

Recent Wars and Ongoing Conflicts: Extended Global

The first decade of the twenty-first century has been marked by a proliferation of protracted armed confrontations that span several continents. In Eastern Europe, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, launched in February 2022, escalated a frozen Cold-War-era tension into a full-scale conventional war. In the Middle East and North Africa, the civil war in Syria entered its twelfth year, while Yemen's Houthi-backed insurgency and the Saudi-UAE coalition have produced a humanitarian disaster since 2015. In the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia's Tigray conflict, reignited in November 2020, merged with broader ethnic clashes in Amhara and Oromia. Sub-Saharan Africa also witnessed a renewed war in Sudan after the April 2023 power struggle between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces. In South Asia, the insurgency in Myanmar's border regions intensified following the February 2021 coup. These wars share common drivers-state fragmentation, external patronage, and competition over resources-yet each possesses distinct historical trajectories.

Key developments in 2023-2024 illustrate both escalation and diplomatic fatigue. Ukraine's defence has relied on extensive Western military aid, yet Russian forces have consolidated control over the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, while conducting missile strikes deep into Kyiv's infrastructure. In Syria, the Syrian Arab Army, backed by Russian airpower and Iranian militias, regained most of the Idlib corridor, prompting a fragile cease-fire brokered by Turkey. Yemen's port city of Hodeidah saw intermittent cease-fire violations, and the United Nations-mediated Stockholm Agreement remains largely unenforced. Ethiopia's federal government announced a partial withdrawal from Tigray in early 2024, but fighting persists in Amhara, driven by disputes over the Amhara Region's "special status." Sudan's conflict entered a stalemate after both sides exhausted conventional supplies, leading to the emergence of locally-manufactured "improvised" weapons. In Myanmar, ethnic armed organisations formed a joint "People's Defense Alliance," coordinating attacks against the junta's Tatmadaw across the Shan and Karen states.

From a military perspective, the conflicts reveal a convergence of conventional and asymmetric tactics. Russia's use of combined-arms operations, long-range precision artillery (e.g., the 9M729), and information-war campaigns contrasts with Ukraine's reliance on mobile drone fleets and Western-supplied air-defence systems such as the Patriot and SAMP/T. In Syria, the integration of Russian S-300 air-defence batteries with Iranian-sponsored proxy forces has created layered deterrence, while Turkish drones dominate the battlefield in Idlib. Yemen's war is characterised by low-tech naval blockades, ballistic missile exchanges between the Houthis and the Saudi-UAE coalition, and the proliferation of armed merchant vessels. Ethiopian combatants employ both heavy armour supplied by the United Arab Emirates and militia-based infantry equipped with AK-type rifles, reflecting a hybrid war model. Sudan's forces increasingly depend on captured Soviet-era T-55 tanks and improvised explosive devices, whereas Myanmar's junta has intensified the use of aerial bombardments and heavy artillery to suppress coordinated People's Defense movements.

Economically, the wars have strained budgets, deterred investment, and driven up commodity prices; Ukraine's grain blockade raised food costs, while sanctions on Russia reshaped markets. Socially, displacement exceeds 30 million, fostering economies, gender-based violence, child-soldier recruitment, and a surge in organized crime and illicit mining.

1. Russia-Ukraine War

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which escalated into a full■scale invasion on 24 February 2022, has its roots in a complex post■Soviet geopolitical landscape. After Ukraine's 2014 Euromaidan protests and the subsequent removal of President Viktor Yanukovych, Russia annexed Crimea and supported separatist movements in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. These events created a frozen conflict that persisted until Moscow launched a multi■axis offensive aimed at securing a rapid regime change in Kyiv and establishing a land corridor to Crimea.

Key developments since the 2022 invasion can be grouped into three phases. The initial blitz, characterized by rapid advances toward Kyiv, Kharkiv, and the southern coast, was halted by stiff Ukrainian resistance and logistical shortcomings, leading to a strategic withdrawal of Russian forces from the north by early April. The second phase, from April to September 2022, saw intense fighting in the eastern Donbas, where Russia concentrated artillery, armored units, and mercenary groups to capture key towns such as Severodonetsk and Lysychansk. The Ukrainian counteroffensive launched in September reclaimed territory around Kharkiv and pushed Russian units back across the Vovchansk corridor, demonstrating improved combined■arms coordination and effective use of Western■supplied Western systems.

