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## **VIOLENT CONFLICTS DYNAMICS IN POST-COLD WAR AFRICA: THE HUMAN SECURITY FACTOR**

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**Abstract.** Through studying conflict transformation in Africa since the Cold War's end, this paper looks at the dynamic nature of violent conflicts in Africa, as well as how human insecurities have impacted the conflicts. The study surveys literature on conflict trajectory in post-Cold War Africa and human security. Despite the reduction in interstate conflicts and an increase in intrastate conflicts in Africa, the character of the state cannot be seen to have displayed sensitivity to these changes. Failed state theory which explains inability to deliver political goods and services to the citizens by states is used for theoretically espousing violent conflicts dynamics and human insecurity influence on the conflicts, and attendant insecurity. Owing to state failure, human insecurities are significant contributors to post-Cold War conflicts in Africa. It is therefore suggested that African governments should prioritise welfare of their citizens, and protect them from existential threats and violence in the region.

**Key words:** Post-Cold War African conflict dynamics, human security, violent conflict, terrorism, failed state.

### **Introduction**

Since the Cold War ended, Africa has experienced more violent conflicts than any other region globally. These conflicts have resulted in millions of deaths and have displaced countless individuals within their own countries. In the post-Cold War era, there has been a notable increase in internal violent conflicts involving both state and non-state actors like insurgent groups, while interstate conflicts have diminished. Palik et al. (2022) emphasize that communal conflicts, driven by communal identity differences, are the predominant form of non-state violence in Africa and tend to be of low intensity (often referred to as small wars). Notable examples of such conflicts include the civil war in northern Uganda involving the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), clashes between the governments of Chad and the Central African Republic against eastern-border insurgencies, Ethiopia's conflict in the Ogaden region, Namibia's struggle against separatists in the Caprivi Strip, Tuareg insurgencies in Northern Mali and Niger, the Casamance conflict in Senegal, Cabinda separatists in Angola, and Boko Haram's activities in Nigeria.

Gluhbegovic (2016) in EISA occasional paper confirms the widespread occurrence of inter-political party conflicts across various African nations. For instance, Mozambique has seen violent clashes between the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) and the opposition Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo). Election-related violence is a recurring problem in many African political contexts, as illustrated by the post-election unrest in Lesotho in 2007 when the opposition rejected the election results (Matlosa, 2007). These instances highlight the complex and ongoing nature of political conflicts in Africa, which stem from struggles for power, electoral disagreements, and the broader challenges associated with political transitions and democratization.

Klare (2001) notes that many of the conflicts during this period are linked to the abundance or scarcity of resources in Africa. For instance, the presence of diamond mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone has fuelled conflict, while oil-related crises have developed in Angola, Algeria, and Nigeria's Delta region. Resource scarcity has also led to tensions between herders and farmers in Nigeria, Mali, and Kenya, as well as water-related

conflicts in various African nations. Research indicates that resource-related conflicts are particularly challenging to resolve and often have regional implications (Klare, 2001). For example, the conflict in the DRC has escalated to involve more than eight countries (Faal, 2001).

Additionally, poor leadership and incompetence have exacerbated crises, leading to state failure in countries such as Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Kieh and Klay (2009) identify bad governance as a significant factor that triggered Liberia's second civil war in 2003, following President Charles Taylor's failure to restore democracy after the initial civil war.

## Literature Review

The resurgence of violence following the Cold War has sparked ongoing debates regarding the relationship between failed states and international terrorism, particularly in developing nations (Kersmo, 2021). Mary Kaldor (1998: 95-96) argues that these "new wars" predominantly occur in areas where state structures are either severely weakened or entirely collapsed. Furthermore, Kaldor (1998: 96) suggests that these conflicts are marked by a variety of fighting units, including public and private, state and non-state actors, or a combination thereof. The U.S. government has recognized that the end of the Cold War has introduced new threats, including an increase in territorial disputes, armed ethnic conflicts, and civil wars that jeopardize regional and international peace (PDD/NSC 56, 1997: 1). Consequently, the U.S. classified failed states as national security threats in its 2002 National Security Strategy (Lieber and Lieber, 2002).

In articulating U.S. foreign policy related to the NSS (2002), Rice stated that failing states provide a haven for international terrorists, allowing them to operate freely in regions with porous borders (Rice, 2003: 3). Fukuyama (2004: 92-93) argued that weak or failing states violate human rights, commit abuses, provoke humanitarian crises, drive mass migrations, and threaten neighbouring countries. Di John (2011) critiques the rationale behind the concept of state failure, arguing that there is insufficient evidence to support the economic and political performance claims of failed states in sub-Saharan Africa. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP, 2021) asserts that violent extremism and terrorism pose serious threats to national security in African states, particularly from local terrorist groups linked to international organizations.

Dempsey (2006) characterizes failed states as those where government authority has collapsed, violence is rampant, and effective governance has ceased. His research indicates that such states emerged primarily after the Cold War, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, creating opportunities for transnational terrorist groups to operate within these territories. Nuruzzaman (2013) examines how human security issues in North African countries, particularly rights abuses by authoritarian regimes, sparked social unrest in the 2010s. Akokpari (2007) argues that the high levels of human insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa have intensified conflicts and instability in the region, attributing this insecurity to a combination of internal and external factors.

