IV. Armed conflict and peace processes in the Horn of Africa

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In this section the Horn of Africa is defined as the eight member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. These states are 'listed among the thirty-five most fragile countries in the World'.[1] The state fragility is derived from a complex mix of limited or uneven access to natural resources, intergroup tensions (on regional, religious and ethnic lines), poverty and economic inequalities, and weak state institutions.[2] This 'state fragility–conflict dynamic nexus' shapes the security environment of all countries in the region.[3] In 2019 only three of those states—Djibouti, Eritrea and Uganda—were free from armed conflicts. The armed conflicts in the other five states are discussed below. Relatively peaceful transitions of power in Ethiopia (in 2018) and Sudan (in 2019) and the implementation of a 2018 peace agreement in South Sudan led to significant decreases in armed violence in those three states. The armed conflict in Somalia remained one of the worst in the world.

Counterterrorism and anti-piracy efforts have been priorities in the region for a growing number of external actors over the last decade. This has created a crowded playing field that includes China, India, the United States and other Western powers (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United Kingdom) and several Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, UAE)—with growing geopolitical tensions, rivalries and risk of destabilizing proxy conflicts.[4]

The Horn of Africa also has a long history of interstate disputes, cross-border violent incidents and border conflicts, such as the Kenya–Somalia maritime border dispute.[5] Disputes over resource allocation and access have also been significant in the region. For example, the dispute over the sharing of the eastern Nile waters, involving Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, remained

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[1] IGAD, *IGAD Regional Strategy: Volume 1, The Framework* (IGAD: Djibouti, Jan. 2019), p. 15.

[2] IGAD (note 1), pp. 8–10.

[3] Adeto, Y. A., 'State fragility and conflict nexus: Contemporary security issues in the Horn of Africa', African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 22 July 2019.

[4] See Melvin, N., 'The new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2019/2, Apr. 2019; Melvin, N., 'The foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Background Paper, Apr. 2019; and International Crisis Group, *Intra-Gulf Competition in Africa's Horn: Lessening the Impact*, Middle East Report no. 206 (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 19 Sep. 2019). On geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and North Africa, see chapter 6, section I, in this volume.

[5] Quartz Africa, 'Why the US, UK, France and Norway are taking sides in Kenya's maritime row with Somalia', 7 Nov. 2019; and Wabuke, E., 'The Kenya–Somalia maritime dispute and its potential national security costs', Lawfare, 15 May 2019.

deadlocked in 2019.[6] Many of the region's social, political and economic challenges are compounded by the impacts of climate change, including droughts and floods. These impacts are local and transnational in character, and add to the risks of political tensions and violent conflict within and among states in the Horn of Africa.[7]

Ethiopia

The relatively peaceful transition of power in Ethiopia in 2018 and a series of reforms initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed led to an opening of the domestic political space and the signing of a Joint Declaration on Peace and Friendship with Eritrea.[8] The 2018 peace agreement formally ended the Eritrean–Ethiopian war (1998–2000) and border conflict (2000–18) and restored full diplomatic relations between the two countries.[9] Abiy was awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for resolving the border conflict with Eritrea and promoting peace and reconciliation in his own country and the region.[10] Confidence has also been growing in the country's macroeconomic outlook—Ethiopia's annual growth rate of 7.4 per cent placed it among the 10 fastest-growing world economies in 2019, and the country has attracted a considerable amount of foreign direct investment—although structural challenges remain.[11]

However, in 2019 while internal armed resistance against the Ethiopian Government decreased—battle-related fatalities in 2019 were the lowest for the 2013–19 period (see table 7.8)—ethnic-based violence increased amidst a breakdown in social cohesion in some areas.[12] The border area with Eritrea also remained tense.[13] Conflict, displacement and disease outbreaks, as well

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[6] Palios, E., 'Nile Basin water wars: The never-ending struggle between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan', Geopolitical Monitor, 4 Nov. 2019; and International Crisis Group, *Bridging the Gap in the Nile Waters Dispute*, Africa Report no. 271 (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 20 Mar. 2019).

[7] For a regional analysis of environment, peace and security linkages in the region with specific focus on water security and governance, see Krampe, F. et al., 'Water security and governance in the Horn of Africa', SIPRI Policy Paper no. 54, Mar. 2020.

