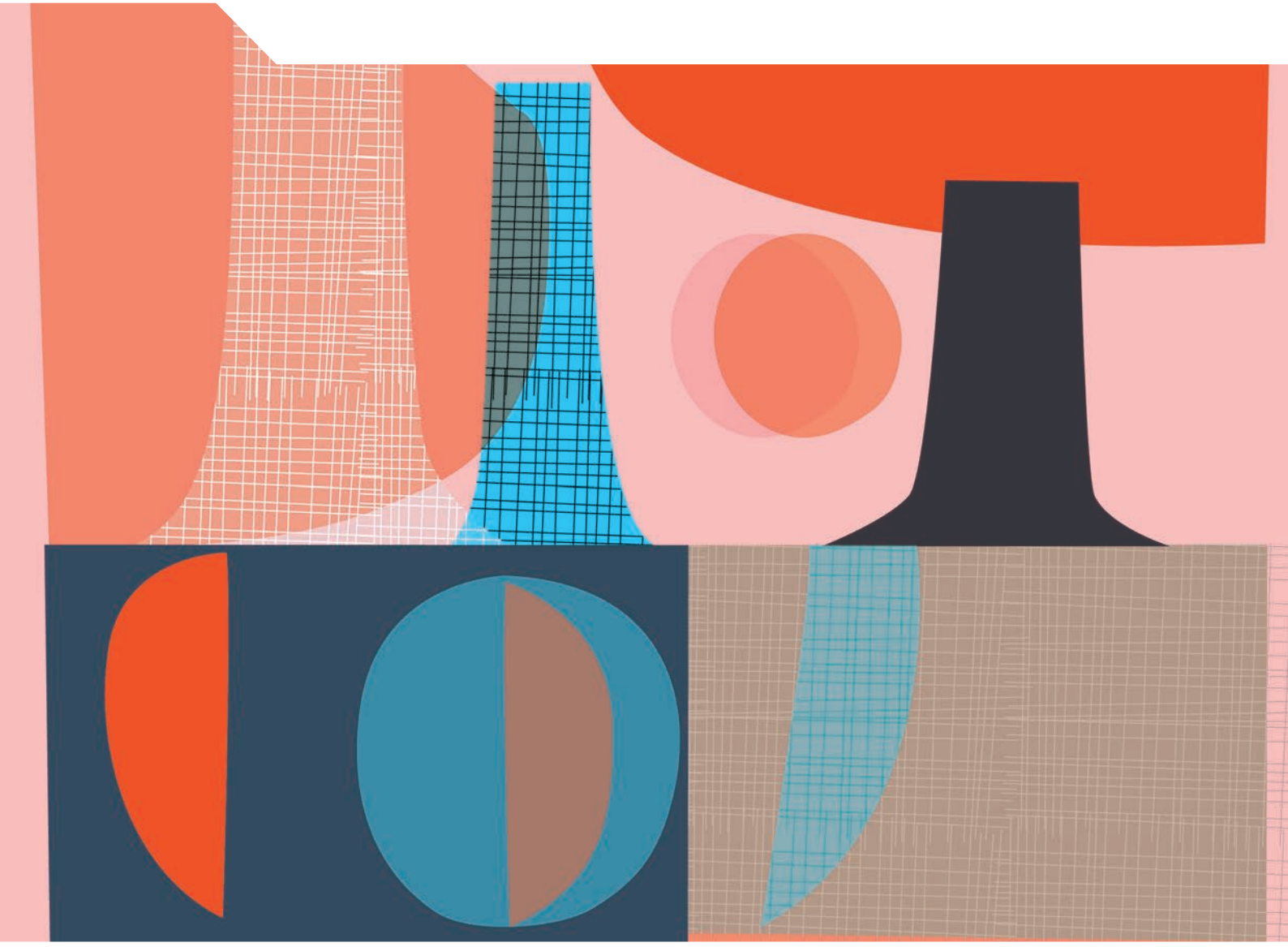
West African Studies

The Geography of Conflict in North and West Africa



OECD

SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA Club Secretariat

West African Studies

The Geography of Conflict in North and West Africa

Under the direction of
Marie Trémolières, Olivier J. Walther and Steven M. Radil

OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA Club
Secretariat

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Please cite this publication as:
OECD/SWAC (2020), *The Geography of Conflict in North and West Africa*, West African Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, *https://doi.org/10.1787/02181039-en*.

ISBN 978-92-64-51893-3 (print)
ISBN 978-92-64-41137-1 (pdf)

West African Studies
ISSN 2074-3548 (print)
ISSN 2074-353X (online)

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The Sahel and West Africa Club

The Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC) is an independent, international platform. Its Secretariat is hosted at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Its mission is to promote regional policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people in the Sahel and West Africa. Its objectives are to improve the regional governance of food and nutrition security and improve the understanding of ongoing transformations in the region and their policy implications through regional, spatial and forward-looking analyses. SWAC Members and partners are Austria, Belgium, Canada, CILSS, the ECOWAS Commission, the European Commission, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the UEMOA Commission and the United States. SWAC has a memorandum of understanding with the University of Florida Sahel Research Group.

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Foreword

Since the early 2000s, a combination of rebel groups, transnational organisations affiliated with Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS), and independent self-defence militias has challenged the legitimacy and stability of states in North and West Africa. In this region, governments are increasingly confronted with new forms of political violence. The geography of these conflicts is often elusive, due to the large number of actors involved, their shifting alliances and their transnational movements.

The new Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi), developed by the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC) and presented in this report, addresses many pressing questions related to the evolving nature of such threats. It examines the origins, intensity and spatial distribution of political violence, as well as its evolution in the region, notably in the Lake Chad region, in Libya and in the Central Sahel. Building on a database of around 30 360 violent incidents recorded in 21 countries from January 1997 to June 2019, the report maps the changing geography of conflict in North and West Africa. It also provides additional knowledge on what drives terrorist movements. Indeed, military interventions have had differential effects on the geography of conflicts in the area, although none have resulted in durable peace.

The last five years were the most violent ever recorded in the region, with the number of areas experiencing local intensification of political violence rising sharply. According to our indicators, political violence remains mainly concentrated in border areas, with over 40 percent of violent events and fatalities recorded within 100 kilometres of land borders. Violence targeting civilians also soared, especially in West Africa, where attacks against civilians now exceed clashes between the respective governments and armed groups.

Degrading security has led West African countries and their partners to launch military interventions to stabilise the region, prevent the spread of extremism and end violence against civilians. Since 2010, some African countries have formed coalitions that pool military personnel and share intelligence. While some of

these partnerships concentrate on issues related to security, such as the Nouakchott Process, other alliances combine security, governance and development. Unfortunately, the SCDi shows that while military interventions have generally reduced the intensity of violence in North and West Africa in the short-term, they have not brought about durable conflict resolution.

As our report argues, the specificities of current conflicts in the region call for innovative responses from national and local governments, but also from the international community. Stronger attention must be paid to understanding the local drivers of insurgencies. This work and the SCDi indicator aim to provide a better insight into the impact of geographic levers on the emergence, development and spread of conflict, as well as on the impact of military intervention on the diffusion and concentration of violence. We hope to provide evidence-based quantitative and qualitative knowledge to enrich and promote a more focused security discussion, with the goal of contributing to improve regional and international responses to the changing and complex landscape of political violence in a region with enormous importance and potential. Ultimately, we hope that this work will help improve the lives of people in North and West Africa.

Angel Gurría
Secretary-General, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAB	Abdallah Azzam Brigades
AAD	Ansar al-Dine
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ADC	Democratic Alliance for Change
AFRICOM	United States Command for Africa
AIS	Islamic Salvation Army
AMB	Al-Mulathamun Battalion
ANN	Average nearest neighbour
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ATNMC	Alliance des Touaregs du Nord-Mali pour le changement
AU	African Union
CC	Conflict Concentration
CEMOC	Joint Operational Staff Committee
CI	Conflict Intensity
CILSS	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
CMA	Co-ordination of Azawad Movements
DHKP/C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ELN	National Liberation Army
ETA	Basque Fatherland and Liberty
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission
EUTN Mali	European Union Training Mission in Mali
FANCI	*Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire*
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FDS	*Forces de défense et de sécurité*
FESCI	Student Federation of Côte d'Ivoire
FLM	Macina Liberation Front
FN	*Forces nouvelles (Côte d'Ivoire)*
FROLINAT	National Liberation Front of Chad
FUC	United Front for Democratic Change
GATIA	Imghad Tuareg Self-Defense Group and Allies
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIA	Armed Islamic Group
GNA	Government of National Accord
GNC	General National Congress
GPP	Groupements des patriotes pour la paix
GSIM	Group to Support Islam and Muslims
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
GTD	Global Terrorism Database
HCUA	High Council for the Unity of Azawad
HM	Hizbul Mujahideen
HOR	House of Representatives
HQN	Haqqani Network
HUJI	Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami
HUM	Harakat ul-Mujahidin
ICC	International Criminal Court
IED	improvised explosive devices
IJU	Islamic Jihad Union
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IR	International Relations
IS	Islamic State
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISIL-K	ISIL-Khorasan
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

ISWA	Islamic State in West Africa
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammed
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin
JTF	Joint Task Force
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
LeT	Lashkar-e Tayyiba
LJ	Lashkar i Jhangvi
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDJT	Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MFDC	Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance
MINURCAT	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MNA	National Movement of Azawad
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MNJ	Niger Movement for Justice
MNLA	National Movement of Azawad
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MPS	Mouvement patriotique du salut
MSA	Movement for the Salvation of Azawad
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDPVF	Nigeria Delta Peoples Volunteer Force
NDVF	Niger Delta Vigilante Force
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NPF	Nigeria Police Force
NTC	National Transitional Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	PFLP-General Command
PIJ	Palestine Islamic Jihad
PLF	Palestine Liberation Front
PSI	Pan Sahel Initiative
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RDL	Rally for Democracy and Liberty
RHDP	Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SCDi	Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator
SLA	Sudan Liberation Army
SWAC	Sahel and West Africa Club
TSCTI	Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
UCDP/PRIO	Uppsala Conflict Data Programme/ Peace Research Institute Oslo
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
WITS	Worldwide Incident Tracking System
WOT	War on Terror

Executive summary

Armed conflicts in North and West Africa are increasingly complex

The geography of conflicts in North and West Africa is often elusive due to a large number of states, rebels, extremist organisations and militias, their shifting alliances and transnational movements. While violence is on the increase, it remains unclear whether violent organisations are intensifying their efforts in particular areas, spreading insecurity to a growing number of regions, or relocating under the pressure of government forces. The new Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) developed in this report addresses these pressing questions by examining both the intensity and spatial distribution of political violence in the region since 1997. It shows that violence is increasingly targeting civilians and border regions. The indicator also suggests that military interventions have reduced the intensity of violence in the short-term without, however, resulting in durable peace (Chapter 1).

Geography is a fundamental dimension of conflicts

Armed conflicts have developed in sub-Saharan Africa since the end of the Cold War due to a combination of political factors. A better understanding of the local drivers of insurgencies and their interactions is needed. As no single cause can explain the increase in armed conflicts, the main factors that feed into their complexity and longevity in the region need to be interpreted geographically. A spatial approach could provide an important opportunity to build knowledge at the regional scale and to understand how conflicts emerge, develop and spread — particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Geography can also be a cause of conflicts when state and non-state actors fight for control over territory. Moreover, geographical concepts such as distance, identity, borders, territory and scale affect the spatiality of modern conflicts (Chapter 2).

Political violence is very unequally distributed in North and West Africa

The SCDi examines the intensity and concentration of violent events across three major hotspots of violence: Mali and Central Sahel, Lake Chad (Nigeria) and Libya. The indicator highlights which regions experience the highest rate of conflict, how these conflicts change geographically over time, and how military interventions affect their geography. It leverages data on political events that have taken place since 1997 from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED) (Chapter 3).

The geography of conflict is changing

The last five years have been the most violent recorded in the region, with more than 12 000 events and 50 000 fatalities through June 2019. Conflicts tend to involve numerous non-state actors with diverging agendas, and they target civilians more systematically than before. Border regions attract a disproportionate

and concentrated number of violent events and casualties — more than 40% of violent events and fatalities occur within 100 kilometres of a land border. Moreover, the number of regions experiencing local intensification of political violence has increased significantly faster than other types of conflicts. The SCDi illustrates that violence has both relocated and expanded over time. Less than one-third of the regions with violence exhibit signs of diffusion, however, the geography of violence is less isolated than 20 years ago and violent events are more likely to occur near to one another. Multiple clusters of high-intensity violence have formed in the Sahel, where they are spilling over into neighbouring regions and countries. These clusters are more likely to be surrounded by a periphery of lower-intensity violence than in the past (Chapter 4).

Military interventions do not lead to long-term stability

The report illustrates the impact of military interventions on limiting the intensity and geographical spread of recent conflicts in North and West Africa. The SCDi analyses how interventions in Mali, Lake Chad and Libya were initially able to decrease the intensity and dispersion of violence where it was occurring. As an example, in the Lake Chad region, the offensive launched by Nigeria and its neighbours in 2015 was a turning point in the war against Boko Haram, initially reducing the intensity of violence and limiting it to remote areas. However, these locations continue to be persistent zones of conflict, where violence has not diminished in intensity over time but has dispersed (Chapter 5).

The shift and relocation of political instability across international boundaries should encourage policy makers to continue to monitor the locations of violence at regional and multi-state levels. Simply focusing on an individual country or even a smaller set of states misses this essential aspect of political violence and can lead to failure in detecting the direction and implications of such shifts when they occur. Regional policy responses should pay more attention to the geography of conflicts, the unpredictable dynamics of political violence and the complex interactions between the large numbers of actors involved, in order to build sustainable policy options.

Chapter 1

The complexity of violence in North and West Africa

Chapter 1 highlights the increasing complexity of conflict in North and West Africa. It shows that the geography of conflict is obscured by a large number of belligerents and their divergent political strategies. While violence is on the increase, it remains unclear whether violent organisations are intensifying their efforts in particular localities, spreading insecurity to a growing number of regions, or relocating under the pressure of government forces. The new Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) introduced in this chapter contributes to address these pressing questions by examining both the intensity and spatial distribution of political violence in the region since 1997. It shows that violence is increasingly targeting civilians and border regions. The indicator also suggests that military interventions have reduced the intensity of violence in North and West Africa in the short-term without, however, resulting in a durable peace.