Abtudu (2005) investigates the insecurity in Africa following the Cold War, linking it to the continent's economic crisis, which was exacerbated by neoliberal policies and reforms. His analysis emphasizes both internal and external factors as causes of insecurity, with a focus on the shift from traditional state-centred security to a human security paradigm. According to the *Africarenewal/UNDP* (2023), lack of employment opportunities is a significant driver of violent extremism in sub-Saharan Africa, with the hope of finding jobs pushing the youth towards joining Islamist militant groups in the region.

Nwizu and Cyprian (2018) explore the challenges of security governance and crises in Africa, noting that state failure and the inability of governments to provide basic necessities are primary contributors to crises. They conclude that poor leadership, corruption, and a focus on state-centred security over human security present significant security challenges in 21st-century Africa.

In summary, the human insecurity prevalent in Africa, a consequence of state failure since the end of the Cold War, is a critical factor driving conflicts and violence in the region. Research indicates that efforts by the UN, AU, and other international organizations to address the security challenges stemming from these "modern wars" in Africa have seen limited success. Therefore, the literature reviewed here will inform the ongoing research, which aims to study the dynamics of violent conflicts in the post-Cold War Africa and the impact of human insecurity on these conflicts.

## Methodology

Through studying conflict transformation in Africa since the Cold War's end, this paper looks at the dynamic nature of violent conflicts in Africa, as well

as how human insecurities have influenced the conflicts. Due to this focus, this paper analyses the trajectory of violent conflicts in Africa since the end of the Cold-War and the influence of human insecurity on the conflicts. The study surveys literature on conflict trends in the post-Cold War Africa, human insecurity and subsequently apply these insights to analysing the post-Cold War African conflict scenario garnered from books, book chapters, journal articles, and newspapers. Additionally, conflict statistics were sourced from databases such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)/Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Armed Conflict Database, the UCDP Battle Death Database, as well as reports from the World Bank, UNDP, Human Development Index (HDI), and other credible sources. To categorize the collected data into themes aligned with the study's objectives, thematic analysis is utilized. The main themes identified include: dynamics of violent conflicts in the post-Cold War Africa, the concept of human security, and the relationship between human insecurity and violent conflicts in the post-Cold War Africa. The next section will analyse this study within the framework of failed state theory.

In this context, the principles of failed state theory resonate with the insecurity prevalent in Africa, which arises from governments' failure to safeguard their citizens against threats and severe violence from terrorism, armed robbery, kidnapping, civil wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, and other violent crimes. This raises the question of how the inability of African governments to fulfil their core responsibilities is related to human insecurities, and how these challenges have impacted the conflicts and violence in the region.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study utilizes the failed state theory as its theoretical framework, which is particularly relevant considering the state fragility and violence that have plagued Africa since the Cold War's conclusion. This theory elucidates how "modern wars" contribute to insecurity in Africa and highlights the failure of African states to fulfil their essential duties of protecting their populations from existential threats. The failed state hypothesis describes a scenario in which a state cannot meet its obligations.

A central premise of this theory is that a state functions as a service provider. Eriksen (2011) supports this notion, emphasizing that a state is responsible for safeguarding its citizens' lives and property, facilitating political participation, offering health and education services, and ensuring security and the rule of law. Conversely, state failure indicates a state's

inability to deliver these vital services. Englehart (2009) argues that state failure occurs when governments cannot meet their fundamental responsibilities to their citizens. In this research, state failure is defined as the incapacity of African states to provide essential services necessary for the security and safety of their populations, meaning they can no longer fulfil their obligations to their people.

In this framework, Rotberg (2003) argues that a state's primary duty is to ensure the political good of security. This includes preventing cross-border incursions, maintaining territorial integrity, addressing domestic threats, combating crime, and fostering peaceful conflict resolution among citizens without resorting to violence.

### **Relevance of the Theory to Study**

In this current research, the discussion about the conflicts in post-Cold War Africa represents a similar connection between poverty, exclusion, unemployment, and corruption brought on by state failure as fundamental causes and catalysts of violent conflicts in Africa. Of note, the internal turmoil and structural failures faced by numerous African nations became pronounced following the Cold War's conclusion in the 1990s, significantly impacting regional security.

### **Violent Conflicts Dynamics in Post-Cold War Africa**

The nature of conflicts in post-Cold War Africa indicates a transformation in the complexity and duration of violence. Contemporary conflicts are often prolonged, lethal, and challenging to resolve, frequently crossing national borders and shaped by both internal and external influences. The Social Science Research Council (2018) emphasizes that conflicts and widespread violence possess intricate socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions, operating through power structures that blur traditional boundaries such as public versus private or local versus national. This perspective is supported by conflict literature from PRIO (2022) and Krause (2016), which document the shift from inter-state wars to diverse forms of intrastate violence, including insurgencies, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, organized crime, and protests. Avis (2019) also notes this transition, linking it to a decline in traditional interstate conflicts and a rise in intrastate and asymmetric warfare involving both state and non-state actors.

In this research, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)/PRIO Armed Conflict Database, UCDP Battle Death Database are utilized to illustrate the types and dynamics of post-Cold War violent conflicts in Africa.