[8] On developments within Ethiopia in 2018 and the Eritrea–Ethiopia peace agreement, see *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 134–37.

[9] Gebrekidan, S., 'Ethiopia and Eritrea declare an end to their war', *New York Times*, 9 July 2018; and Ylönen, A., 'From demonisation to rapprochement: Abiy Ahmed's early reforms and implications of the coming together of Ethiopia and Eritrea', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2019), pp. 341–49.

[10] BBC, 'Nobel Peace Prize: Ethiopia PM Abiy Ahmed wins', 11 Oct. 2019.

[11] African Development Bank, *African Economic Outlook 2020: Developing Africa's Workforce for the Future* (African Development Bank: 30 Jan. 2020); Sidhu, A., 'FDI in Ethiopia: Is "Abiymania" enough?', Geopolitical Monitor, 31 July 2019; and Oqubay, A., 'Will the 2020s be the decade of Africa's economic transformation?', Overseas Development Institute, 14 Jan. 2020.

[12] International Crisis Group, *Keeping Ethiopia's Transition on the Rails*, Africa Report no. 283 (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 16 Dec. 2019).

[13] Plaut, M., 'How the glow of the historic accord between Ethiopia and Eritrea has faded', *Mail & Guardian*, 8 July 2019.

Table 7.8. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Ethiopia, 2013–19

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Battles	418	237	568	1 065	875	718	193
Explosions/remote violence	48	2	16	15	4	22	17
Protests, riots and strategic developments	33	53	177	677	132	241	169
Violence against civilians	85	43	49	755	341	572	286
Total	**584**	**335**	**810**	**2 512**	**1 352**	**1 553**	**665**

Note: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Data export tool', [n.d.].

as flooding in some parts of the country and rainfall shortages in others, remained key drivers of humanitarian needs in Ethiopia during 2019. At least 8 million people were projected to require humanitarian assistance in 2020.[14]

Challenges to consolidating the political transition

Ethiopia is made up of 10 semi-autonomous ethnically based federal states (one of which was added in 2019, see below). With the opening up of the political space the competition among them has increased, and people living outside of their own ethnic regions have faced increasing attacks.[15] Armed violence between ethnonationalist groups and those supporting the central government also took place within some regions during the year, especially attacks by splinter factions of the Oromo Liberation Front in western Oromia in October 2019.[16] Similar violence in the Amhara region in June 2019 resulted in the assassination of Amhara's regional leader and also the chief of staff of Ethiopia's military.[17]

There were frequent political protests during 2019, many in support or opposition to the prime minister's reform agenda. The creation of a new pan-Ethiopian political grouping, the Prosperity Party, to replace the former ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front—a coalition of four ethnic parties that has controlled all tiers of government since 1991—ahead of elections in 2020 was particularly controversial. While seen by some of Ethiopia's ethnic groups as an attempt by Abiy to fashion a more unified national identity, it was perceived by others as a further setback to their claims for political autonomy and cultural justice.[18] One ethnic group administered

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[14] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Global Humanitarian Overview 2020* (OCHA: Geneva, Dec. 2019), p. 37.

[15] BBC, 'Abiy Ahmed's reforms in Ethiopia lift the lid on ethnic tensions', 29 June 2019; Associated Press, '67 killed in days of unrest in Ethiopia, police say', 26 Oct. 2019; and Reuters, 'Ethiopia deploys police in universities to stop ethic violence', 10 Dec. 2019.

[16] *The Economist*, 'Ethnic violence threatens to tear Ethiopia apart', 2 Nov. 2019.

[17] International Crisis Group, 'Restoring calm in Ethiopia after high-profile assassinations', Statement, 25 June 2019.