KEY MESSAGES

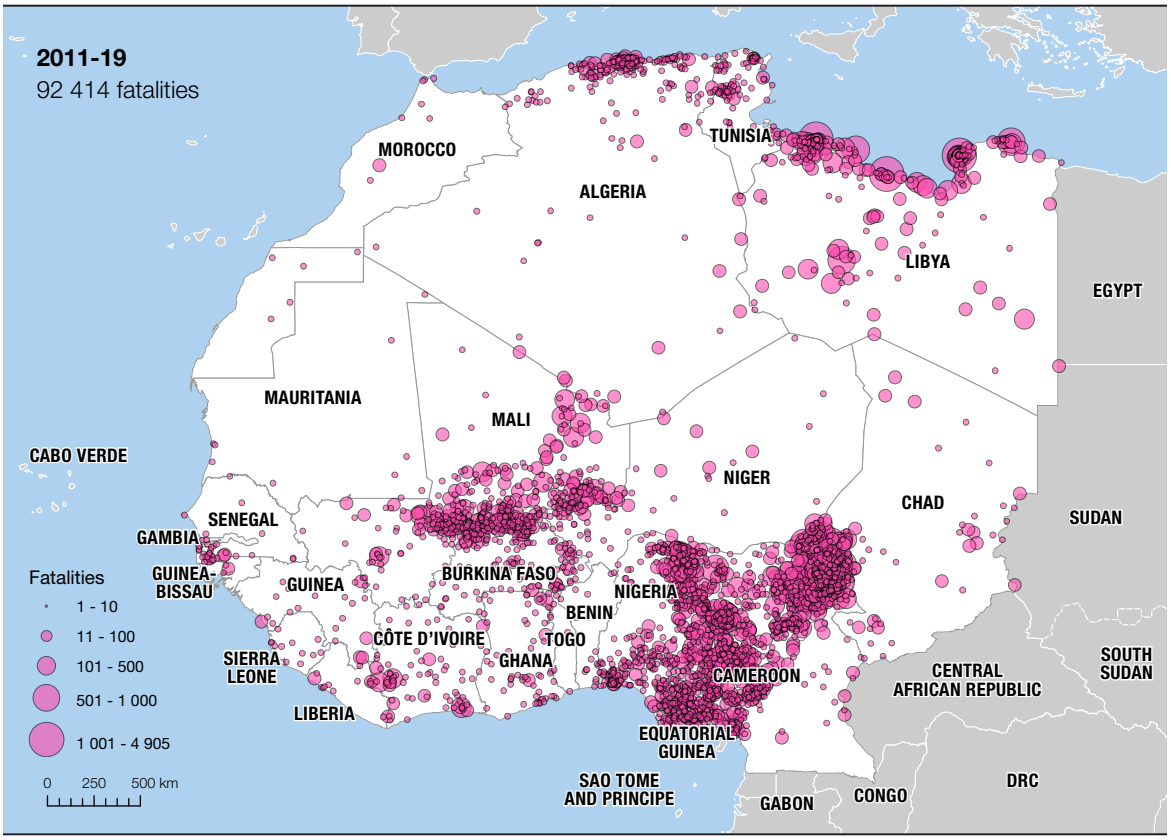
- **Several waves of conflicts between states, rebels, extremist organisations and militias have challenged the legitimacy of North and West African states since the early 2000s.**
- **The geography of these conflicts is often elusive due to the large number of actors involved, their shifting alliances and their transnational movements.**
- **The Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) allows for a better understanding of the long-term evolution of four types of conflict geographies in the region since 1997.**
- **Political violence is increasingly targeting civilians and occuring within border regions.**
- **Military interventions have had differential effects on the geography of conflict but none of the interventions resulted in a durable peace. Violence has continued and expanded in Mali and Central Sahel, the Lake Chad region, and Libya.**

Since the early 2000s, a combustible mix of ethnic rebel groups, transnational organisations affiliated with Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS), and self-defence militias has challenged the legitimacy of several states in North and West Africa. The region's governments are increasingly confronted with new forms of political violence by non-state actors.

The situation is particularly worrying in the Sahel and Sahara, a region better known climatically and geopolitically for episodes of drought and occasional acts of banditry, where violent extremist organisations and secessionists rebels have recently thrived on the inability of states to fully control their own territory. A few recent examples illustrate the broader regional challenges. Within the span of a few years, Mali has faced a military coup, a rebellion, a Western military intervention, and several major terrorist attacks. In the Lake Chad region, the Jihadist organisation Boko Haram is attempting to revive an emirate over northeastern Nigeria, killing thousands and forcing more than half a million civilians to flee to neighbouring countries.

Unfortunately, these cases are not the only examples of political insecurity. Since 2011, the region has been engulfed in a wave of political violence that has eclipsed that of the late 1990s and early 2000s (Map 1.1). An estimated 20 900 acts of violence have killed more than 92 000 with thousands more wounded or otherwise directly impacted by the fighting over the last eight and a half years. Notably, few states in the region have been spared from the wave and many are confronted with violence that continues to spills across state boundaries.

Map 1.1
Victims of violent political events, 2011-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data, 2019.

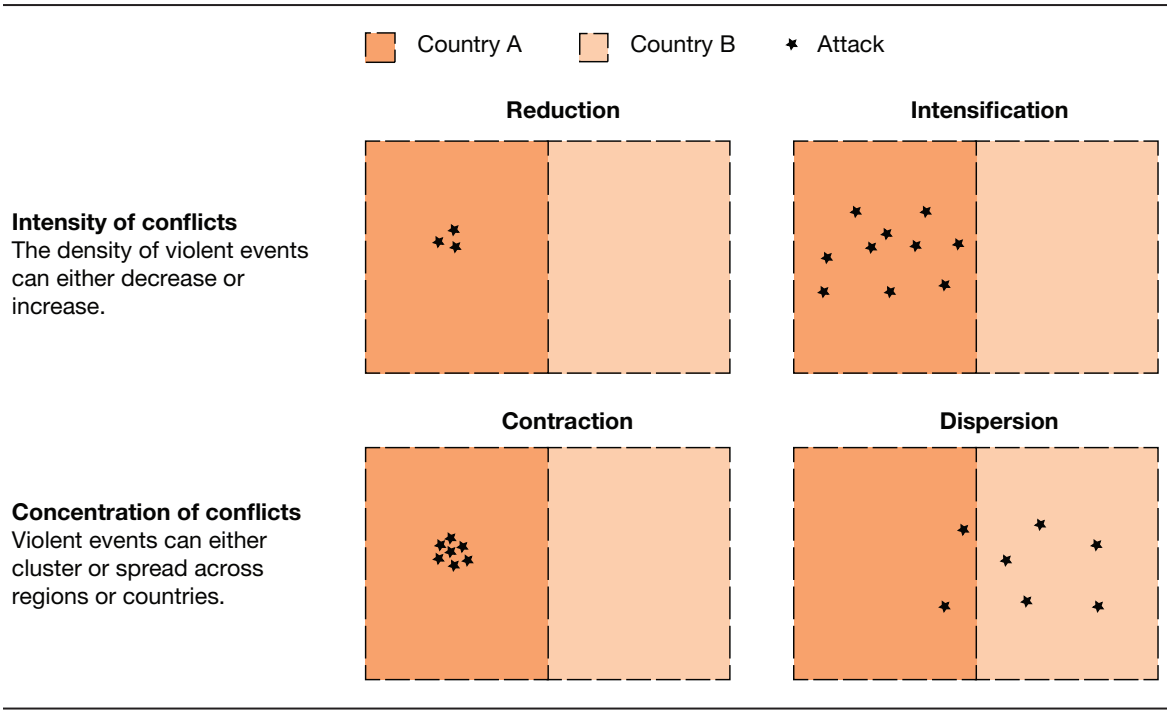
THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF CONFLICT

Despite the multiplication of security studies, the geography of conflict throughout the region is obscured by the large number of belligerents, and their divergent political strategies. While violence is on the increase, it remains unclear whether violent organisations are intensifying their efforts in particular localities, spreading insecurity to other regions, or relocating under the pressure of government forces.

One objective of this report is to map the changing geography of violence in North and West Africa. Building on a database of 30 360 violent incidents recorded in 21 countries from January 1997 to June 2019 (Map 1.2), the report addresses three fundamental issues for the future of the region. First, it identifies which regions have experienced the highest levels of political insecurity. Second, it determines whether conflicts tend to cluster or spread across the region, potentially across national boundaries. Third, it examines whether military interventions have affected the spatial dynamics of conflicts in North and West Africa.

The report focuses on all forms of political violence in the region, including rebellions, terrorism, and communal violence. These conflicts are prolonged conditions of open fighting between people, organisations or countries without formal declarations of war or the possibility of an armistice. They differ from formal wars between state actors that have a clear beginning and end. In a region where formal interstate clashes are rare, the vast majority of the armed struggles studied in this report are conflicts rather than wars.

Figure 1.1
The spatial dynamics of conflict events



A spatial indicator of political violence

The report introduces a new spatial indicator of political violence that assesses the long-term evolution of conflicts within North and West Africa (Walther et al., 2019). The Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) incorporates two fundamental spatial dimensions of political violence: intensity, or the amount of violence within a region, and concentration, or how violent events are distributed within the region.

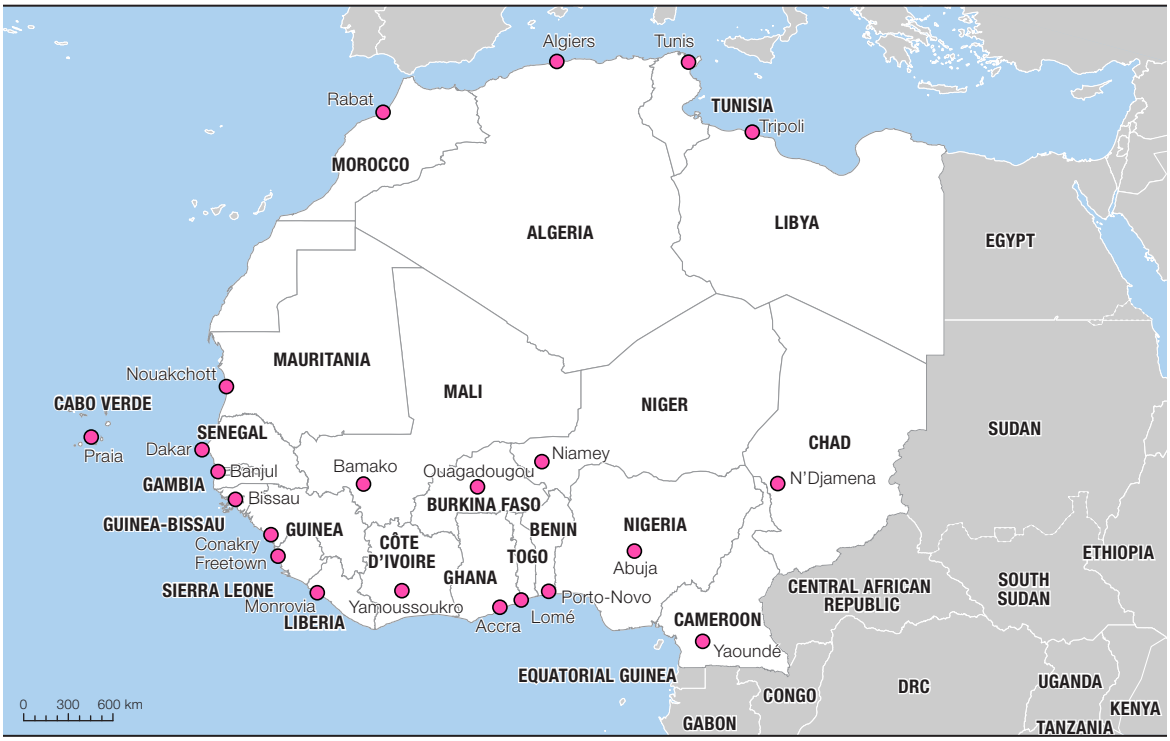
On the one hand, the military capabilities and political strategies of the actors in a conflict can increase or decrease the intensity of conflicts. On the other hand, the location of conflicts within a region can vary spatially, diffusing and spreading across a landscape or, conversely, concentrating on a limited space. These dual dimensions can take place within each country or, as is increasingly the case in West Africa, across national borders.

The new indicator is applied by dividing North and West Africa into a uniform grid of 50 kilometre by 50 kilometre "cells" or "regions". The intensity of conflicts is measured within these cells as the density of violent events per square kilometre while the concentration of conflicts is measured using a nearest neighbour analysis, which determines if violent events are clustered or diffused within the region. A reduction of violence occurs when the overall number of incidents decreases in a region, while an intensification of violence characterises the opposite trend (Figure 1.1). If the increase in the number of violent events takes place across international boundaries, on a larger territory, this process is synonymous with a regionalisation of the conflict.

Conflicts can also disseminate spatially without necessarily increasing the number of violent events or fatalities. This spatial dispersion occurs when a given number of events takes place on a much larger territory than before. When dispersion occurs internationally, conflicts tend to relocate rather than regionalise. The opposite of dispersion is contraction, which occurs, for example, when government forces push insurgents into remote areas.

Civilians are no longer exclusively killed when they are caught in the crossfire between

Map 1.2
Countries covered



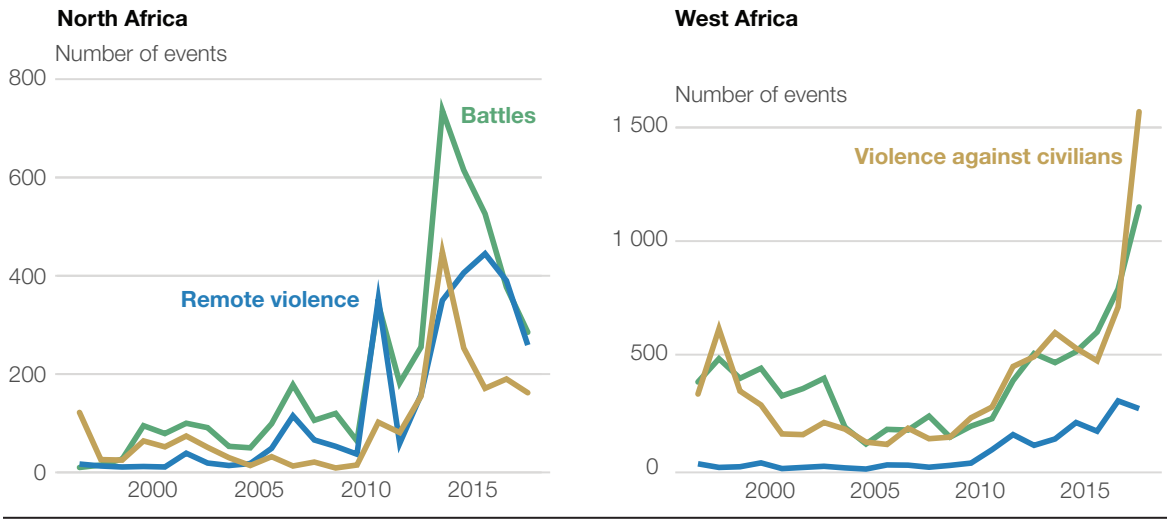
armed groups and governments. They have increasingly become a key objective of numerous conflicts in the region. Many conflicts in North and West Africa are driven less by ideological considerations than by assertion of identity designed to promote an idealised vision of the past. One of the consequences of these identity politics is the deliberate killing or displacement of thousands of civilians in order to create homogeneous ethnic or religious areas.