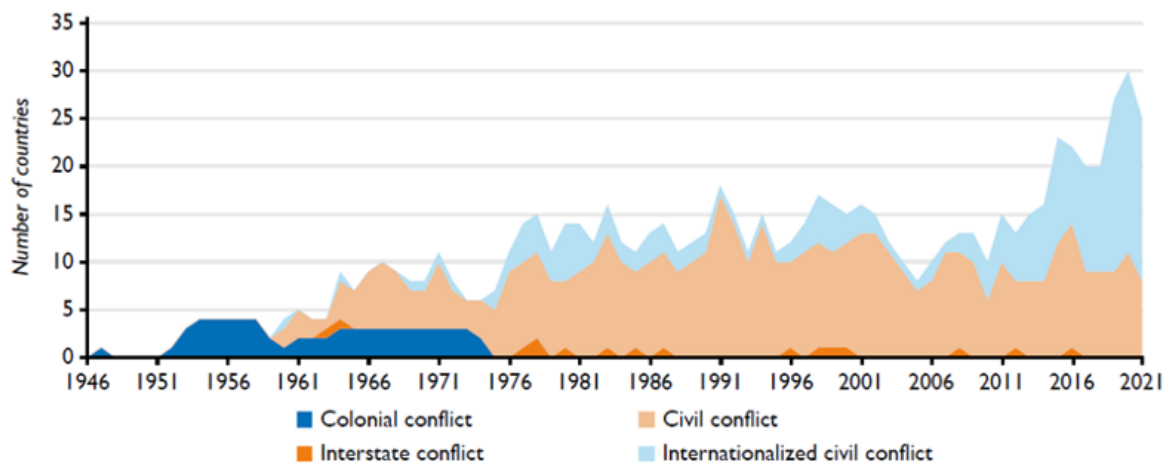


Figure 1: State-based armed conflicts in Africa by conflict type (1946-2021)

Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database

As depicted in Figure 1, there was a slight decrease in state-based conflicts in Africa, dropping from 30 in 2020 to 25 in 2021, although this number is higher than a decade ago. In the literature, colonial conflicts, interstate conflicts, civil conflicts, and internationalized civil conflicts are classified as state-based conflicts in Africa, with civil and internationalized civil conflicts being the most prevalent. Both types are generally characterized as low-intensity (Palik et al., 2022). In 2021, out of the 30 state-based conflicts, 11 were civil wars, while 19 were internationalized civil wars, marking the highest count of such conflicts in Africa since 1989.

This trend highlights the changing landscape of conflict in Africa, with a decline in interstate wars juxtaposed against a significant rise in civil conflicts. Study reveals that since 1990, only seven interstate wars have occurred in Africa, the latest being between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2006. However, the emergence of terrorist groups like ISIS since 2014 has led to an increase in violence and intrastate conflicts across the continent. For instance, in 2021, seven African nations—Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, and Nigeria—faced conflicts involving ISIS within their borders (Palik et al., 2022).

Reports of foreign intervention in internal conflicts across various African nations, including Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, and Somalia, further underscore the internationalization of civil wars in Africa. The UCDP (2021) defines internationalized conflicts as those in which

the government, opposition, or both receive support from external states actively involved in the conflict. While the deployment of peacekeeping forces in a state-based conflict can be categorized as internationalized, it does not automatically confer that status. External actors can either complicate or aid in the resolution of conflicts, with research indicating that internationalized conflicts tend to be prolonged and more severe (Cunningham, 2010; Pettersson et al., 2019; Balch-Lindsay et al.; and Lacina, 2006). The motivations and interests of interveners significantly influence conflict dynamics.

The rise of international involvement in African conflicts is illustrated in Figure 2. In Figure 2, it is shown that the number of internationalized conflicts has notably increased since 2009, rising from 11 in 2018 to 18 in 2019 and 19 in 2020, although it decreased to 17 in 2021. In 2022, the PRIO dataset estimated that twelve African countries experienced external involvement in their domestic conflicts, including Burkina Faso (with two internationalized civil conflicts), Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, DR Congo (two), Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali (two), Mozambique, Niger (two), Nigeria (two), and Somalia. For example, in 2020, Kenya and Somalia engaged in combat against Al-Shabaab with support from the United States and AU countries, respectively. Additionally, several African nations fought against ISIS with assistance from external governments, including the US, France, and EU countries or AU members. In another instance, the Malian government battled JNIM with French support through Operation Barkhane (Palik et al., 2022).

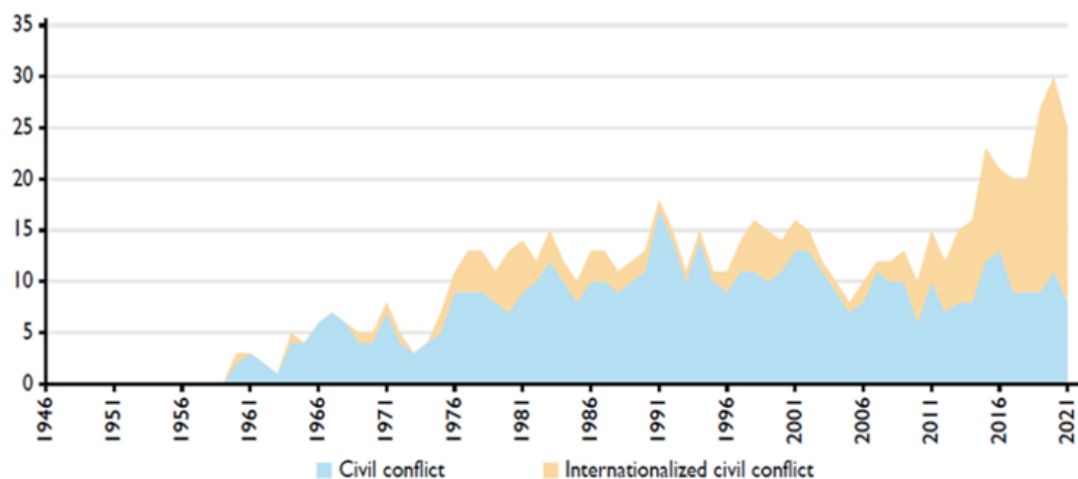


Figure 2: Number of civil conflicts with and without international involvement in Africa (1946-2021)

Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database

The changing nature of conflict in Africa, as noted by UNU-CPR (2014: 4-5), is partly due to the rise of organized crime, extreme violence, the internationalization of civil wars, and the growing activity of violent Islamist extremist groups. Kaldor (1998) refers to these as “new wars” or “modern” conflicts in Africa. The UNU-CPR (2014: 4) report also highlights that organized crime exacerbates state fragility, undermines state legitimacy, and complicates conflict resolution. Avis (2019: 9) concurs, noting that internal conflicts have become externalized with the involvement of outside states, leading to regional

violence, as seen in the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria, the Tuareg conflict in Northern Mali, and various intrastate conflicts in North African countries.

This study in the *Understanding Conflict Trends* (Watts, 2017), confirms that there was a decline in interstate warfare against an increase in intrastate violence. It further confirms that since the Cold War’s end, there have been few high-intensity intrastate conflicts claiming over 100,000 lives in a single year. In contrast, the late Cold War period saw a peak in medium- and low-intensity intrastate conflicts, with varying battle casualties.

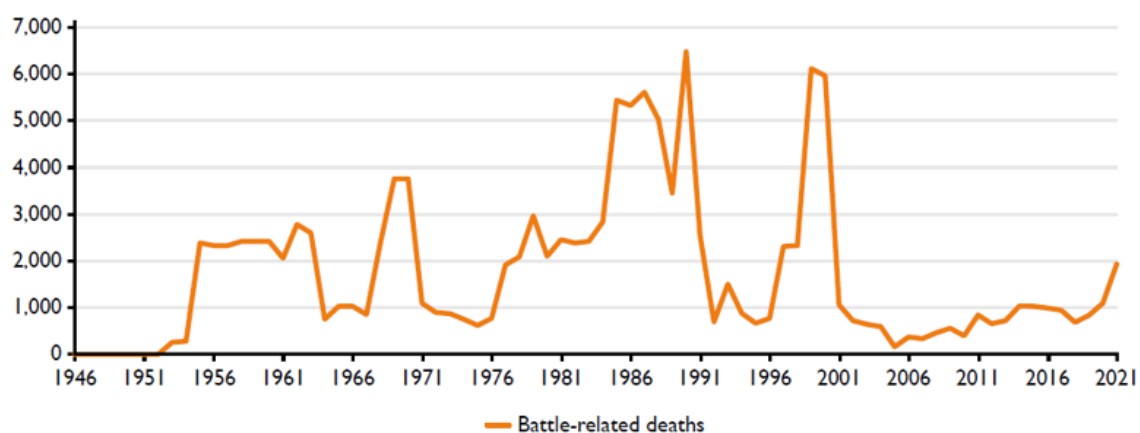


Figure 3: Battle-related deaths from state-based conflicts in Africa (1946-2021)

Source: UCDP Battle Death Database



Figure 3 illustrates the battle-related deaths from state-based conflicts in Africa from 1946 to 2021, showing a decline in fatalities during the early 1990s and 2000s, followed by a rise in 2018. In 2020,

there were 10,978 battle-related deaths, compared to 19,325 in 2021, largely due to the conflict between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

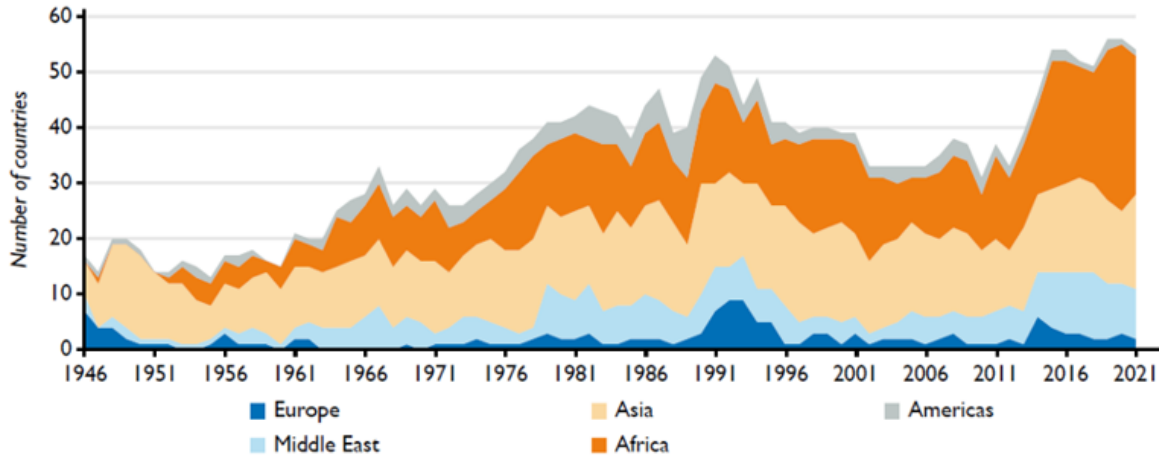


Figure 4: Number of conflicts with state-based conflicts by region (1946-2021)

Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database

Figure 4 indicates that the number of conflicts in Africa rose from 15 in 1946 to 25 in 2021. Compared to other regions, Africa experienced the highest number of state-based conflicts (105) between 1946 and 2021, followed by Asia (82), the Middle East (41), Europe (38), and the Americas (27) (Palik et al., 2022).