[18] Allo, A. K., 'Why Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party could be bad news for Ethiopia', Al Jazeera, 5 Dec. 2019.

under Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region made a successful bid for federal statehood: Sidama became Ethiopia's 10th semi-autonomous regional state in November 2019, after protests and a successful referendum.[19] The referendum could fuel similar demands by other ethnic regions in southern Ethiopia, particularly those of Wolayta, while separatist movements are growing in other parts of the country, especially in Tigray.[20]

Pivotal elections scheduled for May 2020 will be delayed because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Despite having a popular leader Ethiopia's system of ethnic federalism is at risk of increased fragmentation due to the spread of ethnic violence, while significant regional challenges also remain.[21]

Kenya

The main threat to peace and security in Kenya comes from al-Shabab, the Somalia-based group that is affiliated with al-Qaeda.[22] Since 2015 the group has conducted over 100 small-scale assaults in the north-east of Kenya, killing dozens of security forces, mostly by roadside bombs.[23] An attack by al-Shabab in Kenya's capital on 15 January 2019 killed at least 21 civilians and brought back memories of the 2013 attack on a shopping centre that killed 67 people.[24] According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Kenya had 61 battle-related fatalities in 2019, down from 156 in 2018 (out of a total of 268 conflict-related fatalities for the year, compared with 406 in 2018).[25]

Somalia

Following the overthrow of the military regime of President Siad Barre in 1991 Somalia disintegrated into rival clan-based armed groups. An inter-nationally backed unity government formed in 2000 failed to establish control, and the two relatively peaceful northern regions of Somaliland and Puntland sought to break away from Somalia: although both remain inter-

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[19] Sileshi, E., 'Sidama becomes Ethiopia's 10th regional state', *Addis Standard*, 23 Nov. 2019; and International Crisis Group, 'Time for Ethiopia to bargain with Sidama over statehood', Africa Briefing no. 146, 4 July 2019.

[20] Temare, G. G., 'The Republic of Tigray? Aydeln, yekenyeley!', Ethiopia Insight, 28 Sep. 2019.

[21] Mosley, J., 'Ethiopia's transition: Implications for the Horn of Africa and Red Sea region', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2020/5, Mar. 2020.

[22] On al-Shabab recruitment in Kenya, see Speckhard, A. and Shajkovci, A., 'The Jihad in Kenya: Understanding Al-Shabaab recruitment and terrorist activity inside Kenya—in their own words', *African Security*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2019), pp. 3–61.

[23] Abdille, A., 'The hidden cost of al-Shabaab's campaign in north-eastern Kenya', International Crisis Group commentary, 4 Apr. 2019.

[24] *The Economist*, 'Another terrorist outrage in Nairobi', 17 Jan. 2019.

[25] ACLED, 'Data export tool', [n.d.].

Table 7.9. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Somalia, 2013–19

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Battles	1 985	2 894	2 786	3 731	2 686	3 034	2 154
Explosions/remote violence	529	953	750	1 215	2 188	1 446	1 221
Protests, riots and strategic developments	15	19	8	27	74	48	23
Violence against civilians	628	602	561	676	887	573	640
Total	**3 157**	**4 468**	**4 105**	**5 649**	**5 835**	**5 101**	**4 038**

Note: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Data export tool', [n.d.].

nationally recognized as autonomous regions of Somalia.[26] The seizure of the capital Mogadishu and much of the country's south by the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2006 prompted an intervention by Ethiopia, and in 2007 by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The ICU subsequently splintered into more radical groups, including the al-Shabab group, which is aligned with al-Qaeda. Since 2012 the main armed conflict has been between the Somali Government, backed by AMISOM and US forces, and al-Shabab insurgents.[27] In 2018 AMISOM adopted a security transition plan for the gradual transfer of security responsibilities to Somali forces, with final withdrawal of the mission by 2021.[28]

In 2019 despite continued AMISOM operations and increased US air strikes, al-Shabab remained a major threat to Somali society and President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo's government. According to ACLED continued expansion by al-Shabab made Somalia the country with the third-highest level of Islamist activity in 2019.[29] Improvised explosive devices continued to be the 'weapon of choice'.[30] In addition, Somalia's rural populations continued to suffer from clan-based violence, with weak state security forces unable to prevent clashes over water and pasture resources. Thus, although there was a small decrease in the total number of conflict-related fatalities in 2019 compared with the previous three years—and battle-related fatalities were at their lowest since 2013 (see table 7.9)—the armed conflict remained one of the worst in the world.

[26] On the tensions between Somalia and Somaliland in 2019, see International Crisis Group, *Somalia–Somaliland: The Perils of Delaying New Talks*, Africa Report no. 280 (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 12 July 2019.

[27] On developments in Somalia in 2018, see *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 137–40.

[28] Oluoch, F., 'Amisom ready to withdraw', *East African*, 12 Nov. 2018. On developments within AMISOM in 2018, see *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 169–71.