Unlike earlier insurgencies, Jihadist movements rarely seek to win the hearts and minds of the local population. Despite their radical discourse, they show little interest in actually governing those they have conquered and implementing reforms that would challenge state institutions. Their political program, if any, relies on moral issues rather than development, which they regard with suspicion. Around Lake Chad, for example, Boko Haram has adopted a strategy of indiscriminate violence against civilians that has devastated the economy of the region without proposing an alternative mode of governance.

The cost paid by civilians to modern conflicts has increased by more than 500% between 2011 and 2018 in Western Africa, where the number of civilian deaths reached 4 645 victims in 2018, an all-time record. The victims of direct attacks, kidnappings and sexual assaults now exceeds the number of deaths associated with armed battles between state forces and armed groups (Figure 1.2). If the situation continues to deteriorate, 2019 will be the deadliest year for civilians since detailed statistics have been recorded in 1997, with 3 451 victims through June.

Conflicts tend to regionalise across state borders because armed groups relocate to other countries when defeated by counter-insurgency efforts. The report shows that offensives against rebellions and violent extremists often follow the principle of communicating vessels: pressure exerted by one country on one group results in its opportunistic relocation to a neighbouring country where military capabilities or political will are weaker. In recent years, both Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Boko Haram have experienced such evolution.

Figure 1.2
Evolution of violent events by type in North and West Africa, 1997-2019



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

The geographic spread and opportunistic relocation of such conflicts is amplified by the lack of controls on many African borders that facilitate the circulation of fighters, hostages and weapons. The offensive conducted by AQIM and the rebels of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) against the Malian army in 2012, for example, was fuelled with Tuareg fighters who fled Libya with light arms, ammunitions and explosives from Gaddafi's extensive stockpile. Far from being ignored by rebellions and violent extremist organisations, African borderlands are used as staging grounds from which military operations can be conducted, new recruits can be found, and temporary bases can be built.

Border regions have been deadlier than any other type of area. Violent events located within 50 kilometres of a land border represent one-third of the fatalities recorded in the region. Regions located in close proximity to borders are even more dangerous: 10% of all the victims who died as a result of political events in the region since 1997 were located less than 10 kilometres from an international boundary. While historically the borders of Sierra Leone and Liberia have been the most affected by political violence, it is the Sahelian borders that concentrate the majority of the violent events today. The two main epicentres of transnational violence are the Lake Chad basin and the Liptako Gourma, two impoverished regions where Jihadist groups exploit unresolved disputes and power struggles among the local populations. Between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, most attacks tend to take place outside urban centres and away from major road corridors (Map 1.3).

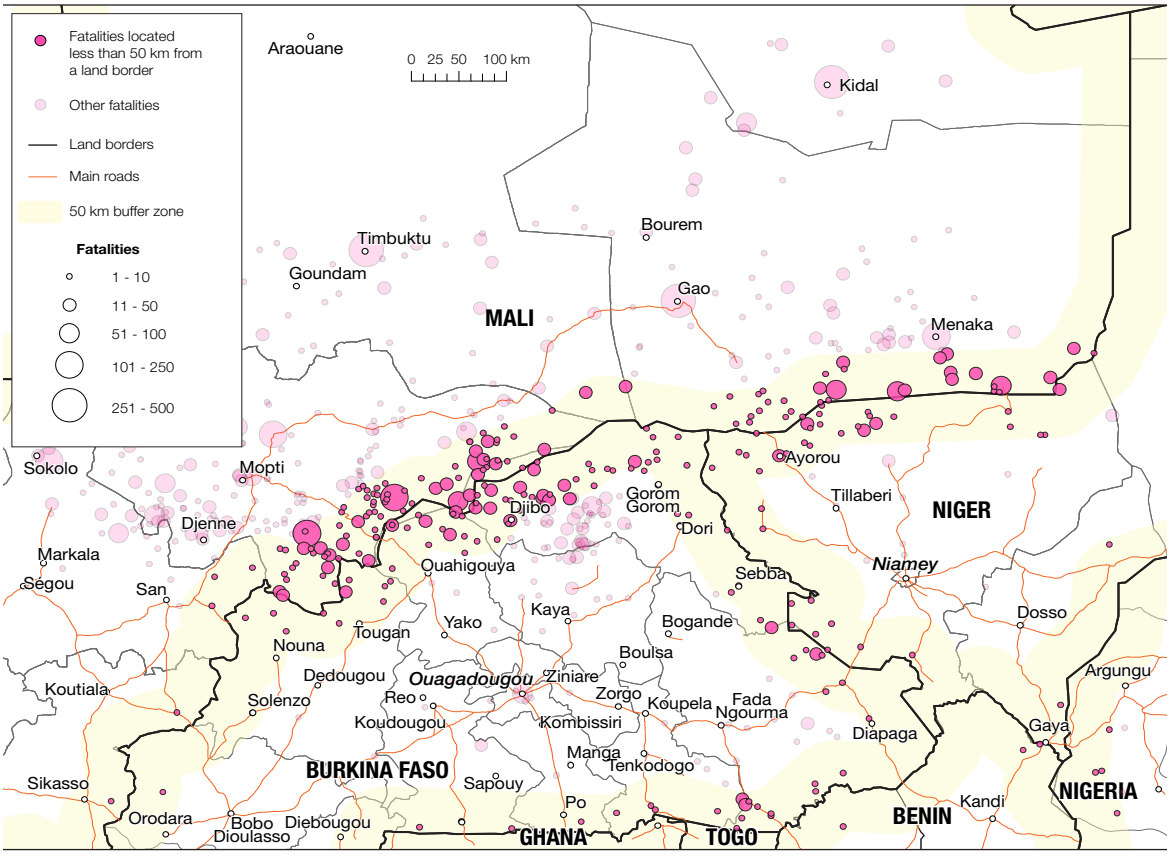
Four types of conflict geography

The combined study of the intensity and concentration of political violence identifies four different types of conflict geography in North and West Africa (Table 1.1).

- The first type applies to regions where there are an above average intensity and a clustered distribution of violent events, suggesting that violence may be intensifying locally. This was the most common form of conflict in 2018 with 52% of the conflictual "cells" or "regions" studied here. These regions, represented in dark green on Map 1.4, often form the core of large epicentres of violence, as in central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, around Lake Chad, in the Middle Belt and the Niger Delta in Nigeria, and along the Mediterranean coast of Libya.

Map 1.3

Fatalities according to distance to borders in the Liptako-Gourma region, 2011-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

- The second type is when a conflict is characterised by a higher than average intensity and a diffuse distribution of events, indicating that the violence may be accelerating. This worst-case scenario is, fortunately, quite rare in the region: only 3% of the conflict regions meet this condition. The Inner Niger Delta in Mali, southern Nigeria, the Liptako Gourma, and the border region between Nigeria and Cameroon are the most affected by these conflicts (represented in dark brown).

- The third type applies to regions where there are fewer violent activities and most of them take place near each other, possibly indicating a decreasing range of violent groups. This type concerns 31% of the conflictual regions of North and West Africa, many of them on the periphery of more intense conflict zones, such as on the outskirts of major cities in Libya (in light green).

- A lower than average intensity and a diffuse distribution suggest that a conflict may be lingering. This situation can be indicative of a region in which opponents are highly mobile or are unlikely to face protracted opposition in a given locality. This type represented in light brown on Map 1.4 is found in 13% of the conflictual regions, often at the periphery of the major theatres of operations or in some countries with fewer violent events, such as Algeria, Ghana or Guinea.

Conflicts are local but increasingly violent

Most conflicts are local. The new indicator reveals that, contrary to popular belief that extremist ideas fuelled by transnational groups spread like wildfire across the region, less than 35% of the regions with violence exhibit signs of possible diffusion. In general, conflicts may

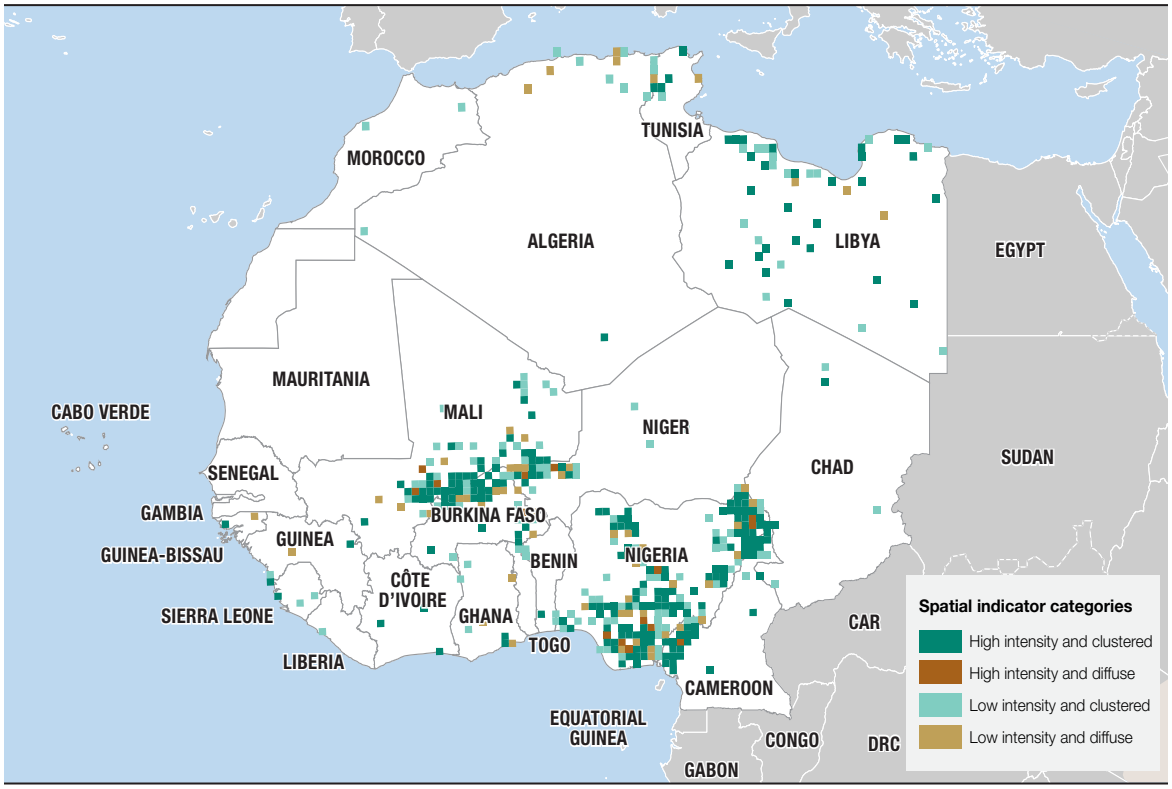
Table 1.1

Types of conflict according to intensity and concentration of events

	High intensity of violence	Low intensity of violence
Clustered events	The conflict may be intensifying locally	The conflict may be decreasing
Dispersed events	The conflict may be accelerating	The conflict may be lingering

Map 1.4

Categories of conflict in North and West Africa, 2018



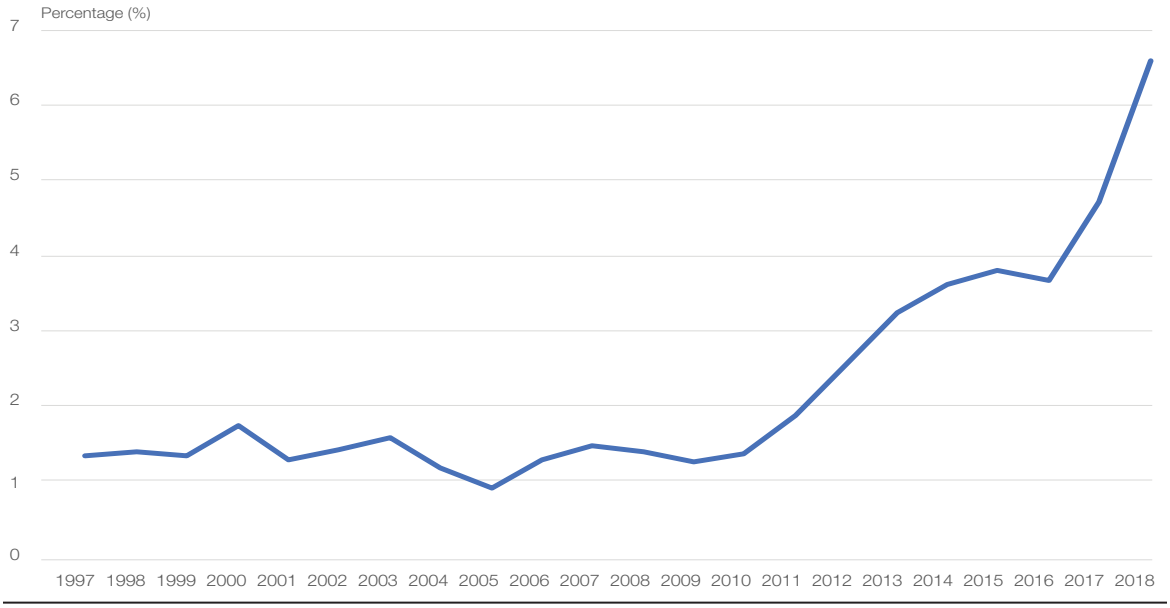
Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

not necessarily be spreading to incorporate new places and violence is predominantly entrenched in certain spaces, with profoundly negative consequences for civilians.

The indicator also shows that more conflicts are intensifying than before. Over the last 22 years, the number of regions experiencing political violence has multiplied by five (Figure 1.3). In 2018, the number of violent events and fatalities was higher than the 20-year average in more than half of the conflictual regions. In other words, where a conflict was present, it was likely to be worse than expected historically. This result points to the ongoing difficulties state and multinational forces have encountered in containing fighting and the need for greater reinforcement of their capacities and increased co-ordination between actors.