The UCDP categorizes conflicts based on severity, defining 'Conflict' as those with 25-999 battle-related deaths per year and 'War' as those with over 1,000 deaths in a single year.

Figure 5 shows that Africa had the highest number of state-based battle-related deaths in 1990, with 8 wars resulting in 63,000 fatalities and 5 conflicts accounting for 1,563 deaths. Notably, wars outnumbered conflicts in Africa in 1990, a trend that only

occurred again in 1989 and 1990. The second spike in battle-related deaths occurred in 1999 and 2000, with 61,206 and 59,715 fatalities, respectively. Unlike 1990, conflicts outnumbered wars during these years. From 2000 onward, battle-related deaths from both conflicts and wars sharply declined, but in 2021, conflict-related deaths reached their highest point since 2001 (Palik et al., 2022).

It is imperative to state that since the Cold War's conclusion, non-state violent conflicts have surged, particularly due to the presence of extremist groups in Africa. However, the UCDP defines non-state conflicts as armed confrontations between organized groups, neither of which is a state government, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year.

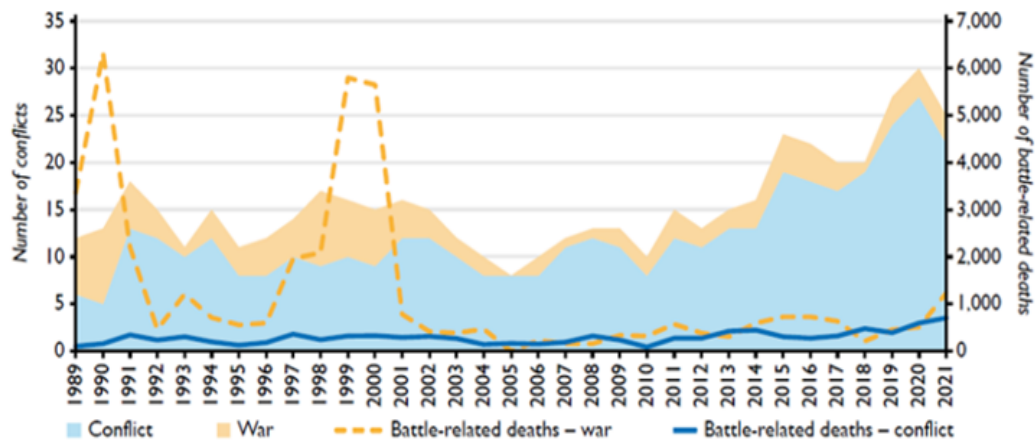


Figure 5: Number of conflicts and battle related deaths in relation to conflicts and wars in Africa (1989-2021)

Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database

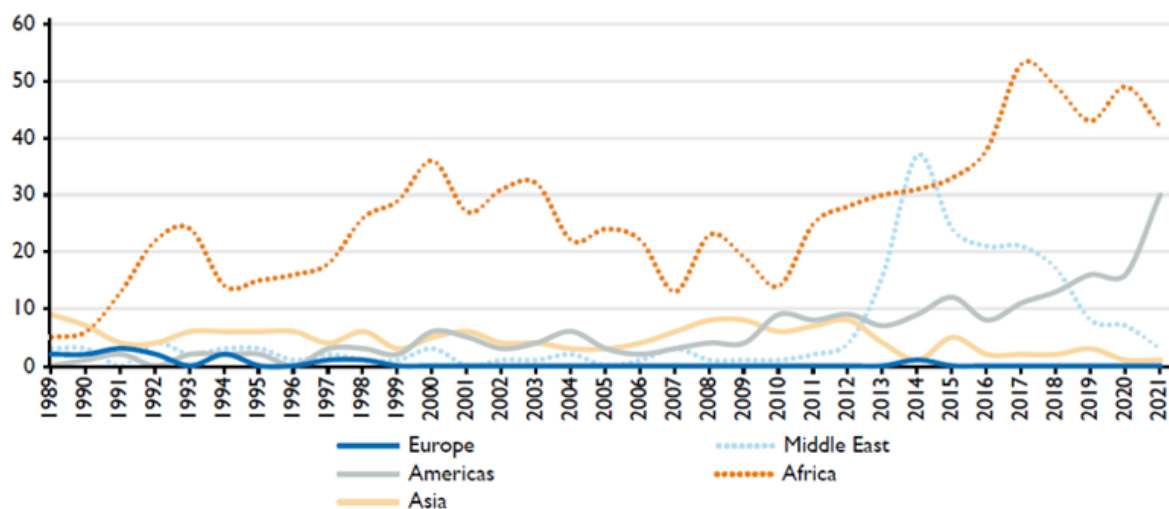


Figure 6: Total number of non-state conflicts by region (189-2021)

Source: UCDP Non-state Conflict Database

Figure 6 reveals that Africa is the most affected region by non-state conflicts globally as of 2021.

As a pointer to the evidence in Figure 6, over 35 non-international armed conflicts (NIACs) have reportedly occurred in South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and neighboring countries (Redealli, 2020). Long-standing hostilities in Somalia, the Central African Republic (CAR), and the Great Lakes Region are also noted in the Redealli's study. Comparably destructive intra-

state conflicts have been observed in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Morocco, particularly during the Arab Spring. The Libyan crisis escalated into a civil war, with the total cost of the conflict estimated at 783.4 billion Libyan dinars from 2011 to 2021 (UN-ESCWA, 2021). These conflicts often involve non-state actors who perpetrate extreme violence against vulnerable civilians or engage in battles with government forces and each other. Traditional interventions have largely failed to resolve these issues, allowing violence to persist.