[29] Kishi, R. et al., *Year in Review* (ACLED: 2 Mar. 2020), p. 54. On the role of women in the insurgency, see International Crisis Group, 'Women and al-Shabaab's insurgency', Africa Briefing no. 145, 27 June 2019.

[30] UN Security Council, 'Final report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia', S/2019/858, 1 Nov. 2019, pp. 5 and 9–12.

The persistent insecurity was compounded by weather extremes (below-average rainfall, but severe flooding from heavy rains in November 2019) and the poorest harvest since detailed record-keeping began in 1995. These conditions drove an additional 1 million people in Somalia into humanitarian need, and nearly 302 000 people were newly displaced in 2019, joining more than 2.6 million existing internally displaced persons. It was projected that an estimated 6.3 million people will be food insecure, and 1 million children under the age of five are likely to be acutely malnourished in 2020.[31]

The fight against al-Shabab and drawdown of the African Union Mission in Somalia

The USA increased its engagement in Somalia in 2019—conducting 63 air strikes against al-Shabab targets (compared to 45 in 2018, 35 in 2017, 14 in 2016, 11 in 2015 and 11 during 2007–14)—as part of an effort to weaken the insurgency prior to the planned handover of security operations from AMISOM to the Somali armed forces in 2021.[32] According to independ-ent reports the air strikes continued to involve civilian casualties not acknowledged by the US military.[33]

In May 2019, following a joint African Union (AU)–United Nations technical review of AMISOM, the UN Security Council renewed AMISOM's mandate until 31 May 2020 and reduced personnel by 1000 to a maximum level of 19 626 by 28 February 2020.[34] However, al-Shabab remained resilient in the face of this increased military pressure from Somali and international military forces, and continued to carry out armed attacks on those forces and civilian targets.[35] These attacks intensified towards the end of 2019: an attack on a checkpoint in Mogadishu on 28 December 2019, for example, killed 81 people.[36] A national Defector Rehabilitation Programme aimed at helping al-Shabab members to disengage, rehabilitate and reintegrate has also failed to weaken the group.[37]

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[31] OCHA (note 14), p. 38. On the impact of climate-related change in livelihood options and migration in Somalia, see also Eklöw, K. and Krampe, F., 'Climate-related security risks and peacebuilding in Somalia', SIPRI Policy Paper no. 53, Oct. 2019; and Hujale, M., 'Mogadishu left reeling as conflict and climate shocks spark rush to capital', *The Guardian*, 27 Jan. 2020.

[32] Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 'Somalia: Reported US actions 2019', [n.d.]; and Schmitt, E. and Savage, C., 'Trump administration steps up air war in Somalia', *New York Times*, 10 Mar. 2019.

[33] Dewan, K. and Dahir, A. H., '"We heard it coming": US lethal operations in Somalia', TRT World Research Centre, Sep. 2019; and Amnesty International, 'The hidden US war in Somalia: Civilian casualties from air strikes in Lower Shabelle', Mar. 2019.

[34] UN Security Council, 'Security Council extends mandate of African Union Mission in Somalia, authorizes troop reduction, unanimously adopting resolution 2472 (2019)', SC/13828, 31 May 2019. The joint AU–UN review is contained in UN Security Council, Letter dated 10 May 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2019/388, 13 May 2019.

[35] See e.g. Al Jazeera, 'US special forces base, Italian army convoy attacked in Somalia', 30 Sep. 2019.

[36] AFP, 'Death toll in Somalia bombing climbs to 81: Govt', News 24, 30 Dec. 2019.

[37] Gjelsvik, I. M., 'Disengaging from violent extremism: The case of al-Shabaab in Somalia', African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 24 June 2019.