Regions that experience high levels of clustered violence tend to remain unchanged over time. Localised conflicts that last for many years are a common occurrence in the region, particularly in Nigeria, where none of the conflicts that tear apart the country have come to an end, or in Libya, where much of the violence is concentrated in a few cities. Other types of regions tend to change for the better: places where violence is of low intensity are likely to experience no

Figure 1.3
Regions with multiple violent events, percentage, 1997-2018



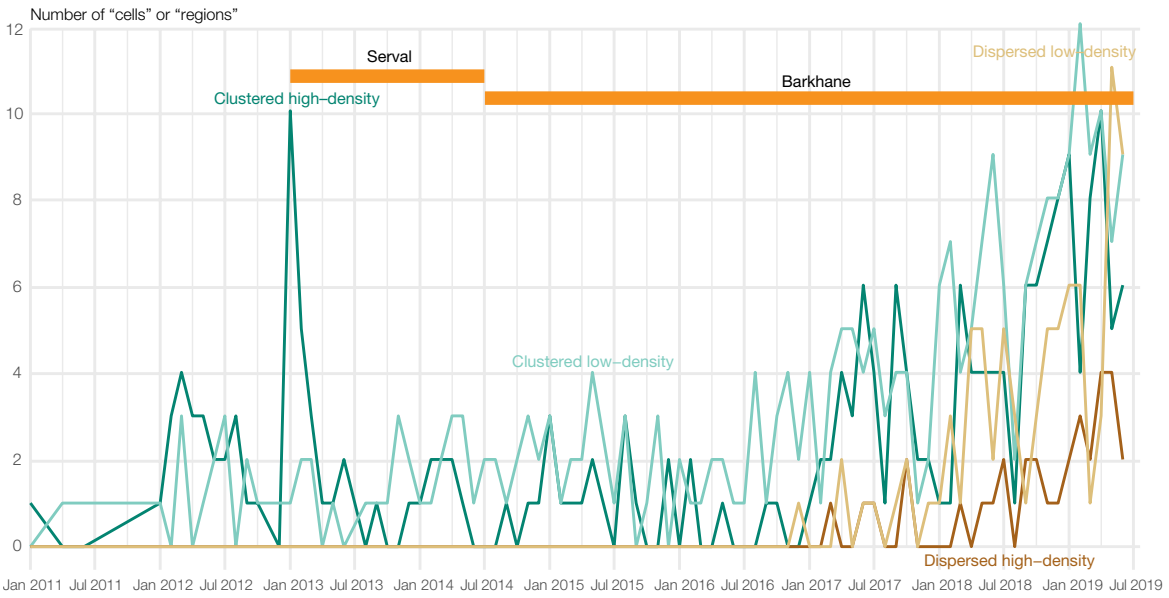
conflict in the following year, whether violent events are clustered or not.

Another important finding is that regions that are not affected by conflicts tend to remain peaceful: most regions never experience conflicts over the study's time range. Half of the conflicts that do emerge tend to be clustered spatially and develop as a low intensity insurgency that can linger for many years. The other half tend to be spatially clustered and extremely violent, the worst possible outcome given the persistence of this category of conflict over time and its high number of civilian casualties.

The nature of political violence varies significantly across the regions. The spatial indicator reveals that in Mali and Central Sahel, new clusters of conflict have emerged in regions that had remained largely unaffected by political violence, such as the Gourma and the Inner Niger Delta. In these regions, political violence is now both very localised and intense. The Central Sahel also counts numerous regions where violence is dispersed and comparatively less intense than elsewhere, such as the Dogon country, which are potential fragile areas where the security situation could deteriorate. The number of these regions has grown rapidly since the Malian insurgency spread to neighbouring countries in the last two years, as shown on Figure 1.4.

Nigeria is by far has been the most affected by political violence. One-third of the violent events and half of the victims recorded in North and West Africa since 1997 are located in this country. More than 67 000 people have died as a result of violent political events in Nigeria, particularly in the northeast, the Middle Belt and the Niger Delta (Map 1.5). The Lake Chad region is the largest epicentre of violence in the country due to the indiscriminate campaign of terror led by Boko Haram against government forces, local militias, traditional authorities, concurrent religious movements, and the wider civilian population. More than 39 000 people have died in Nigeria and the neighbouring countries as a direct result of the Boko Haram insurgency since the Jihadist organisation launched a major uprising in Maiduguri in 2009.

Figure 1.4
Categories of conflict in Mali and Central Sahel, 2011-19



Note: This chart shows how many 50 kilometres by 50 kilometres "cells" or "regions" have experienced different types of conflict from January 2011 to July 2019 in Mali, western Niger, and Burkina Faso. Each type of conflict is defined according to its intensity and spatial distribution.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

MODERN CONFLICTS AND MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

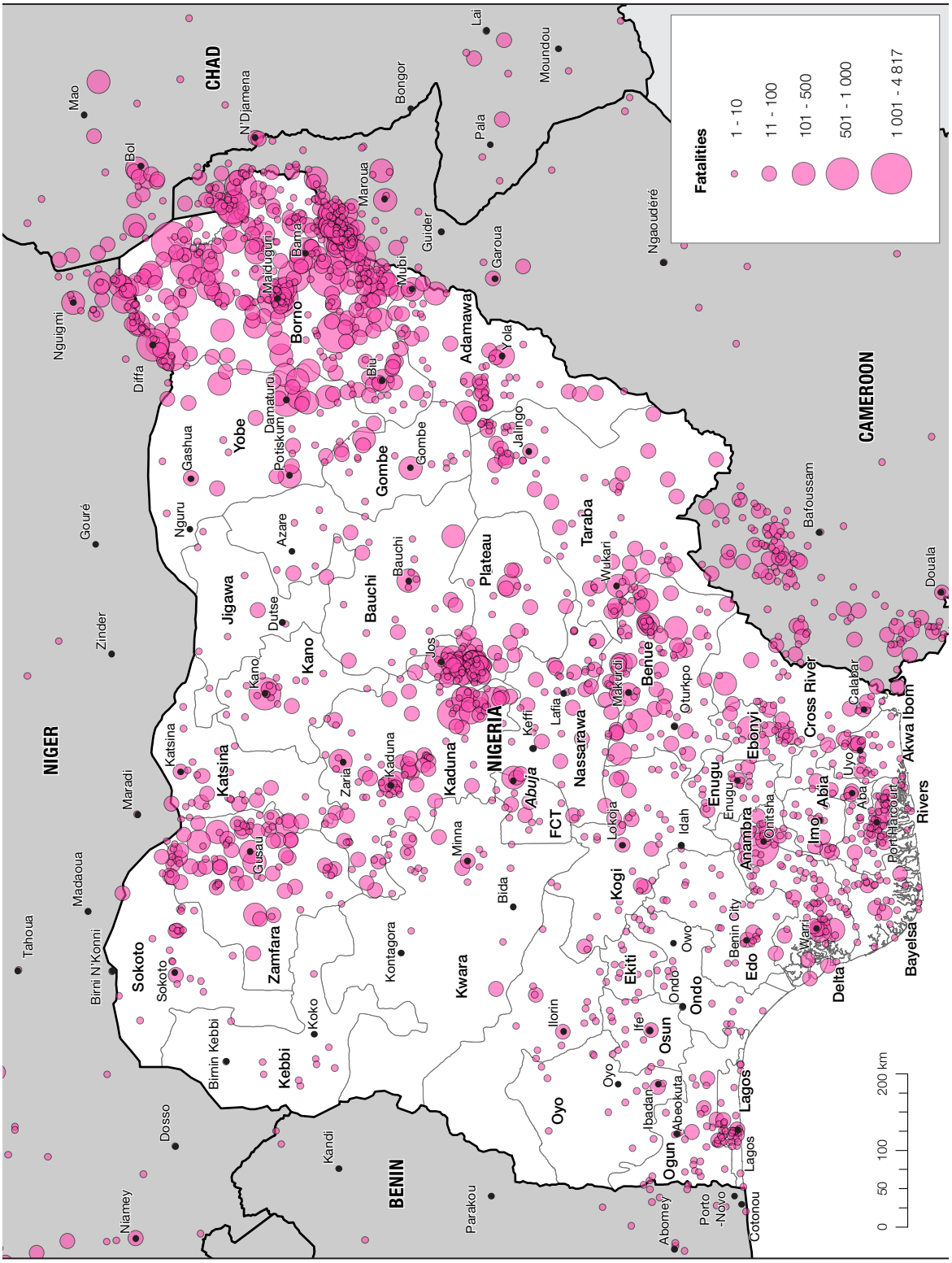
The degrading security situation has led Western countries to intervene militarily in the hope of stabilising the region, preventing the spread of extremist ideas and ending violence against civilians. In parallel, African countries have formed coalitions that, in addition to pooling military personnel and material, allow for sharing of intelligence on the locations and movements of rebels and violent extremist organisations. While some of the partnerships developed since the 2010s mainly rely on security, such as the Nouakchott Process, other 'Sahel strategies' or "alliances" combine governance, security and development.

The military interventions studied in this report modified both the overall geography of the conflicts and the type of violence recorded in the region.

- In Mali, the French Operation Serval successfully reasserted control over the north of the country and led to the arrest and killing of hundreds of violent extremists affiliated with Al-Qaeda between 2013 and 2014. The analysis confirms that Operation Serval drastically reduced the number of violent events and fatalities from pre-intervention levels. Thanks to a highly mechanised intervention, French forces were able to restrict violence to a few remote regions. As the intervention progressed, violence was short-lived and less concentrated than before, suggesting that militants resorted to hit-and-run engagements. Since then, however, violence in Mali and neighbouring Burkina Faso has surpassed the levels that triggered the Serval intervention. Violence is now found across all four conflict categories (Figure 1.4), suggesting that the efforts to bring peace to the region face a far more complex challenge than in 2013.
- In the Lake Chad region, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) initiated by Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria has contributed to reduce the number of violent events and fatalities since its peak in the mid-2010s. As a result of the MNJTF intervention in 2015, Boko Haram lost most of

Map 1.5

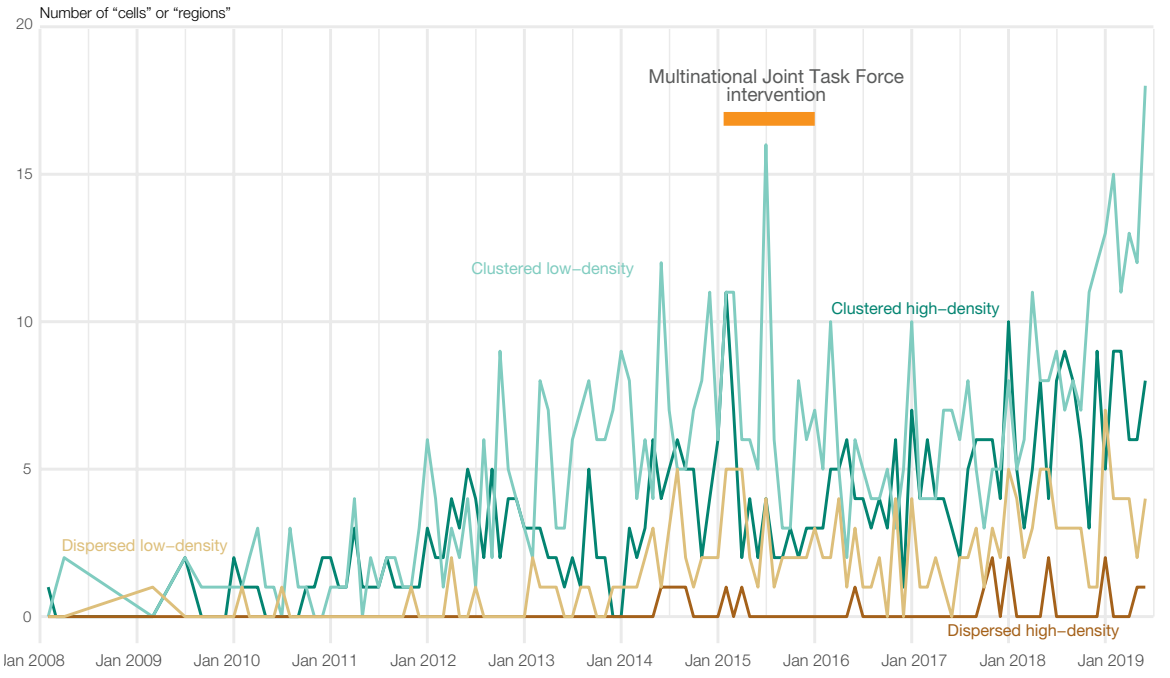
Violent events in Nigeria, 2009-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Figure 1.5

Categories of conflict in the Lake Chad region, 2008-19



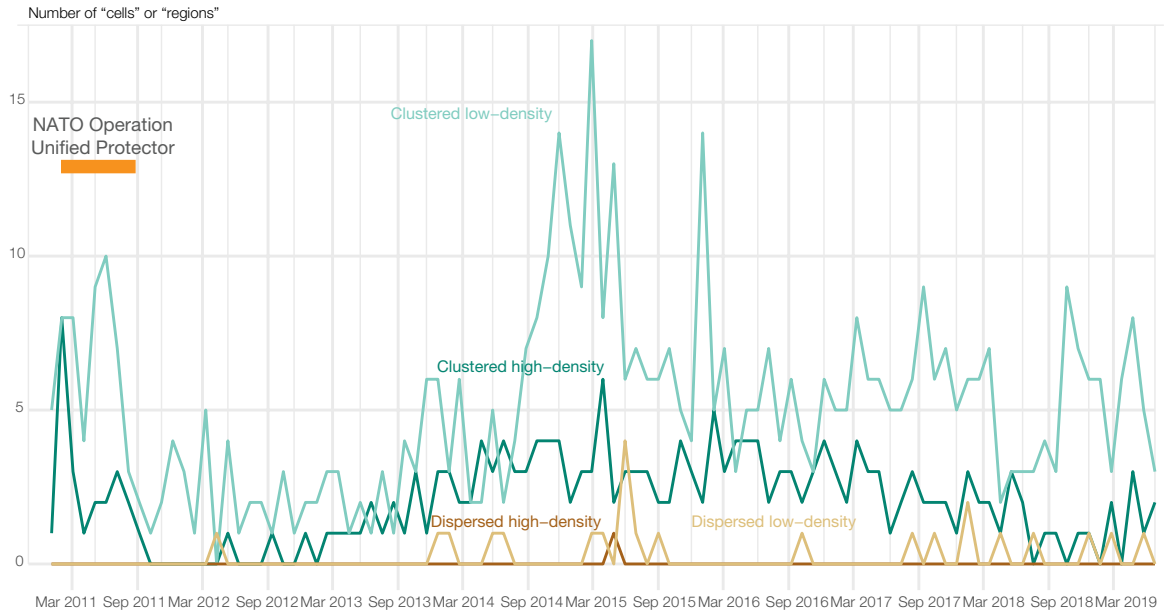
Note: This graph shows how many 50 kilometres by 50 kilometres "cells" or "regions" have experienced different types of conflict from January 2008 to July 2019 in northern Nigeria and around Lake Chad. Each type of conflict is defined according to its intensity and spatial distribution.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

its territorial control over northern Nigeria and was left restricted to a few pockets in very remote and/or mountainous areas. This meant the conflict geography was rather localised although intense violence persisted throughout. In the long term, however, the MNJTF intervention has neither eliminated nor consistently relocated violence. Violence tends to persist at lower levels around specific places for longer durations. Overall, the intervention only temporarily served to depress violence within the region. Violence has re-intensified and expanded geographically since 2018 and is now found across all four conflict categories in the region (Figure 1.5).