Experts in peace studies emphasize the importance of understanding African conflict dynamics and the evolving nature of warfare for effective crisis resolution. Evidence in Figure 1 indicates that contemporary wars in Africa are predominantly intrastate rather than interstate. Ajala (2022) points out that today's conflicts typically occur within state borders and encompass civil wars, guerrilla warfare, ethnic/religious strife, political violence, armed banditry, and terrorism. Straus (2012: 179) agrees, asserting that modern warfare in Africa often takes place on the peripheries of states. Boutros-Ghali (1995: 7) adds

that these conflicts are frequently religious or ethnic in nature, marked by extreme violence and brutality.

These “new wars,” as illustrated in Figure 1, are mainly civil conflicts where warring factions show little regard for human life or cultural institutions, deliberately targeting critical infrastructure and livelihoods for criminal gain (International Alert, 1999; Collier, 2000; DFID et al., 2003). The extreme violence in contemporary African conflicts is linked to issues such as identity conflicts (ethnic, religious, cultural), resource scarcity or abundance, state fragility, and economic underdevelopment.

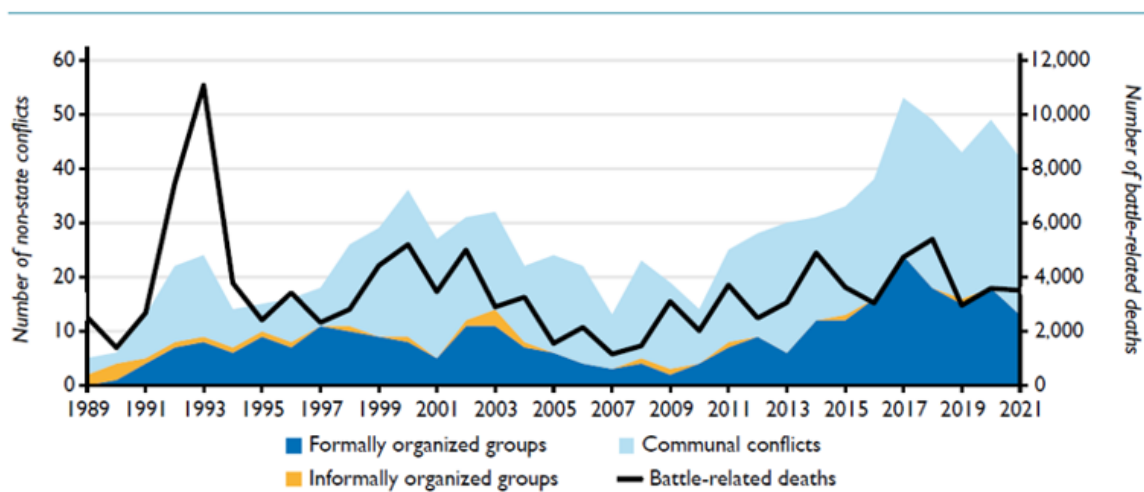


Figure 7: Non-state conflicts in Africa by types of conflicts (1989-2021)

Source: UCDP Non-state Conflict Database

Figure 7 highlights that communal conflicts are the most prevalent type in Africa. As depicted in Figure 7, it is significant to note that inter-communal ethnic violence has long fuelled tensions and undermined security in many African nations. Bacon and Warner (2021) conclude that international terrorist groups and criminal organizations exploit these local grievances to further their reign of terror.

A review of the literature indicates that global terrorist groups and criminal organizations have capitalized on local crises in African states to advance their illicit agendas. Local disputes have provided fertile ground for terrorist organizations and criminal gangs to instigate armed conflicts and violence in the Sahel, Mano River, and Lake Chad regions. For instance, local conflicts between the Fulani and Tuareg ethnic groups along the Mali-Niger border, which saw numerous attacks on Tuareg civilians in

2017 and 2018, contributed to the ongoing armed conflict in Mali. Similarly, while acting as mediators in regional disputes, ISWAP-Greater Sahara exploited long-standing tensions between these two groups (Bacon and Warner, 2021).

Supporting the evidence in Figure 2, the Boko Haram crisis, which erupted in Maiduguri, Borno State in 2012 when a local Islamic sect transformed into a terrorist organization allied with ISWAP, has fuelled ongoing armed banditry and terrorism that threaten Nigeria's national security. This alliance has further bolstered Boko Haram's violent actions and terror campaigns in Nigeria and the surrounding Lake Chad region. Islamic terrorist organizations have also exploited state failures in Africa, arising from governments' inability to provide essential services to their citizens. Consequently, these terrorist groups have emerged as alternative providers, offer-



ing locals financial support and other necessities (Bacon and Warner, 2021).

In Somalia, for example, the collapse of the state and the absence of a central authority allowed Al-Shabaab terrorists to establish themselves and create a shadow government. Scholar Mohamed Ingiriis noted that local communities often preferred Al-Shabaab's governance over the federal government, perceiving insecurity under Al-Shabaab as more favourable than under the central authority (Ingiriis, 2018). In comparison to the dynamics of state fragility and weak structures facilitating arms influx, Steinberg and Weber observe that in the spread of Islamist militancy, the local populations maintain closer ties with terrorists across border towns in Africa than with their distant governments (Steinberg and Weber, 2015).