Political fragmentation and Somalia's federalism

Reflecting the fragmented nature of Somali politics after nearly three decades of civil war, the country is organized as a federal republic, with a central authority (the federal government) and six federal member states, which are divided into 18 administrative regions. Power-sharing arrangements along the main clan lines are common in all levels of Somali governance. In 2018 the council of ministers of the federal government endorsed a road map for inclusive politics, designed to counter the political fragmentation in the country, paving the way for elections in 2020.[38] However, in 2019 there were continuing disagreements between the federal government and federal states over power and resources.[39] These disagreements also hampered the counter-insurgency effort. In July and August for example, during heightened political tensions arising from a disputed presidential electoral process in Jubaland, al-Shabab carried out its first attack in the city of Kismayo, resulting in 26 fatalities.[40]

Further political destabilization in Somalia has occurred as a result of the Gulf rivalry. Qatar and Turkey for example, are important supporters of President Farmajo's federal government, while the UAE has supported Somaliland, effectively undermining the federal government's authority.[41]

Somalia is scheduled to hold a 'universal suffrage' election in 2020 (to replace the existing clan-based, power-sharing model) for the first time since the outbreak of the civil war in 1992. With al-Shabab undefeated and Somalia's Gulf allies likely to increase their efforts to secure political influences ahead of the general election, 2020 will be a pivotal year for Somalia.[42] The proposed AMISOM withdrawal adds a further layer of uncertainty.

South Sudan

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011 after a 2005 agreement that ended one of Africa's longest-running civil wars. A UN peacekeeping mission, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), was established on 8 July 2011. Although a post-independence civil war (2013–15) was curtailed by a 2015 peace agreement, the legacy of violence continued in the form of an armed conflict waged primarily between two groups—the Government of South Sudan and its allies, led by President Salva Kiir (an

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[38] UN Security Council, 'Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia', S/2018/411, 2 May 2018.

[39] UN Security Council, S/2019/858 (note 30), pp. 21–24.

[40] UN Security Council, S/2019/858 (note 30), p. 23; and UN Security Council, 'Security Council press statement on terrorist attack in Kismayo, Somalia', SC/13883, 15 July 2019.

[41] Southern, N. P., 'UAE's relations with Somalia flounder over Qatar', Global Risk Insights, 1 Feb. 2019; and Bergman, R. and Kirkpatrick, D. D., 'With guns, cash and terrorism, Gulf States vie for power in Somalia', *New York Times*, 22 July 2019.

[42] Associated Press, 'Somali official: 2020 could see first election in 50 years', 22 Nov. 2019.

ethnic Dinka), and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition and the Nuer White Army, led by former vice president Riek Machar (an ethnic Nuer). Although the main division in the subsequent conflict has been between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups, underlying conflict dynamics are primarily political and vary considerably across the country. Opposition groups have become more fractured and localized.

In September 2018 Kiir and Machar signed a new peace deal, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan.[43] However, at the end of 2018 it remained contested and partial, and required further negotiations to form a unity government, transitional security arrangements and a unified national army. Limited and localized, clashes among some of the armed groups associated with the signatories were also continuing.[44]

Implementation of the 2018 peace agreement

According to UN reports, implementation of the agreement remained selective and significantly behind schedule during 2019. In particular, the planned formation of a new unity government, delayed from May to mid-November 2019, was in question because concerns about the accord's transitional security arrangements, the reunification of the army, and the number of states and their boundaries remained unaddressed.[45] Just before the 12 November deadline the pre-transitional period was extended by a further 100 days.[46] A UN panel of experts on South Sudan also noted inconsistent support for the agreement among IGAD and neighbouring states, specifically Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda.[47]

More promising was the reduction in fighting in most parts of the country as a result of the 2018 ceasefire—as reflected in the lower battle-related fatalities in 2019 (see table 7.10). Nonetheless, intercommunal violence and clashes between the government and opposition forces continued in some areas, mainly in the Central and Western Equatoria and the Upper Nile

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[43] IGAD, *Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan* (IGAD: Addis Ababa, 12 Sep. 2018); and Vhumbunu, C. H., 'Reviving peace in South Sudan through the Revitalised Peace Agreement: Understanding the enablers and possible obstacles', African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 11 Feb. 2019. On developments in South Sudan in 2017–18, see *SIPRI Yearbook 2018*, pp. 99–100; and *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 140–43.

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

[45] UN Security Council, 'Interim report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan submitted pursuant to resolution 2471 (2019)', S/2019/897, 22 Nov. 2019, pp. 8–12; UN Security Council, 'Situation in South Sudan', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2020/145, 26 Feb. 2020, pp. 2–3; and UN Security Council, 'Situation in South Sudan', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/936, 11 Dec. 2019, pp. 1–3. Also see Tombe, S., 'Revitalising the peace in South Sudan: Assessing the state of the pre-transitional phase', African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 24 June 2019.