From a military perspective, the war has highlighted several trends. Russian forces have relied heavily on massed artillery, tactical ballistic missiles, and aerial bombardment, resulting in high civilian casualties and extensive infrastructure damage. Conversely, Ukraine's defence has been bolstered by integrated air■defence networks, portable anti■tank weapons (e.g., Javelin, NLAW), and intelligence support from NATO allies. The introduction of long■range precision munitions, such as ATACMS and Storm Shadow, has altered the operational calculus, enabling strikes deep into occupied territories and disrupting Russian supply lines.

Economic repercussions are profound for both countries and the global system. Ukraine's GDP contracted by an estimated 30 % in 2022, with agricultural exports—particularly grain—disrupted, prompting food■security concerns across the Middle East and Africa. International sanctions targeting Russian banks, energy exports, and high■technology imports have reduced Russia's foreign■exchange earnings by roughly 40 % and accelerated a shift toward Asian markets, especially China and India. Energy markets have experienced volatility; European reliance on Russian gas fell from 40 % to under 10 % within a year, prompting a rapid diversification toward liquefied natural gas and renewable sources.

Social and crime■related consequences are equally severe. The United Nations estimates over 8 million internally displaced persons and 7 million refugees abroad, creating humanitarian pressures in neighboring states. Reports of war■time sexual violence, forced labour, and the recruitment of child soldiers have risen, while the breakdown of rule of law in occupied areas has fostered black■market activity, including illicit mining, smuggling of contraband, and cyber■crime operations linked to state■affiliated groups. The prolonged conflict also strains mental■health services, with a marked increase in post■traumatic stress disorder among civilians and combatants alike.

In sum, the Russia■Ukraine war remains a dynamic, multi■dimensional conflict whose military, economic, and societal impacts reverberate far beyond the immediate battlefield, shaping security calculations and policy responses across Europe and the broader international community.

2. Israel-Gaza War

The Israel-Gaza war, rooted in the broader Israeli-Palestinian dispute, entered a new phase in October 2023 when Hamas launched a coordinated assault on southern Israel, prompting a large-scale Israeli military response. Historically, Gaza has been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007, following Hamas's takeover of the enclave. The blockade, combined with periodic flare-ups, has shaped a volatile security environment that repeatedly erupts into armed confrontations.

Key developments since the latest escalation include: (1) the initial surprise attack by Hamas, which resulted in over 1,400 Israeli civilian and security-force casualties and the capture of several hostages; (2) Israel's declaration of a "total siege" on Gaza, cutting electricity, water, fuel, and telecommunications, and launching a sustained aerial and artillery campaign targeting Hamas command centres, weapons depots, and tunnel networks; (3) the involvement of regional actors, notably Hezbollah's limited missile exchanges along the Lebanon border and diplomatic pressure from the United States and Egypt to negotiate temporary humanitarian pauses. By early December 2023, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) reported the destruction of more than 250 underground tunnels and the killing of senior Hamas leaders, while Hamas claimed continued rocket fire reaching major Israeli cities.

From a military standpoint, the conflict has highlighted Israel's reliance on precision-guided munitions, intelligence-driven targeting, and the Iron Dome missile-defence system, which intercepted an estimated 90% of inbound rockets. Conversely, Hamas employed a mixed arsenal of short-range rockets, mortars, and improvised explosive devices, supplemented by a dense network of civilian infrastructure that complicates target discrimination. The IDF also employed ground incursions in limited sectors to clear tunnel entrances, but the dense urban environment and the presence of civilians have constrained the scope of conventional maneuver warfare.