- In Libya, the establishment of a no-fly zone and a naval blockade by NATO in 2011 began as a humanitarian intervention to protect civilians protesting against the government during the Arab Spring. However, NATO's Operation Unified Protector quickly became an offensive air war against the Libyan military that ultimately led to the end of the Gaddafi government. In keeping with the targeting of Libyan military forces and installations, the violence was highly localised and concentrated in cities along the Libyan coast. Violence was at its most intense early in the intervention and declined quickly as the air campaign unfolded. The intervention was a short-run success in terms of NATO's political objectives but ultimately failed to resolve the political disputes within Libya. The civil war later re-emerged and continues to this day as rebels and militias seek to control the central government and the natural resources of the country. After peaking in 2015, violence has now returned to levels similar to those observed during the intervention. A hallmark of this conflict is that violence has remained localised and concentrated geographically throughout the various iterations of the civil war (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6
Categories of conflict in Libya, 2011-19



Note: This figure shows how many 50 kilometres by 50 kilometres "cells" or "regions" have experienced different types of conflict from February 2011 to July 2019. Each type of conflict is defined according to its intensity and spatial distribution.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

POLITICAL OPTIONS AND LONG-TERM STABILITY

The rebellions, insurgencies, coups d'état and protest movements that have impacted North and West Africa since the end of the Cold War are being carried out in a security environment that is much more global than before. These new conflicts are no longer constrained by one geographical scale: militants can exploit local grievances, develop a national agenda, operate regionally, and exploit global narratives and resources simultaneously. These conflicts tend to spill over international boundaries as militants move to more welcoming areas when under pressure from government forces. Unlike previous rebellions, conflicts in North and West Africa also tend to be driven by issues of identity rather than ideologies, and target civilians explicitly. Finally, these conflicts tend to involve a multitude of radical organisations, secessionist groups and ethnic militias who merge, split and change sides in a rather unpredictable manner, making peace processes elusive.

The specificities of current conflicts in the region calls for innovative responses from the states of the region and the international community. Based on the spatial analysis conducted in this report, five major policy options could be suggested to improve the long-term political stability of the region.

- *Promote regional initiatives.* The deterioration of the security situation over the last twenty years demonstrates that military solutions must be found and applied at a regional basis. From this point of view, the Malian conflict was a catalyst for numerous regional initiatives designed to promote security, governance and development in the region that culminated in the creation of the G5 Sahel joint force and the reactivation of the MNJTF. The newly created Alliance for the Sahel is expected to result in the co-ordination of the previously disparate initiatives by the region's principal donors.
- *Restore state legitimacy.* Long-term conflict resolution entails restoring state legitimacy and their ability to control borders. In the early 2010s, Algeria was able to mobilise

more than ten thousand men on its border with Mali, about twice the strength of the Nigerien armed forces. The low number of troops and the lack of operational resources of West African armies make it difficult to implement counter-insurgency strategies. Considering a ratio of 20 to 25 soldiers per 1 000 inhabitants, the regions of Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao and Mopti would ideally need to mobilise between 90 000 and 112 500 soldiers, for example. This is three times more than the 33 800 men who can theoretically be mobilised by the Malian armed forces, MINUSMA and France in the country.

- *Invest in border regions*. Border regions have been neglected by central governments for decades. Some of them have now transformed into strongholds for violent extremist organisations. Countering violent extremism requires strengthening national cohesion by better connecting capital cities with peripheral regions (OECD/SWAC, 2019). Particular attention should be given to border towns and cities, where the current lack of infrastructure does not allow them to develop both as local centres of innovation and as regional business hubs. In addition to military initiatives to secure border regions, more sustained investments should target road and rail infrastructure, socio-educational institutions and commercial structures.
- *Protect civilians at all cost*. The fact that civilians pay such a high price in the current conflicts should encourage the authorities to use the minimum necessary force in their military operations. Protecting the civilian population from violence and gaining their support is the most effective way of countering the strategies of extremist groups based on fear and exclusion. Protecting civilians effectively entails the creation of secure regions where inclusive forms of policy are put in place, the establishment of a dialogue between states and local actors known for their integrity, and initiatives to rehabilitate rebels and religious extremists. More generally, conflict resolution should involve the recognition of the virtues of diversity and cosmopolitanism, two vital ingredients in fighting identity politics.
- *Counter insurgencies with national political processes*. In recent decades, military interventions and international legal proceedings have often superseded African states when the latter were struggling to defend their territory, maintaining domestic order and protecting their cultural heritage or population. This report suggests that military interventions are effective in reducing the intensity of violence and, at some circumstances, in limiting the spread of violence. However, these interventions only have had short-run impacts and rarely improved the long-term stability of a region. External forces can be effective in reducing violence over shorter time frames but that they cannot be relied upon to be the main instrument to resolve the political issues involved in an insurgency. Insurgencies emerge because of grievances, real or perceived, that must be addressed through civil means by the decision makers of the countries in which they develop. External forces can only reduce conflicts to a manageable problem to allow such a political resolution to begin by states themselves. Extending the length of interventions when they do occur is a possible recommendation but the presence of military forces will always be a temporary one.

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Chapter 2

Characteristics of modern conflicts in Africa

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on armed conflicts in Africa, with a particular focus on their spatial dimension. The first section shows that no single cause can explain the increase in armed conflicts observed in Africa since the end of the Cold War. The governance of postcolonial elites, natural resources, sovereignty, ethnicity and religion are ingredients that combine in different ways and to varying degrees in each conflict rather than operating as universally deterministic causes. The second section shows that geography is a fundamental dimension of conflicts. Conflicts can be facilitated or constrained by geographical features such as mountains, borders, and distance to capital cities. Geography can also be a cause of conflicts when state and non-state actors fight for control over territory. Finally, conflicts can spread geographically, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The third section investigates how key geographical concepts such as distance, identity, borders, territory and scale affect the spatiality of modern conflicts

KEY MESSAGES

- **Armed conflicts have developed in sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s due to a combination of political factors that require more attention be given to the local drivers of insurgencies.**
- **Some of the factors that explain the complexity and longevity of armed conflicts in the region need to be interpreted geographically.**
- **A spatial approach provides an important opportunity to build knowledge at a regional scale and understand why conflicts emerge, develop and spread across the region.**
- **The spatialisation of conflicts is required to better understand the impact of geographical features, such as places, distance, borders, territory and scale, on conflicts as well as the diffusion of armed struggles across space.**

WHY SO MANY CONFLICTS IN AFRICA?

Africa experienced a multiplication of conflicts after the Cold War, which contrasts with the decrease in violence observed in the rest of the world since the early 1990s. The rise in organised violence in Africa is due to many factors that combine in an original way for each conflict. Among the most important ingredients of conflicts are the governance of postcolonial elites, the presence or absence of natural resources, the search for sovereignty, and the use of ethnicity and religion (Williams, 2016). Considered separately, none of these ingredients are individually the cause of conflict.

Governance of postcolonial elites

African postcolonial regimes have been prone to instability but they are not violent per se. In times of economic or political crisis, however, they have experienced organised violence. During the democratisation period that followed the end of the Cold War, many regimes lost the financial support of their international allies, which weakened their ability to redistribute wealth to their patrons and further compromised their ability to balance the divide between those who benefited from state resources and those who were excluded (Bates, 2008).

The civil wars that followed the collapse of West African centralised patronage networks proved highly disruptive for the region and resulted in several military interventions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN) and Western powers. These conflicts rarely took the form of popular revolts and did not fundamentally challenge the propensity of African elites to use state resources to satisfy their patrons. Rather, the typical main objective was to gain better positions within the countries' politics of patronage (Reno, 2011). As Chabal and Daloz (1999: 37) have argued, "It is the decline in the resources available for patronage rather than dissatisfaction with the patrimonial order per se which has undermined the legitimacy of political elites".

Presence or absence of natural resources

Natural resources are another ingredient that is often used to explain the rise in armed conflicts in Africa between warlords or between herders and farmers. Proponents of the "greed approach", in particular, have argued that African insurgents are motivated by self-enrichment rather than by ideology or social grievances (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Le Billon, 2001). According to this approach, oil, diamonds and drugs fuel undisciplined groups, who compete for the control of mines and smuggling routes. Natural resources are initial endowments that allow leaders to lift some of the obstacles to the organisation of insurgency. As a result, groups that emerge in resource-rich environments tend to commit higher levels of indiscriminate violence than groups that arise in resource-poor contexts (Weinstein, 2007). While popular in the policy sphere, the existence of a direct or indirect link between resources and armed conflicts is still highly debated in scientific literature.

Numerous scientists have argued that climate change increases the likelihood of armed conflict around the world by causing migration and altering the availability of water, land and pasture (Welzer, 2012; Hsiang et al., 2013; Burke et al., 2015). Hendrix and Salehyan (2012) argue for example that extreme deviations in rainfall are positively associated with all types of political conflict. Other scholars have suggested, however, that the abundance or scarcity of natural resources does not automatically lead to armed conflicts (Theisen et al., 2012; Raleigh et al., 2015; Brzoska and Fröhlich, 2016). Rather than drought or crop failures, this approach argues that the wider socioeconomic and political context in which conflict develops is a much more significant factor to explain organised violence (Buhaug et al., 2015; Witmer et al., 2017). As Williams (2016: 88) argues, "it is political systems, not resources per se, that are the crucial factor in elevating the risk or armed conflict". In Liberia and Sierra Leone, "it was not material resources that shaped the behavior of leaders and fighters so much as relationships in the political system" (Reno, 2011: 169). Rebel groups used the revenues generated by illicit diamond mining operations to prolong the conflicts of the Gulf of Guinea in the 1990s, but natural resources did not explicitly cause the conflict (Richards, 1996). Natural resources enabled insurgents to pursue their political goals and contributed toward the difficulty in resolving these conflicts.

Search for sovereignty

The need for sovereignty is another ingredient that can explain why so many rebellions have developed on the continent since the end of the Cold War (Englebert, 2009). Conflicts can develop when marginalised groups feel the need to create a new state to enjoy the privileges of sovereignty, when they fight for secession by redrawing international borders, or when they call for a better access to national resources through self-determination.

Thus far, however, wars of self-determination without separatism, in which rebels seek greater access to state resources and a better recognition of their marginalised minorities, are the most common form of conflict. The evolution of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) in Mali reflects this general trend. Founded in 2011 by Tuareg, the MNLA declared the independence of Azawad in 2012 before evolving towards greater autonomy within the Malian territory (Lecocq and Klute, 2019). The fact that sub-Saharan Africa has experienced

few wars motivated by secessionism alone, despite the diversity of ethnic groups and poor state performance observed on the continent, is surprising. This apparent paradox is partially explained by the principle of the intangibility of colonial borders and the associated principle of *uti possidetis* adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in the early 1960s. Both prevent newly-formed states from challenging their international borders (Nugent, 2019).

Use of ethnicity

Another ingredient that contributes to conflict in Africa is ethnicity, a property of a group of people who see themselves as different from other groups because they share certain cultural traits. Ethnicity is routinely used to describe a particular type of warfare in which groups with different religious, linguistic or cultural traits resort to organised violence (Bosker and de Ree, 2014). As Wolff (2006: 2) argued, "Empirically, it is relatively easy to determine which conflict is an ethnic one: one knows them when one sees them… This is so because their manifestations are violent and their causes and consequences obviously ethnic". Building on the 1994 Rwanda genocide, the proponents of the ethnic approach argue that hatred between groups persists until a particular event triggers an eruption of mass violence.

In recent years, however, a consensus has emerged in the social sciences to hold that ethnic groups are neither pure inventions of colonial powers nor immutable groups "rooted in a timeless past" (Nugent, 2008: 920). Contrarily to the common view that ethnic conflicts are easy to identify, recent research suggests that, as any other social construct, political elites manipulate ethnicity to shape conflicts. Ethnicity does not lead automatically to violent conflict in Africa, where most ethnic groups live peacefully and where ethnically homogeneous countries can be at war, as the Somalia conflict shows (Vaughan, 2019). So-called ethnic wars are political struggles that shape the identity of the belligerents, rather than inevitable catastrophes that can only be prevented by creating ethnically homogeneous regions. In West Africa, "ethnic" conflicts often reflect fault lines within societies. For example, the Tuareg, an ethnic group perceived as homogeneous, is in reality bitterly divided into groups that support or reject the creation of an independent state in Azawad (see Box 2.1).

Use of religion

Religion is another popular explanatory factor of conflicts in Africa (Basedau et al., 2011). In North and West Africa especially, the recent increase of political violence owes much to extremist organisations affiliated with Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS) who promote a religious agenda, see themselves at war with the West and reject other approaches to Islam. The current literature notes that the vast majority of the victims of radical groups are Muslim and finds no evidence of a "clash of civilizations" between Christians and Muslims in the region. While most recent conflicts take place in Muslim countries, this is due to a reduction in the number of conflicts elsewhere in the world, not to the fact that Muslim groups are particularly conflict-prone (Bormann et al., 2015; Gleditsch and Rudolfsen, 2016).

The type of religious terrorism that emerged in the 1980s is different from previous waves of terrorism in several important ways (Table 2.1). Religious terrorism exerts unconstrained violence against its enemies, through the use of group massacres, sexual violence, beheadings, improvised explosive devices or suicide attacks that target government forces as well as civilians. Unlike terrorism motivated by ethnonationalism, separatism or ideology, contemporary religious terrorism is also much more expansive geographically. Contrarily to previous terrorist movements that focused on one particular region or state, current violent religious groups argue that modern nation-states are incompatible with religious law and that their borders are irrelevant to the community of believers. The constituency profile of religious terrorism is narrow, insular and isolated. In North and West Africa, religious terrorist groups are often numerically small and fail to or are not particularly interested in winning hearts and minds. They can hardly be compared with the "liberation fronts" and other "freedom fighters" that fought in the Basque Country, Corsica, Ulster or Latin America in the 1970s. Indiscriminate violence that targets

Box 2.1

Divisions within nomadic societies in Mali and Niger

Many conflicts have their origins in the balance of power between the various segments that compose nomadic societies in the Sahara-Sahel. Conflicts often reflect tribal, regional and social divisions within these societies and their inability to unite at the national or supranational level. Nomadic societies are divided into confederations, tribes, factions and sub-factions that may ally against segments of the same order and unite with these segments against wider segments.

The Tuareg for example, are divided between nobles (amajegh), free and powerful (ellelu), dependent (imghad) and former slaves (iklan) (Lecoq and Klute, 2019). Former Tuareg noble tribes, such as the Ifoghas, have conflicting relationships with former vassal tribes and with other noble tribes from other regions. During the rebellions of the 1990s, the Popular Liberation Front of Azawad (FPLA) and the Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of the Azawad (ARLA) represented lower social strata while the Peoples Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MPLA) represented nobility. Similar divisions marked the 2012 Tuareg rebellion: MNLA, Ansar Dine and High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) represents the Ifoghas nobles while Imghad Tuareg Self-Defense Group and Allies (GATIA) represents the vassals.