[46] UN Security Council, 'Security Council press statement on South Sudan', SC/14033, 22 Nov. 2019.

[47] UN Security Council, S/2019/897 (note 45), p. 12.

Table 7.10. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in South Sudan, 2013–19

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Battles	1 300	4 473	2 309	2 541	3 356	1 134	823
Explosions/remote violence	18	61	61	46	18	30	10
Protests, riots and strategic developments	0	11	24	1	4	5	4
Violence against civilians	3 075	1 849	1 206	960	1 416	530	963
Total	**4 393**	**6 394**	**3 600**	**3 548**	**4 794**	**1 699**	**1 800**

Note: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Data export tool', [n.d.].

regions.[48] The UN also documented 'the continued use of conflict-related sexual violence by the parties to the conflict', targeted attacks on civilians and an increase in the recruitment of child soldiers.[49]

The UN Security Council extended the mandate of UNMISS on 15 March 2019, maintaining an authorized strength of 17 000 military personnel, including a 4000-strong Regional Protection Force and 2101 police.[50] However, as was the case in 2018 UNMISS did not achieve this strength in 2019: as of 31 December 2019 UNMISS deployed 14 962 military personnel and 1799 police officers.[51]

The humanitarian situation

As a result of years of persistent armed conflict, enduring vulnerabilities and weak basic services, humanitarian needs in South Sudan remained exceptionally high in 2019. More than two thirds of the population (about 7.5 million people) were in need of humanitarian assistance, while nearly 4 million South Sudanese remained displaced (about 1.7 million internally displaced and the remainder as refugees outside the country). Unusually heavy seasonal flooding in 2019 affected more than 900 000 people and deepened the humanitarian crisis. Food insecurity reached record levels during 2019.[52]

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[48] On the conflict in the Upper Nile, see Crace, J., *Displaced and Immiserated: The Shilluk of Upper Nile in South Sudan's Civil War, 2014–19* (Small Arms Survey: Sep. 2019).

[49] UN Security Council, S/2019/936 (note 45), pp. 7–13; UN General Assembly, 'Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan', A/HRC/43/56, 31 Jan. 2020; and Austin, R., 'Rise in children forced to joint militias raises fresh fears over South Sudan', *The Guardian*, 18 Sep. 2019. On gender commitments and requirements for women's representation under the 2018 peace agreement, see UN Security Council, 'Summary of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security on the situation in South Sudan, held on 28 February 2019', S/2019/232, 13 Mar. 2019.

[50] UN Security Council Resolution 2459, 15 Mar. 2019.

[51] UN Security Council, S/2019/936 (note 45), p. 15. On developments within UNMISS in 2018, see *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 167–68. On developments within peace operations more generally, see chapter 2, section II, in this volume.

[52] OCHA (note 14), p. 39.

At the end of 2019 South Sudan was at a critical juncture, with the peace process seemingly deadlocked.[53] The delay in the formation of a coalition government brought uncertainty and doubt about the full implementation of the peace agreement and concern over the potential recurrence of high levels of violence.

Sudan

A major transition of power occurred in Sudan in 2019. Towards the end of 2018 President Omar al-Bashir, who came to power in a military coup in 1989, faced widespread economic-related protests.[54] On 11 April 2019 following months of protest—led by an alliance of civil society groups, the Sudanese Professionals Association and political parties known as the Forces for Freedom and Change—the president was removed from power by the Sudanese army, which subsequently dissolved the government, suspended the constitution and declared a state of emergency.[55] As demonstrations continued, on 15 April the AU called on state forces to transfer power to a civilian government within 15 days, or face suspension from the regional organization; a further 60-day deadline was announced by the AU on 1 May.[56]

Dialogue between military and civilian leaders took place amidst increasing violence, with paramilitary forces reportedly killing over 120 protesters on 3 June 2019.[57] In June Sudan was temporarily suspended from the AU. In July a power-sharing agreement was finally reached between the Sudanese Military Transition Council and a coalition of opposition and protest groups. Under the agreement Sudan will hold elections following an approximately three-year period of shared rule between the military and civilian groups.[58] On 17 August 2019 the parties signed a landmark constitutional declaration and power-sharing accord, and formed a transitional government.[59] The

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[53] 'Peace deal wheelspin', *Africa Confidential*, vol. 60, no. 25 (19 Dec. 2019); and International Crisis Group, 'A short window to resuscitate South Sudan's ailing peace deal', Statement, 2 Dec. 2019. On the 'trust deficit' among the parties, see Onapa, S. A., 'South Sudan power-sharing agreement R-ARCSS: The same thing expecting different results', *African Security Review*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2019), pp. 75–94.