Economically, the war has deepened Gaza's humanitarian crisis. The United Nations estimates that over 80% of the enclave's 2.3 million residents now lack reliable electricity, while the destruction of commercial facilities and agricultural lands has reduced food production by an estimated 30%. In Israel, the conflict has disrupted supply chains in the southern districts, increased defense expenditures by an estimated \$5 billion, and contributed to a temporary rise in inflation due to heightened security costs. International aid flows have surged, with the European Union and United Nations agencies pledging over \$1 billion for emergency relief, yet delivery remains hampered by the ongoing siege.

Social and crime-related consequences are pronounced on both sides. In Gaza, the loss of housing, schools, and medical facilities has generated a surge in displacement, with UNRWA reporting over 400,000 internally displaced persons. Mental-health disorders, particularly post-traumatic stress, have risen sharply among children and adults. In Israel, the attack triggered a wave of retaliatory vigilantism, including hate crimes against Arab citizens and increased security-force checkpoints that have strained inter-communal relations. Moreover, the capture of hostages has fueled a market for illicit ransom negotiations, complicating diplomatic efforts. Overall, the latest Israel-Gaza war underscores the intertwined nature of military, economic, and societal dimensions in protracted asymmetrical conflicts.

3. Sudan Civil War

The Sudanese civil war, reignited in April 2023, is a continuation of the power struggle that began after the 2019 overthrow of President Omar al-Bashir. The transitional government, composed of civilian leaders and the military-led Sovereign Council, collapsed when General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan dissolved the council and seized control of the capital, Khartoum. Rival factions, most notably the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) loyal to Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo, have since vied for national authority, reviving the armed confrontation that previously existed in peripheral regions such as Darfur, South Kordofan, and the Blue Nile.

The conflict escalated rapidly after the RSF launched coordinated attacks on key infrastructure in Khartoum and Omdurman on 15 April 2023, targeting airports, government ministries, and media outlets. Within weeks, both sides declared cease-fire attempts, but violations persisted, leading to a stalemate that has endured into 2024. International mediation, led by the United Nations, the African Union, and the Saudi-backed Jeddah Initiative, has produced limited agreements, chiefly the August 2023 “Jeddah Declaration,” which called for a humanitarian pause and the formation of a joint security committee. Despite these diplomatic efforts, fighting continues along the capital’s periphery and in the contested border zones of the Darfur states, where control over smuggling routes remains a strategic objective.

Militarily, the SAF retains a conventional structure, equipped with legacy Soviet-era tanks, artillery, and a modest air force that has conducted limited strikes against RSF positions. The RSF, originally a paramilitary militia formed from the Janjaweed, has evolved into a heavily armed force with approximately 100,000 fighters, extensive small-arms stockpiles, and access to light armored vehicles supplied through informal networks in Libya and the United Arab Emirates. Both sides employ irregular tactics, including urban guerrilla attacks, roadblocks, and the recruitment of child soldiers. The fluid front lines and the lack of a unified command have resulted in frequent civilian casualties and the displacement of over 1.2 million people by mid-2024.

Economically, the war has deepened Sudan's pre-existing fiscal crisis. Gross domestic product contracted by an estimated 6 % in 2023, while inflation surged above 250 %, eroding purchasing power. Key export commodities—oil, gold, and agricultural products—have been disrupted by blockades and the loss of port facilities in Port Sudan. International donors have suspended development assistance, and foreign direct investment has halted, exacerbating shortages of fuel, medicine, and basic foodstuffs. The banking sector faces liquidity constraints, and the Sudanese pound has depreciated sharply, prompting a rise in informal currency exchange markets.

Socially, the conflict has amplified humanitarian needs and crime rates. Internally displaced persons live in overcrowded camps with limited access to clean water and sanitation, increasing the incidence of water-borne diseases. Reports from NGOs indicate a rise in gender-based violence, recruitment of minors, and the emergence of armed criminal groups that exploit the security vacuum to conduct robbery, kidnapping, and illicit trafficking of weapons and minerals. The breakdown of judicial institutions hampers accountability, while sectarian tensions, particularly between Arab-aligned militias and non-Arab communities, threaten long-term social cohesion.