### The Concept of Human Security

Human security emerged as a significant concept in global security discourse following the Cold War's conclusion in 1991, marked by the fragmentation of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism. This shift represented a transformation in international relations, moving from the traditional realist perspective, which viewed the state as the primary object of threats, to a more liberal approach centered on human security. This new paradigm was first articulated and advocated by the United Nations (UN) in 1994. Various events unrelated to interstate conflicts highlighted the need to focus on the security of individuals within states rather than the states themselves (Mathews, 1989). Mathews emphasizes that threats such as environmental disasters, authoritarian regimes, ethnic genocide, chronic illnesses, pandemics, and socio-economic issues position individuals as the primary referents of security, transcending national borders (Mathews, 1989). Consequently, by the mid-1990s, it became crucial for the world to adopt a human security framework, distinguishing it from the traditional state-centric and military notion of security. The UNDP's 1994 *Human Development Report* underscored non-military sources of insecurity, emphasizing the importance of individual safety over state security. Furthermore, the UN- Commission on Human Security's (2003) report defined human security as "freedom from threats of hunger, disease, crime, and repression," encompassing seven dimensions: personal, economic, food, health, political, environmental, and community security (UNDP, 1994).

### Human Insecurity and Post-Cold War Conflicts in Africa

In the post-Cold War era, human insecurities have become predominant security challenges in Africa, stemming from threats to individuals' daily survival and livelihoods, including access to food, health care, employment, justice, and a sustainable environment. The failure of African governments to provide these essential safeguards has fuelled conflicts and violence across the continent. The UNDP's 1994 *human security framework* identified seven key areas: food, health, economic, political, environmental, personal, and community security. According to Kaldor's concept of "new wars," the underlying conditions in Africa have included poverty, disease, environmental degradation, food scarcity, and educational insecurity, all of which are closely linked to regional conflicts. Additionally, the socio-economic and political contexts in which African states operate—characterized by poor governance, resource inaccessibility, climate change, ethnic tensions, arms availability, and marginalization—have exacerbated these issues.

The Sahel region, like the West Africa sub-region, has consistently low ratings on the UN's human development index (HDI) making it one of the world's poorest and least food secure regions with weak political and economic frameworks. In a similar vein, the Sahel region faces several health issues associated with destitution, hunger, and poor sanitation and hygiene. High rates of soil erosion, deforestation, and degradation are characteristic of the area, as are inadequate public and private sector institutions. Moreover, political insecurity, marked by threats to citizens' political participation and the freedom to make democratic choices, has led to increased violence in several African nations since the Cold War's end. This political violence has manifested in electoral disturbances, protests against long-standing rulers, and constitutional crises, affecting at least 15 countries, including Algeria, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, The Gambia, South Sudan, and Sudan (Gluhbegovic, 2016).

Stage-managed elections have often incited post-election tensions, escalating into full-blown conflicts in various sub-Saharan African states. This trend became particularly evident during the 1990s, as countries transitioned from single-party to multiparty

systems (e.g., Ivory Coast, Kenya, Benin), from authoritarian rule to democratic governance (e.g., Nigeria), and from conflict to peace (e.g., South Africa) (Gluhbegovic, 2016: 10). Recent post-election violence in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2011), Ivory Coast (ACCORD, 2021), Togo (Tachiwou, 2013), Lesotho (Matlosa, 2007), and the DRC (Nantulya, 2024) has resulted in significant casualties and property destruction. Such undemocratic practices pose serious threats to human security and are sources of political conflict throughout Africa.

Environmental security is a critical aspect of human security, aiming to ensure a peaceful environment conducive to decent living standards without compromising future generations' needs. Environmental insecurity, characterized by degradation and a lack of protective measures, has led to violent conflicts between farmers and herders in several African nations (Akokpari, 2007: 36). The inability of African governments to enforce environmental regulations has resulted in significant harm to environmental security. Research indicates that increasing land pressure is a primary driver of farmer-herder conflicts, particularly in Nigeria, central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, and parts of the CAR. Brottem (2021) notes that crop damage caused by livestock is a common trigger for these conflicts. Climate change has intensified competition for pastoral land, forcing herders into protected areas like national parks.

Conflicts between farmers and herders have also raged in Kenya. In Sierra Leone, rebels financed their activities through the illegal extraction and trade of diamonds, which prolonged the conflict. Brottem (2021) highlights that since 2015, violence between farmers and herders in Mali has surged, resulting in nearly 700 deaths in 2020, particularly in the Mopti Region near northern Burkina Faso. Nigeria has experienced a dramatic increase in farmer-herder conflicts since the 2000s, with the highest fatalities in West and Central Africa—approximately 2,000 deaths linked to these conflicts reported in 2018. These clashes predominantly affect the North-western and Middle Belt regions, as well as some southern states (Brottem, 2021).

In the Horn of Africa, human insecurities such as food shortages, unemployment, poverty, marginalization, environmental degradation, and limited access to resources have been key drivers of violent conflicts. The systemic marginalization which reinforced prebendal resource allocation, patronage and nepotism in the region was confirmed by the World Bank's 2014 report. The report reveals that disparities in access to state resources exacerbate tensions,

particularly between communities with and without access to public goods and services.