[54] International Crisis Group, 'Improving prospects for a peaceful transition in Sudan', Africa Briefing no. 143, 14 Jan. 2019; and 'The protests in Sudan', *Strategic Comments*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2019), pp. iv–vi.

[55] Walsh, D. and Goldstein, J., 'Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir is ousted, but not his regime', *New York Times*, 11 Apr. 2019; Beaumont, P. and Salih, Z. M., 'Fall of Bashir risks leaving Sudan prey to rival regional powers', *The Guardian*, 27 Apr. 2019.

[56] Al Jazeera, 'African Union gives Sudan military further 60 days to cede power', 1 May 2019.

[57] Walsh, D., 'Sudan talks collapse amid clashes in Khartoum', *New York Times*, 15 May 2019; Matfess, H., 'The Rapid Support Forces and the escalation of violence in Sudan', ACLED, 2 July 2019; and *The Economist*, 'Pro-democracy protesters are slaughtered in Khartoum', 8 June 2019.

[58] Burke, J. and Salih, Z. M., 'Sudanese military and protesters sign power-sharing accord', *The Guardian*, 17 July 2019.

[59] Magdy, S., 'Sudanese protesters sign final power-sharing deal with army', Associated Press, 17 Aug. 2019; and BBC, 'Sudan crisis: What you need to know', 16 Aug. 2019.

Sudanese Professionals Association took on an independent oversight role in the new government. In September 2019 the AU lifted its suspension of Sudan following the announcement of a new cabinet by new Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.[60] On 14 December 2019 a Sudanese court sentenced former president al-Bashir to two years in prison for money laundering and corruption.[61]

The new administration inherited a deepening economic crisis and significantly increased food insecurity in 2019—at least 17.7 million people (42 per cent of the population) suffered from some level of food insecurity—and weakened public services, including health, water and education. Nearly one quarter of the population (about 9.3 million people) needed humanitarian assistance. Some 1.9 million people were internally displaced, and more than 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers were living in camps, out-of-camp settlements and urban areas across Sudan, including about 895 000 South Sudanese refugees.[62] Hamdok has estimated that the country will need foreign investment of about $10 billion over the next two years.[63]

Sudan has been affected by conflict for most of its recent history. Long-standing insurgencies remained extant in Darfur and in the southern border states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan in 2019, and involved a fragmented mosaic of armed groups. In Darfur the main armed group was the Sudan Liberation Army, led by Abdul Wahid al Nur, as well as various Arab militias. There were also various armed groups from Darfur present in Libya as mercenaries.[64] Although the new government declared a ceasefire with all armed groups, the insurgent commanders refused to endorse the power-sharing agreement.

Armed conflict in Darfur and the drawdown of the United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur

The power-sharing deal was criticized by the Sudan Revolutionary Front, an alliance of the largest armed groups in Darfur, and other armed groups for not giving sufficient attention to achieving peace in Sudan.[65] The deal calls for the newly established Sudanese transitional government to reach a peace agreement with the armed groups in Darfur and other states within

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[60] Al Jazeera, 'African Union lifts suspension of Sudan', 7 Sep. 2019.

[61] Ahmed, N. and Magdy, S., 'Ex-Sudan strongman al-Bashir gets 2 years for corruption', Associated Press, 14 Dec. 2019.

[62] OCHA (note 14), p. 40.

[63] International Crisis Group, *Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution*, Africa Report no. 281 (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 21 Oct. 2019).

[64] For details of the various armed groups in Sudan (as well as Darfurian armed groups in Libya), see UN Security Council, 'Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan', S/2020/36, 14 Jan. 2020, pp. 15–28.