4. Ethiopia Internal Conflicts

Since 2018, Ethiopia has experienced a cascade of internal conflicts that have reshaped its political landscape and strained its socioeconomic fabric. The most salient flashpoints are the Tigray War (2020–2022), the insurgency in the Amhara region, and the protracted unrest in the Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz states. These confrontations stem from historic ethnic federalism, contested resource allocation, and the central government's attempts to reassert authority after the 2018 reform agenda led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

The Tigray War erupted in November 2020 when the federal forces launched a military operation against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which had dominated Ethiopian politics for three decades. Initial successes by the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) were quickly complicated by the entry of Eritrean troops and the mobilization of regional militias from Amhara and Afar. By mid-2022, a ceasefire brokered by the African Union reduced large-scale combat, yet sporadic clashes and humanitarian blockades persist, especially along the Tigray-Eritrea border. Concurrently, the Amhara region has witnessed an insurgency led by the Fano militia, which opposes federal attempts to disarm local forces and seeks greater autonomy over contested territories such as Welkait.

Militarily, the conflicts have featured a hybrid warfare model. The ENDF relies on conventional artillery, air strikes, and armored units, while allied militias employ guerrilla tactics, improvised explosive devices, and local knowledge of terrain. The involvement of foreign actors-most notably Eritrea's regular forces and, to a lesser extent, Sudanese border troops-has introduced cross-border dynamics, complicating command-and-control structures. Logistics have been hampered by disrupted supply routes, leading to reliance on aerial resupply and limited use of rail networks. Moreover, the proliferation of small arms among civilian populations has increased the risk of prolonged low-intensity violence.

Economically, the wars have inflicted severe damage on Ethiopia's growth trajectory. The World Bank projects a cumulative GDP contraction of 2.5 % for 2021–2023, driven by disrupted agricultural production in the fertile highlands of Tigray and Amhara, loss of export revenue from coffee and livestock, and the diversion of fiscal resources to defense spending. Infrastructure destruction-roads, bridges, and power grids-has heightened transaction costs and impeded market integration. International sanctions and the suspension of aid flows have further constrained fiscal space, exacerbating inflation and food insecurity.

Socially, the conflicts have precipitated a humanitarian crisis affecting over 7 million people, with widespread displacement, malnutrition, and disease outbreaks. Gender-based violence has surged, as documented by UN agencies, while the breakdown of traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms has fostered a rise in criminality, including looting, human trafficking, and illicit mining. Ethnic polarization intensified, eroding inter-communal trust and complicating post-conflict reconciliation efforts. The cumulative impact underscores the need for comprehensive peacebuilding that integrates security sector reform, equitable resource distribution, and inclusive governance to mitigate the long-term destabilizing effects of Ethiopia's internal wars.

5. Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced a protracted, multi-layered conflict since the early 1990s, but the period from 2020 to 2024 marks a resurgence of violence in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri. Historically, the war originated from the collapse of the Mobutu regime, the subsequent Rwandan-Ugandan interventions, and the exploitation of mineral wealth. The contemporary crisis is rooted in competition among local armed groups, foreign-backed militias, and the Congolese armed forces (FARDC), each seeking control over lucrative resources such as coltan, tin, and gold.

Key developments during the last five years include the resurgence of the March 23 Movement (M23) after a 2013 defeat, the expansion of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) into the Kivu region, and the emergence of new community-based militias, notably the Mai-Méné and the CODECO faction in Ituri. In 2021, M23 seized the town of Nyanzale, prompting a UN-mandated ceasefire that collapsed after sporadic clashes continued. The ADF intensified attacks on civilian populations, culminating in the 2022 Goma bombings that killed over 30 people. Simultaneously, the FARDC launched several joint operations with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), achieving limited territorial gains but often suffering from poor coordination and allegations of human rights abuses.

Militarily, the conflict is characterized by asymmetrical warfare. Rebel groups employ small arms, mortars, and improvised explosive devices, while the FARDC relies on conventional infantry, limited artillery, and occasional air support. The proliferation of foreign weapons, facilitated by porous borders with Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, sustains the combatants' capacity. MONUSCO's presence, though extensive, has been constrained by mandates that limit offensive actions, leading to criticism of its effectiveness in protecting civilians.