Food insecurity, stemming from limited access to food and shortages, has heightened conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, as violence and instability undermine agricultural activities. Recent food crises in Kenya and Nigeria, driven by unaffordable prices and shortages, have sparked national protests that turned violent, resulting in casualties and property damage. Historical accounts indicate that drought-induced food shortages in the Horn of Africa led to conflicts as early as 1997. A 1997 summary report by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO, 1997: 5) noted that among the seven IGAD countries prone to drought, \$2 billion was allocated to address conflicts and violence. Some studies suggest that high poverty levels in the Horn of Africa render the poor particularly vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Effective legislation is crucial for states to uphold and enforce human rights laws. Unfortunately, many African governments are accused of human rights abuses and violations, often with impunity. In the *Human Rights Watch report*, Tiran Hassan (2023) indicates that several African nations have perpetrated rights abuses against civilians, often at the hands of government security forces. This situation has been evident when security forces respond violently to peaceful protests. For instance, in March 2023, Chadian forces brutally quelled protests against government transition plans. In Sudan, security forces have killed over 100 individuals and detained many others during protests against military rule since the coup in October 2021. Similar patterns of repression have been observed in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, where activists and journalists face detention or torture. As further stated in the report, the government suppressed media freedom and deployed secret police to monitor political opponents ahead of the 2023 elections in the DRC.

Human insecurity in North African states ignited social upheavals in the early 2010s across Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, and later Libya. These uprisings were driven by poverty, high youth unemployment rates, corruption, authoritarian governance, inequality, and a widening wealth gap. The failure of dictatorial regimes in North Africa to hold one another accountable resulted in socio-political and economic mismanagement, leading to public distress and youth unemployment. For example, the 2010 UN Human Development Report ranked Tunisia and Egypt poorly on human development indicators, placing them 94th and 113th out of 188 countries, respectively. The report also revealed declining pur-

chasing power in terms of Gross National Income (GNI), with Egypt at \$5,269, Tunisia at \$7,281, and Libya at \$12,637 (UNDP-HDR, 2010).

In these non-democratic societies, freedoms of expression and dissent were severely restricted before the Arab Spring. Citizens were unable to voice their dissatisfaction with authoritarian regimes or criticize government policies. The lack of a free press and guaranteed rights to free expression left people with few avenues to express grievances. Nonetheless, a combination of factors, including protests against marginalization and exclusion from governance, sparked the social upheavals known as the Arab Spring (Rodrik, 2011).

The state failures and human security challenges in North Africa were closely linked to the social upheavals during the Arab Spring. Prior to these events, many North African countries faced poverty, unemployment, economic mismanagement, human rights abuses, public corruption, and poor leadership. Consequently, the movement to overthrow authoritarian regimes and restore democratic governance was led by human rights organizations and pro-democracy activists (Nuruzzaman, 2013).

## Results and Discussion

In the analysis on violent conflicts dynamics in the post-Cold War Africa, this study highlights that there is a connection between failed states in Africa and human insecurity which fuels conflicts and violence in the region. In the post-Cold War era, challenges related to human security brought on by state failure have emerged as significant contributors to conflict and violence in Africa. This is the major contribution to literature in this area by this study, as there is a notable absence of studies addressing the dynamics of violent conflicts in the post-Cold War Africa and how human insecurities have impacted the conflicts. Consequently, this research explores the dynamics of violent conflicts in the post-Cold War Africa, with a particular emphasis on the impact of human insecurity on the conflicts.

The findings indicate that the presence of failed states in Africa has resulted in heightened human insecurity, which in turn fuels conflicts and violence in the region. In several African countries, instability characterized by coups, counter coups, and intra-state wars reflects the fragility of state structures. Key factors driving violent conflicts in post-Cold War Africa, especially in the 21st century, include poverty, marginalization, injustice, unemployment, and corruption, brought on by bad governance. In vari-

ous nations, inter-communal and ethnic violence has exacerbated tensions and threatened human security. Regions such as the Sahel, Mano River, and Lake Chad are particularly vulnerable, where terrorists and criminal groups have exploited local issues to incite armed conflicts and atrocities.

Beyond the issue of state failure, the study highlights that fundamental security challenges related to human security have not been adequately recognized by various African governments. This lack of awareness regarding African security dynamics is a significant reason why conflict resolution efforts in the region have often fallen short. Traditional, state-centered, and military notion of security do not reflect the realities of contemporary African conflicts concerning human security. Major obstacles to achieving human security in Africa include high unemployment rates, food insecurity, poverty, injustice, environmental degradation, corruption, weak governmental institutions, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and recurring droughts.

## Conclusion

The research indicates that owing to state failure, human insecurities are significant contributors to conflicts and violence in the post-Cold War Africa. Such as the rise of non-state actors, youth unemployment, poverty, state fragility, social injustice, food scarcity, inflation, the impacts of climate change on land and water resources, porous borders, cross-border crimes, communal identity conflicts have all been identified as key elements fuelling violent conflicts in the region since the Cold War ended.

Since that period, the nature of conflicts in Africa has evolved, with a decline in interstate conflicts and a rise in intrastate conflicts driven by internal crises like civil wars, guerrilla warfare, identity disputes, and extremist violence. This shift is corroborated by Palik, et al findings in the PRIO 2022 data, which reveals that Africa has the highest incidence of non-state conflicts globally. The PRIO data covering conflict trends from 1989 to 2021 shows a slight decrease in state-based conflicts in 2021 compared to a decade earlier, with 30 recorded in 2020, up from 27 in 2019. Experts in peace studies argue that comprehending the dynamics of African conflicts and the evolving nature of warfare concerning human security issues is crucial for addressing these crises.

Given the interconnectedness of state security and human security, the study advises African nations to complement state security along with human security by implementing practical plans and poli-

cies aimed at improving the quality of life for their citizens. Furthermore, the study suggests that African governments should prioritise the welfare of their

citizens, and protect them from the existential threats from civil wars, insurgencies, terrorism, armed banditry, and extremist violence in the region.

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