[65] UN Security Council, 'Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur', S/2019/816, 15 Oct. 2019, p. 2.

six months. The first round of meetings took place in Juba, South Sudan, in October 2019.[66] A second round of talks began on 10 December and a framework agreement on the issues to be discussed in future direct talks was reached between the government and some of the armed groups on 28 December 2019.[67]

Since 2014 the UN Security Council has reconfigured and gradually reduced the activities of the joint UN–AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which has been deployed in the region since 2007. Under pressure from Sudan's government for an exit strategy, the UN Security Council approved further troop reductions in 2017 and 2018, and refocused the mission on the protection of civilians in the Jebel Marra region of Darfur. A tentative exit strategy was set under Resolution 2429 (2018) for 30 June 2020, contingent on the security situation and progress on specified benchmarks.[68]

In April 2019 the UN described the security situation in Darfur as 'relatively stable', except in Jebel Marra, where clashes continued.[69] Similarly, in May 2019 a joint AU–UN assessment team, while noting a spike in violence in several camps for internally displaced persons, suggested that Darfur had generally 'evolved into a post-conflict setting' and that the proposed drawdown could proceed, albeit gradually.[70] However, in June 2019 UN human rights officials and human rights groups reported a deterioration in human rights in Darfur, with increased reports of killing, abduction, sexual violence and other abuses.[71] This led the AU Peace and Security Council to call for the remaining AU–UN peacekeepers to be consolidated until the situation stabilized.[72]

On 27 June 2019 the UN Security Council voted to pause the drawdown until 31 October 2019, pending a fresh AU–UN assessment of the situation.[73] In its October 2019 report the assessment team found that the security situation in Darfur remained volatile, but largely unchanged from the May

[66] UN Security Council, S/2020/36 (note 64), pp. 7–8.

[67] Sudan Tribune, 'Sudan, armed groups sign framework agreement for peace in Darfur', 29 Dec. 2019.

[68] For UNAMID-related developments in 2018, see *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 168–69.

[69] UN Security Council, 'African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/305, 10 Apr. 2019, p. 1.

[70] UN Security Council, 'Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic assessment of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur', S/2019/445, 30 May 2019, pp. 2, 17.

[71] OCHA, 'Briefing to the Security Council on Sudan by Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, New York, 14 June 2019', 14 June 2019; Amnesty International, 'Sudan: Fresh evidence of government-sponsored crimes in Darfur shows drawdown of peacekeepers premature and reckless', 11 June 2019; and Henry, J., 'Sudan's transition hasn't ended abuses in Darfur', Human Rights Watch, 8 May 2019.

[72] AU, 'Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 856th meeting held on 13 June 2019, on the activities of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the situation in Darfur', 13 June 2019.

[73] UN Security Council Resolution 2479, 27 June 2019.

Table 7.11. Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Sudan, 2013–19

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Battles	5 595	3 049	2 440	2 939	851	700	314
Explosions/remote violence	479	263	263	294	33	28	17
Protests, riots and strategic developments	342	15	9	27	34	37	213
Violence against civilians	380	831	754	639	373	289	223
Total	**6 796**	**4 158**	**3 466**	**3 899**	**1 291**	**1 054**	**767**

Note: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Data export tool', [n.d.].

report. While armed conflict between government forces and armed opposition movements had subsided, the report concluded that some of the major grievances underlying the Darfur crisis, including intercommunal conflicts, remained fundamentally unaddressed.[74] On the basis of this assessment, the UN Security Council renewed UNAMID's mandate until 31 October 2020, with current troop and police ceilings (4050 and 2500, respectively) maintained until at least 31 March 2020.[75]

The predominance of mainly localized security incidents in Darfur and other conflict-affected regions in 2019 is reflected in the continuing fall in battle-related fatalities in Sudan (see table 7.11). However, it is difficult to predict how the political transition in Sudan may evolve in 2020. It faces numerous obstacles, including resistance by elements of the old military regime—the fractured security establishment comprises the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Rapid Support Forces (a paramilitary group formed from the remnants of the Janjaweed militia in Darfur), the intelligence services and allied militias—as well as unresolved local insurgencies and the competing agendas of external powers.[76]

[74] UN Security Council, S/2019/816 (note 65), pp. 3, 5.
[75] UN Security Council Resolution 2495, 31 Oct. 2019; and UNAMID, 'UNAMID facts and figures, as of January 2020', Jan. 2020.
[76] Downie, R., 'From the Gulf to Egypt, foreign powers are playing with fire in Sudan', *World Politics Review*, 6 Aug. 2019; and International Crisis Group (note 63).