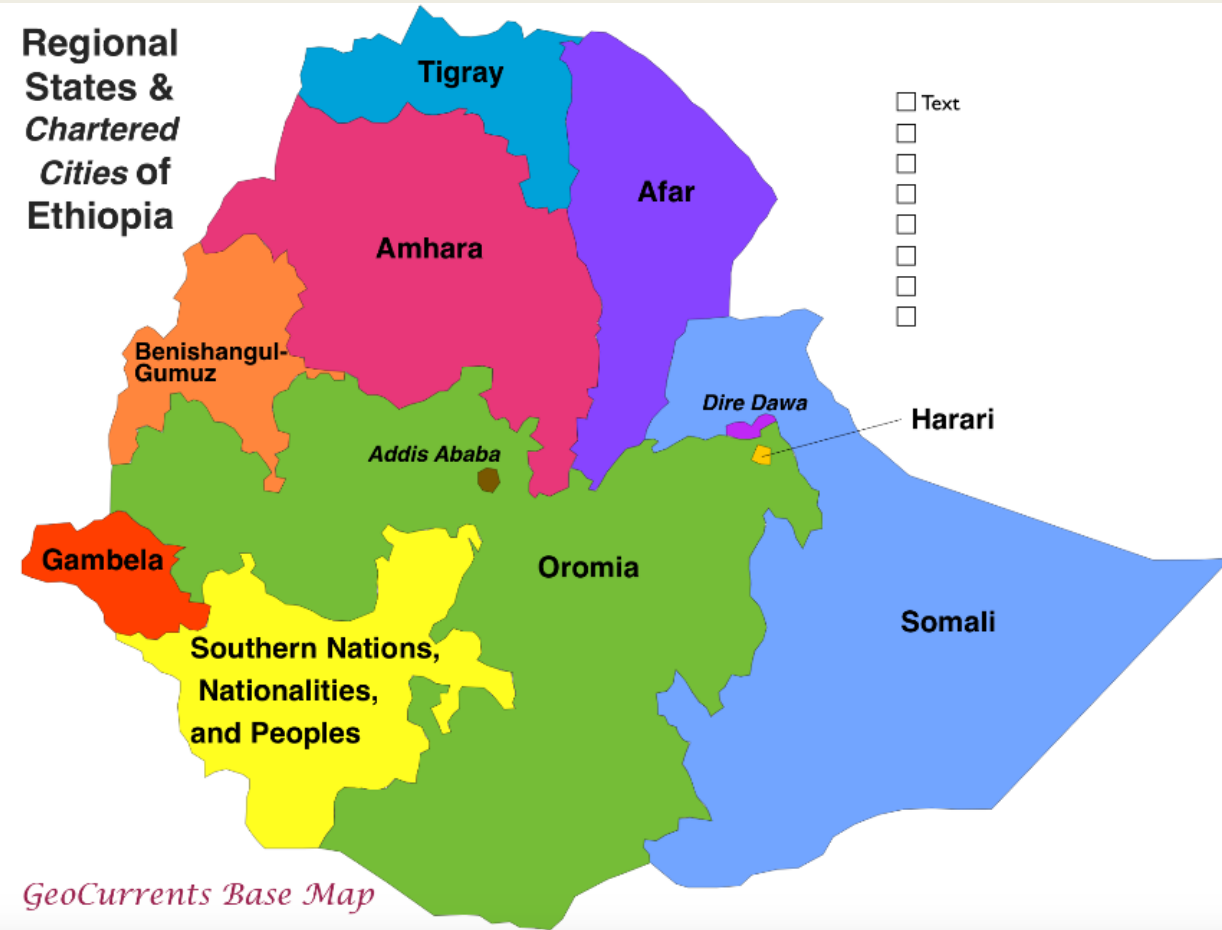
Recent war in Ethiopia

- Primary actors: Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (Tigray Defense Forces).

- Secondary actors: Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF), Oromo Liberation Army (OLA).

- August 2020 – postponement of parliamentary elections,TPLF own elections.

- November 3, 2020 - the beginning of the conflict.

- June 2021 - conquest of Mekele, expansion into Ahmara and Afar.

- August 2021 - involvement of OLA in the conflict.

- November 2, 2021 - state of emergency, detention camps.

- December 2021 withdrawal from Ahmara and Afar, stalemate.

- War crimes on both sides of the conflict.

- March 24, 2022 - Humanitarian ceasefire, end August 24, 2022.

- 3 November 2022 – Treaty on Cessation of Hostilities (Pretoria Agreement).

Thank you for your attention