Another division is observed between countries. Tuareg rebel movements from Niger and Mali have never merged despite a common cultural heritage and similar grievances with their respective governments. Tuareg and Arab societies are also internally divided between those who migrated to neighbouring countries due to the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, and those who stayed in their own country. Locally, bitter disputes involve the individuals who became rich through illicit trafficking and the vast majority of poor peasants and herders whose livelihood has been destroyed by repeated droughts and the collapse of the tourist industry. In Mali, internal divisions can also be observed between the chiefs who had allied with the government since the rebellion of 1963 to preserve their privileges and unemployed young men who came back from Algeria and Libya in the 1990s (Lecocq, 2004).

Whether a more ideological project such as the restoration of a theological order can eventually overcome such internal divisions remains a matter of scholarly debate. For example, the creation of the Islamist group Ansar Dine — whose name means Defenders of the Faith — was motivated both by religious factors and internal power struggles among Tuareg tribes. More recently, the Macina Liberation Front (FLM) is seen by many as an attempt to restore the Caliphate of Hamdullahi formed in the 19th century in the Inner Niger Delta by Sheku Amadou. Both Ansar Dine and FLM have developed a religious and political project that does not exclusively rely on tribal and ethnic alliances against a common enemy.

Source: Walther and Tisseron 2015.

apostates and "false believers" is used by contemporary religious terrorist groups to destroy the social and political order, not restructure and rebuild society as in past terrorist movements.

Modern Islamic movements are diverse and not all are violent (Dowd, 2015). Islamic fundamentalists promote a literal interpretation of the Quran and the Sunna (the words and acts of Muhammad) and a strict adherence to religious law (sharia) without armed struggle. Unlike Islamist movements who reject political violence, Jihadist groups seek to overthrow secular governments, cut their ties with the West, and "purify" other Muslims using violence. Jihadist groups share three ideological views that sets them apart from other reform religious movements in the region (Ibrahim, 2017). First, they see the world through the prism of a clash of religions and consider that it is the duty of all Muslims to confront the West and its local allies through military means and terrorist tactics. Second, Jihadist groups reject what they regard as anti-Islamic practices, such as Sufism, and Western-inspired institutions such

Table 2.1

Ethnonationalist, ideologically-oriented and religious movements

Type of movement	Type of violence	Scope of violence	Constituency profile	Relationships to existing system
Ethnonationalist/separatist				
Examples: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) (2011-present), Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (1984-present)	Relatively constrained	Focused	Inclusive	Restructured or rebuilt society
Ideologically-oriented				
Examples: Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) (Ethiopia/Eritrea, 1970-94) Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) (Mozambique, 1962-75)	Constrained	Focused	Narrow, insular, and isolated	Restructured or rebuilt society
Religious				
Examples: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (Algeria, Mali, Niger, 2007-present), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) (Chad, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, 2006-present), Ansaroul Islam (Mali, Burkina Faso, 2016-present), Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), 1984-present)	Unconstrained choice of weapons and tactics	Expansive	Narrow, insular, and isolated	Complete reconfiguration of social and political order

Sources: Adapted from Hoffman 2017 and Martin and Prager 2019.

as democracy, nation-states or modern education (Thurston, 2018). Third, they see fellow Muslims who do not strictly adhere to a literal interpretation of the Quran and the Sunna as infidels that must either abandon their religious practices or be eliminated.

The term "Salafi" is often used to describe modern religious groups in North and West Africa. Not all of them are violent. The Salafi movement, which originated in Saudi Arabia in the 12th century, has adapted to local societies and takes various forms. In Northern Nigeria and Niger, for example, the Society of Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of the Sunna, also known as Izala, is an Islamist movement that promotes a non-violent reformist agenda in reaction to Sufi brotherhoods (Loimeier, 1997). The Izala movement is particularly popular among West African traders because it rejects ostentation and expensive social obligations that prevent many entrepreneurs from enriching themselves (Kuépié et al., 2016). In the same region, the Salafi-jihadist group Boko Haram has emerged as a mass religious movement that preached exclusivism before transforming into one of the deadliest armed groups in the world (Thurston, 2018). Its attacks have targeted Sufi and Salafi religious movements, the wider Muslim and Christian civilian population, and the Nigerian state, which the movement regards as corrupted and illegitimate.

GEOGRAPHY AND WAR

Space is a fundamental dimension of armed conflicts. Geography not only provides the physical framework upon which battles are fought but also shapes the strategies of political actors. Space can act as a facilitating or constraining factor of conflict as well as a source of dispute when states and/or non-state actors fight over territory. Space can also enable conflicts to spread geographically, possibly across borders, as in North and West Africa.

Geography and interstate war

Much of the literature on geography and war has focused on wars between states in the international system (see Starr, 2015). Although this report is not concerned with interstate war per se, the literature on non-state violence draws significantly on concerns about interstate conflict and is typically written from the perspective of international relations (IR). Therefore, a summary of how geography is associated with interstate war is appropriate. This literature is primarily concerned with geography as either a facilitating/constraining influence on conflict or as a source of conflict. A secondary concern involves the mechanisms by which war spreads or diffuses throughout the international system.

Perhaps the most important and consistent theme about geography in the interstate war literature is the effect of geographical distance on political interactions, including conflict. Distance is widely understood as a key factor in the interactions between pairs of states (Gleditsch, 1995). For example, the well-known gravity model of trade in IR has distance as a central element, proposing that trade between two states is a direct function of the population and distance between states, with increased distance reducing trade (Chaney, 2018). It is this notion of distance as an impediment that is translated into the conflict literature through the 'loss-of-strength gradient' notion which argues that a state's ability to exercise political power or to 'project force' decreases in proportion to the distance involved because of transportation costs (Webb, 2007).

In these formulations, distance is often seen as a deterministic effect, a stance that has been widely critiqued. More nuanced interpretations that consider neither distance nor any other geographic feature as a factor that would determine specific political actions are more common. Instead, distance effects are typically understood as shaping possible strategies of political actors, some of which will be more probable than others (Radil et al., 2013). Rather than a deterministic effect, political decision makers consciously respond to distance and other geographic features that may affect interaction as they perceive and interpret them.

The notion of distance as an impediment but not a deterministic one is at the core of the influential 'opportunity and willingness' theory of interstate conflict (Starr, 1978). Opportunity is the possibility of interaction between states, whereas willingness refers to the desire to pursue a particular goal. Geographic proximity is the most important factor influencing the interactions between states, and hence the probability of conflict as most states are unable to project force over long distances and therefore are more likely to fight when their opponent is geographically nearby. Further, proximate states interact more with each other overall, which increases the potential for disagreements that lead to conflict. A state's willingness to engage in interstate conflict may be shaped by such factors as alliance ties, regime similarity, and relative military capability, each of which is also shaped by geographic factors. In that respect, willingness is also impacted by geography.

In this tradition, geography is understood largely as a facilitating or constraining condition for conflict. However, the IR literature sees geography as a source of conflict and emphasises the idea of territory and disagreements over territorial control (Vasquez and Valeriano, 2009). Territory, or bounded space subject to political authority, is seen as important for two primary reasons: for the resources or strategic advantages present within the space, and for the symbolic meaning of the space for people's political, cultural, or national identities (Toft, 2014).

In the tradition of geography as a source of conflict, the most common concern is how the uneven distribution of population, resources, commodities, or strategic elements (deep water ports for instance) can lead to the selective targeting of specific spaces by states for political purposes. Well known examples include Israel's continued occupation of the Golan Heights for defensive purposes, Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, and China's assertive island-building and -expanding program in the South China Sea (Huth, 2009). No less important is the symbolic nature of certain spaces as the geographic heart of national or other group identities. Many territories are seen as central to the historical connections of a state with its citizens, linking people and governments with important cultural events or sites (Murphy, 2010). The value of territory, as strategic or psychological, has meant that disputes over its control are "effectively indivisible issues" that are resistant to political compromise (Fearon, 1995).

Geography both as an influence on and source of conflict has been subject to a great deal of empirical examination. For example, the number of borders a country has with other states has been linked to an increased potential for war as has the proximity to an ongoing war (Reed and Chiba, 2010). The importance of distance and shared borders has been verified by numerous other similar studies (Gibler, 2012). Additionally, there is ample evidence that disputes over territory are more severe, more likely to escalate, and more likely to recur than other political disputes. Overall, there is well-established evidence that the risk of conflict between states is partly a function of both interpretations of geography (Senese, 2005).

A much smaller subset of the literature on interstate war deals with the issue of war diffusion, or the spread of war amongst a system of territorially-defined states. Interstate wars with more than two participants, or multi-party wars, are relatively rare events in international politics but are very costly and destructive affairs (Vasquez and Valeriano, 2010). Geographers identify two types of diffusion — contagious diffusion and hierarchical diffusion — which are relevant for war studies.

Contagious diffusion draws from the analogy of the spread of an illness and involves social interaction, whether by individuals or groups. The basic idea is that exposure to others can lead to the spread of something and this process is always affected by distance. In the war literature the focus is on states as an actor so this interaction is typically understood as occurring through international land borders. States that share a land border are referred to as "contiguous"' to each other and more likely to interact politically. Hierarchical diffusion involves a similar concern with interaction but through a shared organisational structure, such as when joiners are members of the same formal alliance. In this case, distance is usually conceptualised in terms of the organisational structure. This is intended to account for war spreading to geographically distant but organisationally proximate states, such as the Triple Entente alliance between France, Great Britain and Russia that helped to spread World War I.

Beyond geographic contiguity and alliance structures, political rivalries are other basic diffusion condition that have been relevant to the spread of large international wars such as World War I (Radil et al., 2013). For instance, the development of a naval arms race between Germany and Great Britain in 1890 and 1914 helped to create long-standing political tensions that contributed to Great Britain's entry into the war after Germany invaded Belgium (Kennedy, 1980). These rivalries are usually conditioned by distance and tend to reflect the presence of alliances, as distant states or allied states are usually not political rivals (Diehl and Goertz, 2000). This has led some to argue that alliances are the most important condition for war diffusion to occur as the logic of an alliance is to commit several states to fight in the event that another other is threatened (Vasquez and Rundlett, 2016). In this way, rivalries and contiguity matter but often only as a secondary condition to the presence of an alliance structure. In the international system therefore, war diffusion among states is assumed to first occur hierarchically, then contagiously.

Geography and civil war

The literature on civil wars is largely distinct from that of interstate war. The two phenomena are quite different as internal conflicts are generally very asymmetrical relationships in which the rebels tend to be weak challengers to the state. However, the dual concerns for geography as an influence on and a source of conflict in the studies of civil war are similar to those of the interstate war literature. Though plenty of studies of civil war are ageographic, many also consider geography implicitly through a concern for localised political or economic issues and/or an emphasis on the political relations between the central governments and its peripheries. Further, the literature remains focused on the effect of explicitly geographic features such as terrain, roads, natural resources, and demographics, and the realisation and spread of conflict.

The civil war literature reinforces that armed uprisings by an organised opposition group against a state government are shaped by three primary overlapping factors: motivation, opportunity, and identity (Collier and Sambanis, 2005). Motivation typically refers to the gaps between perceived economic outcomes for a group and their expectations (the so-called "relative deprivation" theory of civil war). Opportunity refers to the various means by which a group can mount a challenge to a government. Identity refers to the common bonds that allows individuals to identify as part of a larger group. Geographically speaking, these factors are seen to vary regionally within the interstate system as well as within the space of an individual state.

All three factors have also been interpreted geographically. For example, relative deprivation arguments imply that people in places that are relatively poor or marginalised by the government should be more likely to support and join a rebel group, leading to a concern for mapping locations of high poverty (Hegre et al., 2009). The political discourse of the MNLA in Mali, for example, frequently mentions the deprivation of the region of Kidal to justify its political movement and studies of numerous cases have confirmed that intraregional inequalities were positively associated with civil wars (e.g., Østby et al., 2009). While various forms of opportunity exist, the literature has emphasised how rebellions are financed, including the extortion of valuable natural resources, diaspora funding networks, and support from foreign governments (Le Billon, 2005). More commonly, opportunity has emphasised the advantages of rough terrain, which might offer vital protection from government forces (Hendrix, 2011). The proximity to porous international borders can also provide groups with safe havens and facilitate trade and smuggling (Goodhand, 2008). The distance from centres of political power, such as capitals and military bases (Cederman et al., 2009; Buhaug, 2010) is another factor that shapes conflict probability, as well as how road networks can facilitate or limit the mobility of rebel groups and state forces in remote regions (Zhukov, 2012). Lastly, the distribution of ethnic groups or other social identities, such as religious affiliation, is used as a proxy for the potential for either separatist or revolutionary movements (Denny and Walter, 2014).

How civil wars spread or diffuse geographically within a state is less documented. For example, Buhaug and Gates (2002) argue that the goals of a non-state group are central to understanding the overall geography of conflict within a state. They find that separatist groups tend to fight further from the capital than revolutionary groups do, as capitals are both symbolic and practical sites of state power. Despite this potential variability, the literature largely assumes that non-state violence first builds in the rural 'hinterlands' of a state or in places where the coercive capacity of the state is too weak to forestall or interdict rebellion (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Collier et al., 2009). This reinforces much of the already discussed concern for features of physical geography that enable guerrilla warfare against superior forces, and the presence of resources that can fuel conflict against the state, and of transportation networks that can facilitate movement of both insurgents and state forces.

Because of these concerns, the past decade has yielded a greater emphasis on developing geographically-referenced data on the types of factors mentioned above and led to the use of geographic information systems and spatial statistical analysis (Walther and Miles, 2018). While past analyses of civil wars were conceptually

limited by state-centric approaches and a general lack of reliable data at the subnational level, contemporary studies often build on satellite and disaggregated or localised data to investigate the onset and diffusion of political violence across time and space (Zammit-Mangion et al., 2013).

Accordingly, a burgeoning strand of the literature addresses how localised geographical features affect the likelihood of civil war onset (Buhaug and Rød, 2006; Raleigh and Hegre, 2009) and the duration of conflict (Buhaug et al., 2009). Local political and economic predictors now include factors as diverse as the nature of government, ethnic divisions, poverty, income, inequality, or number and morale of troops. Local determinants of conflict also include environmental factors such as rainfall and temperature variability, visibility and windy conditions, frequency of droughts, and endowment of natural resources (Carter and Veale, 2013). Terrorism studies have developed a similar interest for the geographic determinants of violence (Braithwaite and Li, 2007). Variables such as mountainous terrain, forest coverage, distance to international borders and capital cities, level of civil conflict, economic activity, and population density are increasingly integrated in statistical models to try to explain and predict episodes of organised violence around the world (Marineau et al., 2018).

The Violence Early-Warning System (ViEWS) project launched by Uppsala University is representative of this approach which presumes that geographical, social, economic and political factors lead certain groups or individual to resort to organised violence (Hegre et al., 2019). This approach argues that the milieu or setting of political violence is important to the agency of the participants for two reasons. First, the resources for action vary geographically and, second, such contextual influences can always be observed and measured in the sites in which agency occurs. The typical approach is to develop 'global' models that assume the independence of sites from each other (Radil, 2019). Studies typically measure numerous variables about the specific settings in question as to capture contextual effects and assume that relationships between context and action are stationary across a geographic region.