Economically, the war has devastated the DRC's already fragile economy. Disruption of mining operations has reduced export revenues by an estimated 15 % between 2020 and 2023, while illicit taxation by armed groups has diverted up to US\$200 million annually from local economies. Infrastructure damage, particularly to roads and electricity grids in the east, has hampered trade and increased the cost of humanitarian assistance. The fiscal strain has forced the central government to reallocate resources from social services to security spending, further deepening poverty.

Social and crime-related consequences are severe. Over 5 million people have been internally displaced, creating overcrowded camps with limited access to clean water and health care, which has heightened the risk of disease outbreaks such as cholera and COVID-19. Gender-based violence has surged, with the UN reporting that women in conflict zones are twice as likely to experience sexual assault. The breakdown of law enforcement has also facilitated the growth of organized crime networks involved in smuggling, illegal mining, and child soldier recruitment. These intertwined dynamics underscore the complexity of achieving sustainable peace in the DRC, requiring coordinated diplomatic, security, and development interventions.

6. Myanmar Civil War

The conflict in Myanmar, commonly referred to as the Myanmar Civil War, escalated after the military coup of February 1, 2021, which ousted the democratically elected National League for Democracy (NLD) government. The coup revived long-standing ethnic insurgencies that had been contained by a fragile cease-fire framework under the previous civilian administration. The Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces) justified its seizure of power by alleging electoral fraud, while opposition groups-including the National Unity Government (NUG), the People's Defence Forces (PDF), and a coalition of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs)-condemned the coup as a reversal of democratic progress. The war is thus rooted in both political power struggles and the historic struggle of ethnic minorities for autonomy.

Since the coup, key developments have included the rapid formation of PDF units across the central and western regions, coordinated attacks on military outposts, and the expansion of the People's Defense Committees (PDCs) that provide civilian support. In August 2021, the NUG signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement with seven EAOs, creating a unified front against the Tatmadaw. By early 2023, major clashes erupted in Kayin State, Shan State, and the contested border area of Rakhine, where the Arakan Army intensified its campaign against both the military and rival militias. Internationally, the United Nations and several ASEAN members have issued condemnations, while limited sanctions target military leaders and revenue streams linked to jade and timber exports.

Militarily, the Tatmadaw continues to rely on conventional capabilities, including artillery, air power, and a network of military-run administrative zones. However, its operational effectiveness has been eroded by defections, low morale, and logistical constraints exacerbated by sanctions. In contrast, the PDFs employ guerrilla tactics, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and small-unit ambushes, leveraging local knowledge and civilian support. EAOs contribute heavy weaponry, such as mortars and anti-aircraft guns, acquired through illicit cross-border trade. The conflict has resulted in a fragmented battlefield, with shifting frontlines and frequent cease-fire violations, complicating any prospects for a negotiated settlement.

The war's economic impact is profound. GDP growth, which had been projected at 4.5 % for 2022, contracted by an estimated 6 % in 2023 due to disrupted trade routes, reduced foreign investment, and the collapse of the tourism sector. The jade and gemstone industry, a major source of state revenue, has become increasingly controlled by armed groups, fueling a shadow economy. Agricultural production in conflict-affected zones has declined, leading to food insecurity for an estimated 7 million people. Infrastructure damage, particularly to roads and bridges, hampers market access and raises transportation costs.

Social consequences are equally severe. The United Nations estimates that over 1.2 million people have been internally displaced, while refugee flows to Thailand and India have surged. Human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and forced labor, have been documented by multiple NGOs. The breakdown of law and order has enabled a rise in organized crime, notably drug trafficking and illegal logging, which fund armed groups and further destabilize communities. Education has been interrupted for millions of children, and healthcare services are strained, contributing to increased morbidity and mortality. These intertwined humanitarian, economic, and security challenges underscore the complexity of the Myanmar Civil War and the

urgent need for a comprehensive, inclusive political solution.