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# Violent Conflict Trends in Africa

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5 June 2023

# African State responses to address drivers of conflict

- States exerting greater influence; marginalizing African regional organizations (AU and RECs).
- Preference for ad hoc security coalitions e.g., RCI-LRA, MNJTF, G5 Sahel JF, EACRF-DRC.
- Backsliding on democratic norms and governance. Correlation between poor governance and armed conflict.
- Recent Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG) have seen the AU struggle to stick to its anti-UCG norm.
- Can't fundamentally alter the political economy of warfare.
- Specific challenges of elite competition, including "Government rebels" e.g., South Sudan, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia.

## Key challenges facing African States in addressing civil wars, especially when governments target civilians

- Incumbent regimes use sovereignty as a shield.
- Limits of mediation: Only belligerents / armed factions can end civil wars; not outsiders.
- IOs have few powerful sticks; few tasty carrots.
- Some external actors fuel wars.
- Armed groups networked and transnational, esp. Islamists.
- Disinformation becoming increasingly significant.
- Very difficult to alter the political economy of armed conflict.
- Key examples: South Sudan (2013); Ethiopia (2020), Sudan (2023).

# Key lessons for better responses to African wars + what should security sector leaders do?

- Governments struggle to broadcast power across their entire territory.
- Stabilization missions & ad hoc coalitions have not produced peace or clear exit strategies.
- Talk to rebels; making peace requires dialogue with enemies.
- Divided states have security arenas, rather than security sectors.
- Goal should be building security services - serve their people, not a particular President or regime.
- Military professionalism requires top-down leadership: rules, standards, and accountability.
- Security services must be affordable, not reliant on external finance.



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