An alternative tradition in political geography seeks to understand contextual influences as more than the sum of site-specific features. This approach recognises multiple scales of potential influences. In an armed conflict, rebel groups can exploit local grievances, develop a national agenda, operate regionally, and exploit global narratives and resources simultaneously. The jihadist group Boko Haram, for example, is fuelled by local conflicts around natural resources in the Lake Chad region, fights the Nigerian state, attacks civilians and security forces in the neighbouring countries, and relies on a formal allegiance with a global jihadist organisation such as IS (Thurston, 2018). Such effects are made manifest in places without being the result of or even directly observable at the sites of political acts.

When modelling is associated with this tradition, it yields models that assume the interdependence of geographical locations to each other (Franzese et al., 2016). This approach theorises that context cannot be reduced to a series of independent site-measured variables, and the models allow for the relationships between context and action in one location to depend on those of other locations. For example, both the Great Lakes region of East Africa (Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda) and West Africa (Guinea, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone) have seen numerous civil wars that cannot be understood separately from each other (O'Loughlin and Raleigh, 2008). This highlights the need to account for spatial interdependence in analyses of civil conflict.

HOW SPACE SHAPES POLITICAL ACTORS

The interest for the geography of political violence has experienced a strong growth after 9/11 and the emergence of organisations such as Al-Qaeda or the IS whose space of action and rhetoric contrasts with the local agenda of most terrorist organisations inspired by religion.

One should note, however, that terrorism is not the only manifestation of political violence that has an explicit geographical dimension: rebels, warlords and militias must get funding, plan attacks, acquire weapons, recruit new members and escape from government forces, all activities that are intrinsically spatial. The geography of these activities can be studied through several spatial concepts, such as place, distance, identity, borders, territory and scale.

Place

The location of actors within a conflict is often the easiest or the only information that can be used to understand their spatial patterns. Actor location can always be measured in absolute terms through geographical co-ordinate pairs and contextualised by the attributes of the places with which they are associated. The city of Agadez, for example, is both a place located at 16°97′ North of latitude and 7°98′ East of longitude and a Nigerien city of 119 500 people, located at the crossroads of trade and migration routes that connect the Mediterranean Sea with the Sahel.

In conflict analysis, the location of actors can either refer to the actual place where they lived, were educated, met other actors, or, more often, to the place where an attack was conducted. In one of the first studies conducted on the 9/11 attacks, for examples, Krebs (2002) listed a number of places where the Al-Qaeda hijackers of the planes that crashed in New York City, Virginia and Pennsylvania attended college, took flight classes and stayed together. Being together at a same location was crucial to acquire technical skills and develop social ties in preparation for the attacks. In another study, Medina and Hepner (2008) reconstruct the spatio-social network of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani member of Al-Qaeda who studied at MIT in Boston and travelled extensively between the United States, Pakistan, Afghanistan and West Africa.

Locations are increasing used to analyse social media responses to violent political events in near real time. For example, Carley et al. (2013) used network and geographic tools to visualise the location of Tweeter users that commented on the United States Special Mission in Benghazi, Libya which was attacked on 11-12 September 2012. When exact locations are not available or usable, it is sometimes necessary to aggregate data by districts or regions. For example, Medina et al. (2011) have studied the space-time patterns of insurgent attacks in Iraq from 2004-09 using administrative districts instead of actual geographical co-ordinates.

Distance

Assuming the location of any two actors is not identical, several forms of distance can be measured between actors in conflict. The most widely used metric is Euclidian distance, which measures the straight-line distance between two locations. The underlying assumption is that actors located close to each other will have a higher density of social interactions than actors located far away.

Euclidian distance is not a sufficient condition to explain the formation of social networks, however, and must be supplemented with other forms of proximity, such as cognitive, social, institutional and organisational proximity that also increase network density (Boschma, 2005). In addition to being close to each other, people and organisations also thrive because they share the same expertise, have established relationships of trust, and belong to similar institutional settings. This information can help assess the possible formation of new interactions between actors over time. In a general sense, actors that are close in geographic space may be more likely to form relations but those that are close on multiple social dimensions may also heighten that potential for interaction.

The distance between actors in conflict shows whether organisations tend to operate at the local, national or international level. Extant research suggests that most violent organisations still rely on proximity ties to establish alliances or conduct attacks, despite the availability of new information technologies. In the Islamist terrorist network studied by Medina and Hepner (2011), for example, the density of ties between members of the network rapidly declines with geographic distance. This suggests that distance exerts a considerable constraint on connectivity and that most connections rely on face-to-face

Box 2.2
Targeting the near or far enemy?

When the Algerian civil war started in 1992, Islamist groups initially targeted state security personnel but, as the violence intensified in the 1990s, the definition of the enemy changed rapidly and virtually everyone became a target (Le Sueur, 2010). The strategy of unchecked violence against Muslim civilians adopted by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) led to the creation of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in 1998 under the leadership of Hassan Hattab.

GSPC was divided between several factions over the use of indiscriminate violence, civilian victims and international expansion. While Hattab wanted to target state representatives and develop a national agenda, other leaders wanted to expand the fight to the far enemy, particularly France, as Al-Qaeda recommended. Hattab was eventually replaced by Nabil Sahrawi in 2003 and joined the national reconciliation program of President Bouteflika in 2005. Al-Qaeda played an important role in reorienting the nationalist orientation of local Islamist groups in Africa, including the GSPC, who changed names in 2007, under the leadership of Abdelmalek Droukdel.

In Afghanistan, the war initially opposed the Mujahidin to their 'near enemy' represented by the Soviet army and the Soviet-backed regime from 1979 to 1989. The Taliban that emerged in the 1990s were also primarily interested in conquering power within Afghanistan from the Mujahidin warlords. The focus of the war shifted towards the 'far enemy' represented by the United States when Taliban-controlled Afghanistan became a safe haven for Al-Qaeda in the mid-1990s.

communications and close linkages. As such, violent organisations tend to mirror other social groups, for which new technologies essentially facilitate the exchange of codified information (Klausen, 2015).

The fact that violent organisations tend to form tightly-knit clusters does not mean, however, that all targets are local. Terrorist organisations in particular must choose whether they want to focus their attacks against local states, which they perceive as corrupted and un-Islamic, or Western countries that support local regimes militarily or politically, such as France and the United States (Box 2.2). Conflict with the 'near enemy' is often at odds with more global objectives, which creates internal tensions in terrorist groups and leads to splits and defections (Ouellet et al., 2014). In the 1990s, for example, Al-Qaeda was torn between globalists such as Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri who argued that the United States and its allies were the primary obstacle to the establishment of a worldwide Islamist movement, and localists who wanted to topple the regimes that maintained Islamic societies under secular rules (Sageman, 2004). These tensions were never fully resolved and Al-Qaeda has adopted a structure made of a central command and numerous local or regional franchises, such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

In North and West Africa, groups that focused on fighting local regimes such as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)/AQIM (Algeria) and Boko Haram (Nigeria) have recently embraced a more global approach promoted by Al-Qaeda and the IS. However, the vast majority of their attacks still occur within the country where they operated historically. Since Boko Haram became violent in 2009, more than 70% of its attacks and 80% of its victims have been reported in Nigeria (Matfess, 2019).

The choice of a far or near enemy only partially explains why certain extremist organisations internationalise. Organisations that decide to target the far enemy do not necessarily have to carry out attacks far away from their home countries. They can choose to target individuals or interests locally, by taking hostages or attacking bars, restaurants and hotels frequented by foreigners. Extremist groups can also internationalise without having to change their definition of the enemy, especially when they are under pressure from government

Table 2.2
Attacks and impact on enemies

	Near enemy attacks	Far enemy attacks
Intended near impacts	Attacks on local targets for change in local politics. Example: attack on churches and government facilities in Northern Burkina Faso by Ansaroul Islam in 2019.	Attacks on foreign targets for change in local politics. Example: abduction of 32 European tourists in Southern Algeria by GSPC in 2003.
Intended far impacts	Attacks on local targets for change in international politics. Example: attack of the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako by AQIM and Al-Mourabitoun in 2015.	Attacks on foreign targets for change in international politics. Example: 9/11 attacks in the United States by Al-Qaeda in 2001.

Source: Adapted from Medina and Hepner 2013.

agencies. The increasing internationalisation of AQIM towards the Sahara and the Sahel in the first decade of the 2000s, for example, is explained by the counter-terrorist operations conducted against the group by the Algerian state and a general lack of popular support for violent attacks in Algeria (Werenfels, 2015).

While armed groups may direct their propaganda against the far enemy, their immediate attacks may be much more limited geographically. It is therefore crucial to distinguish between the military reach of a violent organisation and its narrative, as in Table 2.2, which presents the scale and the intended impact of violent attacks. It shows that the impact of the attacks conducted on the far or near enemies of terrorist organisations can be felt locally or globally. Near-enemy attacks and intended near impacts characterise the vast majority of the violent organisations in North and West Africa, as when Islamist militants of Ansaroul Islam kill state representatives and Christian populations in the Sahel (top left cell of the table). Such violent organisations have neither developed a global agenda, nor the ability to conduct military operations far from their homeland. Near-enemy attacks can also be conducted in order to bring about change in foreign or global politics (bottom left cell of the table), as when terrorist groups attack facilities owned or operated by Westerners, such as the Radisson Blu Hotel attack in Ouagadougou in 2015 by AQIM and Al Mourabitoun.

Militants can also choose near-enemy targets to induce change in local politics (top right column, Table 2.2). In the early 2000s, for example, GSPC kidnapped more than 30 European tourists in the Sahara, in order to bring resources to a movement that was essentially targeting the Algerian government. This strategy proved to be both very lucrative and effective: in less than a decade, northern Mali, western Niger and eastern Mauritania have almost completely emptied their European populations, while tourism in the Sahel and the Sahara has almost completely disappeared. Finally, far-enemy attacks and intendent far impacts (bottom right column) intend to strike at the heart of Western countries while maximising the global audience. The most emblematic example of such attacks is the 9/11 attacks against the United States. While spectacular, these attacks are numerically rare.

Identity

Each actor in a conflict develops and maintains affective relationships, identities, and attachments to the places in which they are primarily located. There is little doubt that contemporary conflict in Africa are fought around issues related to group identity. Mary Kaldor (2012: 79) and others have forged the term "identity politics" to describe these "movements which mobilise around ethnic, racial or religious identity for the purpose of claiming state power". Among the factors that have promoted identity politics are the collapse of authoritarian states after the

Cold War, the loss of legitimacy of post-colonial states, and the disillusion with secular nationalist post-colonial regimes. Group identity is then a powerful driver of conflict for rebel groups fighting for a better distribution of national resource, greater autonomy, or independence.

The political mobilisation of group identity can be understood geographically as the identity of rebel groups are embedded into specific contexts that always have a spatial dimension. Therefore, the space associated with a group's context will have implications for identity politics. For example, the association of a group identity with a space involves mobilising the socially constructed idea of a community and its members as being tied to a "homeland" (Anderson, 2006). Even when ill-defined geographically or historically, these spaces have high political value. Groups can claim that they represent these spaces and their associated populations politically and thus use space to derive a sense of legitimacy for the use of violence.

Consider the various Tuareg rebel movements in Mali that explicitly refer to Azawad, a Tuareg term that derives from Azawagh and originally designated a vast and arid region covering northwestern Niger, northeastern Mali and southern Algeria. Azawad is now used to describe the northern part of Mali (the regions of Gao, Menaka, Timbuktu, Taoudeni, Kidal and a part of Mopti), which is populated mainly by Songhai, Fulani, Tuareg and Arab peoples. The idea of a distinct Azawad space that has been underserved by the Malian state was a key claim advanced by Tuareg rebels to justify the most recent war against the state (Zounmenou, 2013).

Geographical space also matters to the creation and reproduction of group identity for practical reasons. Charles Tilly (2015) and others have posited that interpersonal relations are the basic elements of larger social processes, which compound and accumulate into durable social ties. These durable ties are the basis for larger group identities as the "feelings of belonging to imagined communities are sustained by the actual belonging to personal communities of solidarity in which the [group] order takes advantage and assumes ownership of the solidarity produced" (de Federico de la Rúa, 2007: 692). Space has obvious implications for interpersonal networks and nearness in geographic space has long been identified as having a key role in the development of such relations (Bloom, 1990).

Borders

A common aspect of contemporary conflicts is that they often develop across international boundaries (Salehyan, 2009). This is particularly true in Africa, where transnational conflicts involving non-state actors have become much more frequent than inter-state wars since the end of the Cold War (Gow et al., 2013). This evolution tends to blurs the distinction between domestic and international affairs.

African borders have become synonymous with political disorders for many reasons that involve both state and non-state actors (Walther and Miles, 2018). In some cases, military forces cross into neighbouring states to exercise their right of hot pursuit, eliminate rebel bases and "restore order" (Reno, 2011). In 2010 for example, Mauritania conducted a series of raids against AQIM in northern Mali in an attempt to reduce its ability to conduct attacks and take hostages in the region (Harmon, 2014). Government forces also come to the aid of neighbouring allies threated by rebellions, as when Guinean troops occupied the town of Yenga in 2011 to help Sierra Leone's army fight the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebellion founded by Sierra Leoneans in Liberia.

Conflicts also spread across borders when government forces and their militias seek to destabilise neighbouring regimes or intervene in refugee camps that allegedly harbor rebels. In the Great Lakes region, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded Rwanda and put an end to the genocide against Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994. In 1996, Rwanda and its allies invaded Zaire to replace President Mobutu Sésé Séko who provided support to Hutu extremists in Eastern Zaire, setting in motion the First Congo War. The Second Congo War that broke out in 1998 started when rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda invaded the newly renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to eliminate Hutu incursions across the western borders and create a buffer zone that would protect the Tutsis of Kivu (Prunier, 2009).

African conflicts also spill across borders when states launch co-ordinated military actions to address threats that cannot be eliminated nationally. Joint military initiatives allow the often small and underequipped military forces of many African countries to pool personnel and materiel and share intelligence on the spatial patterns of violent organisations. For example, Mauritania and Mali undertook a series of joint counter-terrorism operations aimed at AQIM military bases in the Wagadu forest in north-western Mali in 2011. More recently, Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon have expanded the mandate of their Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to counter-terrorism operations in order to tackle the threat posed by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region. In 2015, Niger and Chad launched a joint offensive across the border that forced Boko Haram back into rural areas (Campbell and Page, 2018). Co-ordinated air strikes by Chadian and Nigerian forces also helped the four countries regain lost territory in Borno the same year (Kendhammer and McCain, 2018). Yet, co-ordination has remained poor due to rivalries between Nigeria and its neighbours and Nigeria's military weakness faced with a highly motivated enemy (Thurston, 2019).

Conflicts also regionalise because armed groups relocate to other countries under the pressure of counter-insurgency initiatives. The recent history of AQIM provides a case in point. Known until 2007 as GSPC, itself a splinter group of GIA, AQIM was expelled by Algerian forces from its stronghold in Kabylia towards the Sahel and Sahara in the mid-2000s. In Northern Mali, AQIM was tolerated for many years by the Malian government and developed a network of alliances with Tuareg and Arab tribes that allowed the group to carry out numerous operations across the region until the early 2010s, as can clearly be seen on Map 2.1 (Walther and Christopoulos, 2015). After the French intervention of 2013, some AQIM members fled to Libya where the chaos that followed the collapse of the regime of Colonel Gaddafi provided a fertile ground for jihadist organisations. Boko Haram has experienceda similar evolution in recent years. While the group had focused its attacks on northeastern Nigeria until 2014, increasing pressure from government forces led Boko Haram to conduct an increasing number of attacks in neighbouring Chad, Cameroon and Niger. In Central Africa, the LRA followed the same trend. Historically based in northern Uganda, the group started to extend its attacks to the DRC and the Central African Republic in the mid-2000s following a series of inconclusive joint military offensives undertaken by neighbouring countries (Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010).

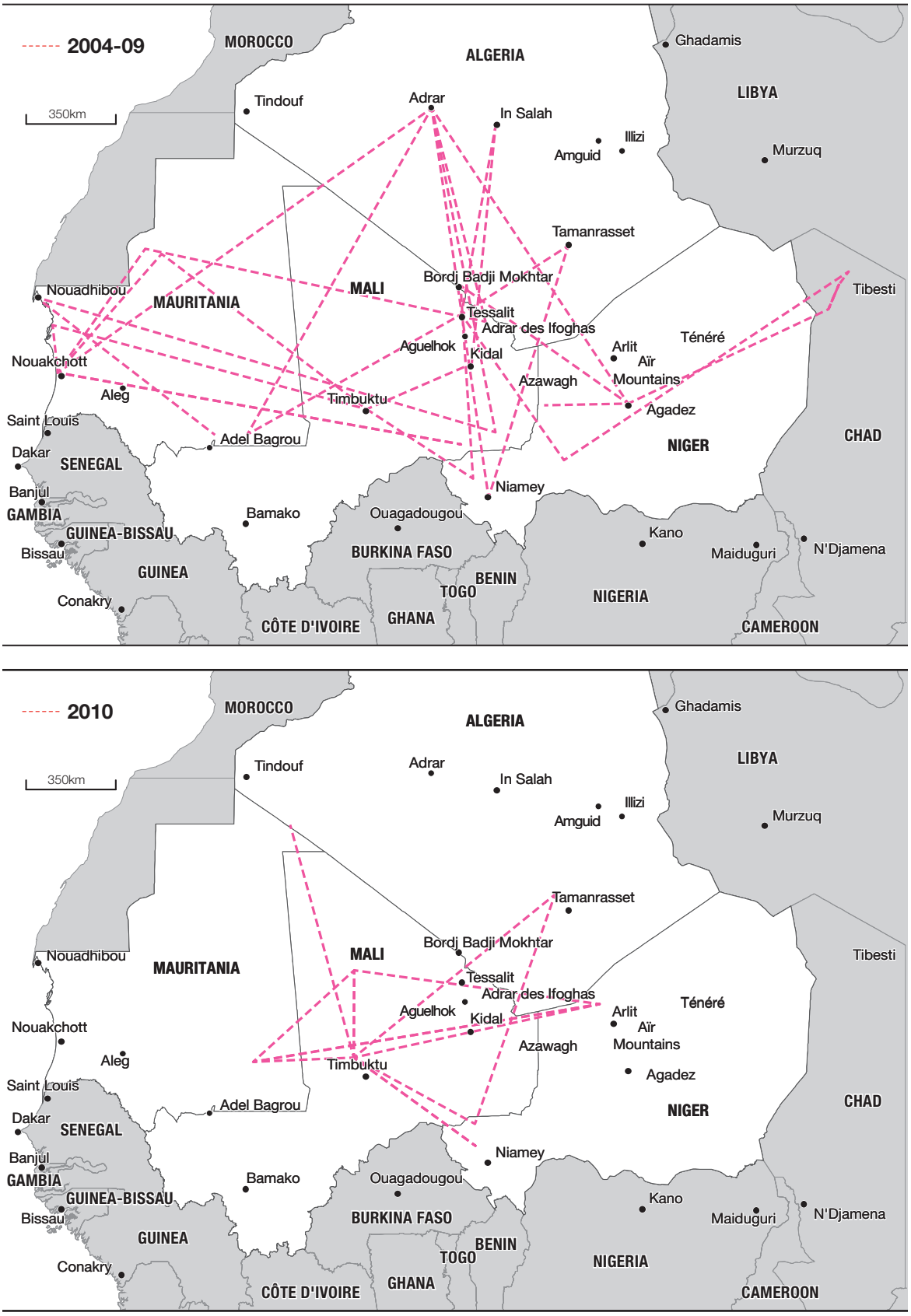
The porosity of many African borders facilitates the circulation of fighters, hostages and weapons and amplifies the geographic spread of such conflicts. Across the region, violent organisations use border regions as bases from which military operations can be conducted and new recruits can be found. The offensive conducted by Jihadist groups and the MNLA against the Malian army in 2012, for example, was fuelled with Tuareg fighters who had fled Libya with light arms, ammunitions and explosives from Gaddafi's extensive stockpile. The rebellions that ravaged the western part of the Gulf of Guinea during the 1990s also used border regions extensively.

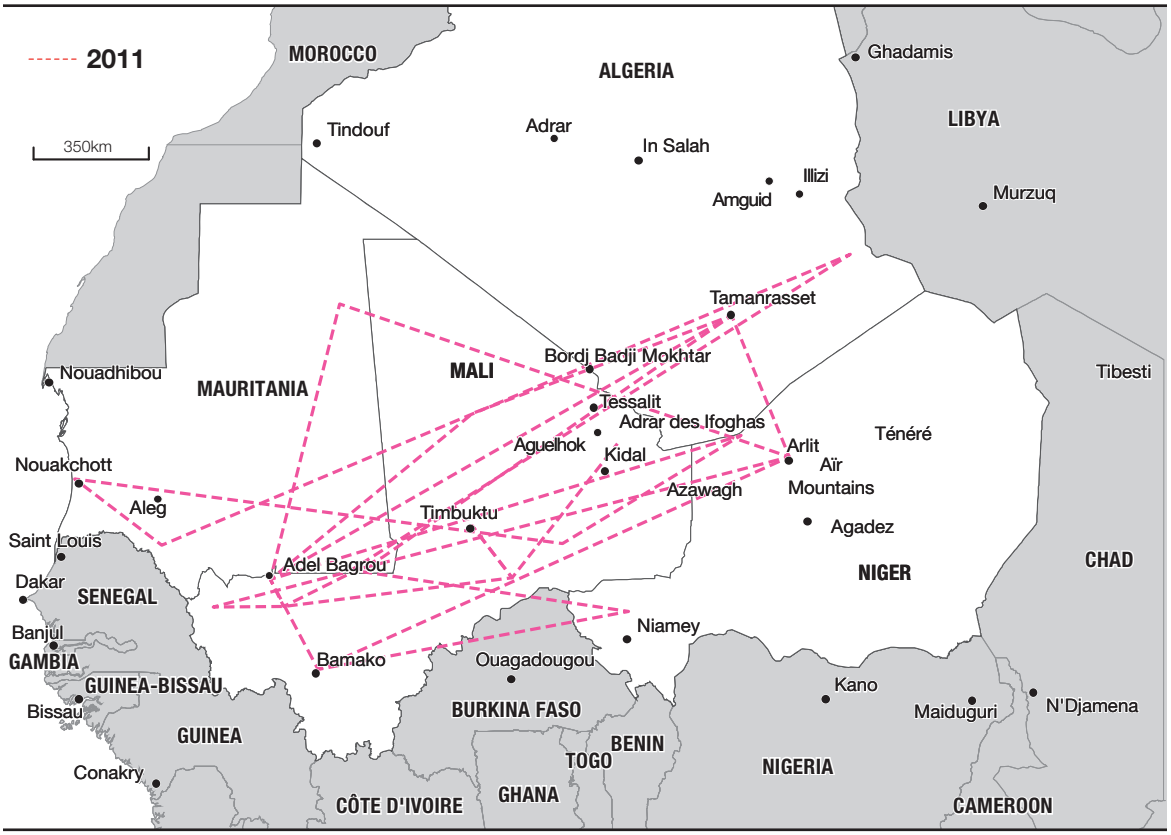
The cross-border nature of African conflicts has been seen either as a consequence of state failure or as a survival strategy. The first approach argues that states who have lost their monopoly of the legitimate use of violence tend to attract violent organisations that are either expelled from other countries or in search of a more secure haven. The idea that failed states allow violent organisations to spread in ungoverned areas and create sanctuaries has grown in popularity after the 9/11 attacks and remains widely popular (Gray and LaTour, 2010). Closely related to the previous one, the second approach argues that violent organisation defeated in their home country have no other choice but to relocate across borders (D'Amato, 2018).

These approaches consider that the development of violent organisation is a result of either state failure or state policy: states are too weak to control their territory or too strong to tolerate terrorist organisations within their boundaries. More recent studies suggest that these approaches are complimentary. In Pakistan, for example, terrorist groups expand when there is a lack of government will and government capability (Arsenault and Bacon,

Map 2.1

Violent events related to Al-Qaeda-affiliated organisations, 2004-11





Notes: Each node indicates the location of an attack. The dotted lines connect violent events committed by groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda chronologically. They do not imply actual movements but a succession of historical events in the region.

Source: Walther et al. 2018.

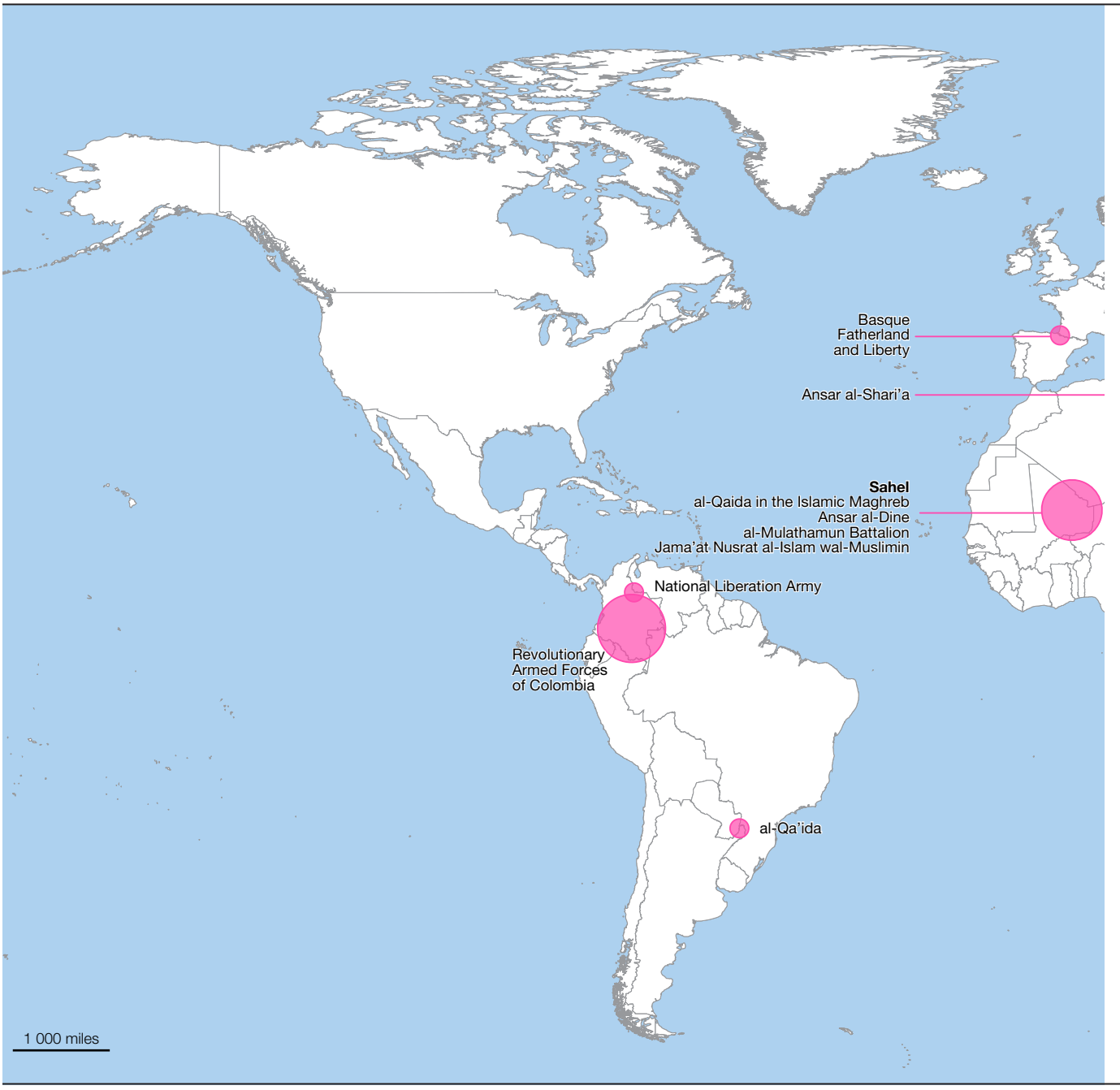
2015). In West Africa, too, Mauritania and Chad, combine a strong will with a military capacity to fight transnational groups and have experienced fewer attacks than Mali or Niger (Walther et al., 2018).

Many border regions serve as refuge for violent organisations around the world. Of the 68 terrorist groups designated by the US Department of State in June 2019, 38 used a safe haven near a border area for their military operations (Map 2.2). Nearly 40% of them are located on the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Indian border, which includes Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan's North Waziristan, Baluchistan, and Indian-administered Kashmir. This border region serves as a refuge for violent organisations supported by Pakistan since at least the Second Afghan Civil War (1979-89) against the Soviets. The Lebanon-Syria border, Syria-Iraq borderlands, Southern Lebanon, and Kurdistan are home to ten foreign terrorist organisations. In the mid-2010s, for example, Syrian opposition forces used the Sunni-dominated areas as safe havens, whereas Hezbollah used Shia-dominated areas to launch attacks or enter Syria. In the Sahel, seven foreign terrorist organisations operate in border regions, from Central Mali in the west to the Lake Chad Basin in the east.

The failed-states approach upon which the safe haven concept is built, has been increasingly criticised since the late 2010s for a number of reasons. First, the weakness of states is not a sufficient explanation for the presence of violent organisations. As Pakistan's FATA clearly shows, terrorist organisations can also be financially and politically supported by states (Newman, 2007). Second, there is no such thing as a "power vacuum" in which violent organisations could develop without competing with

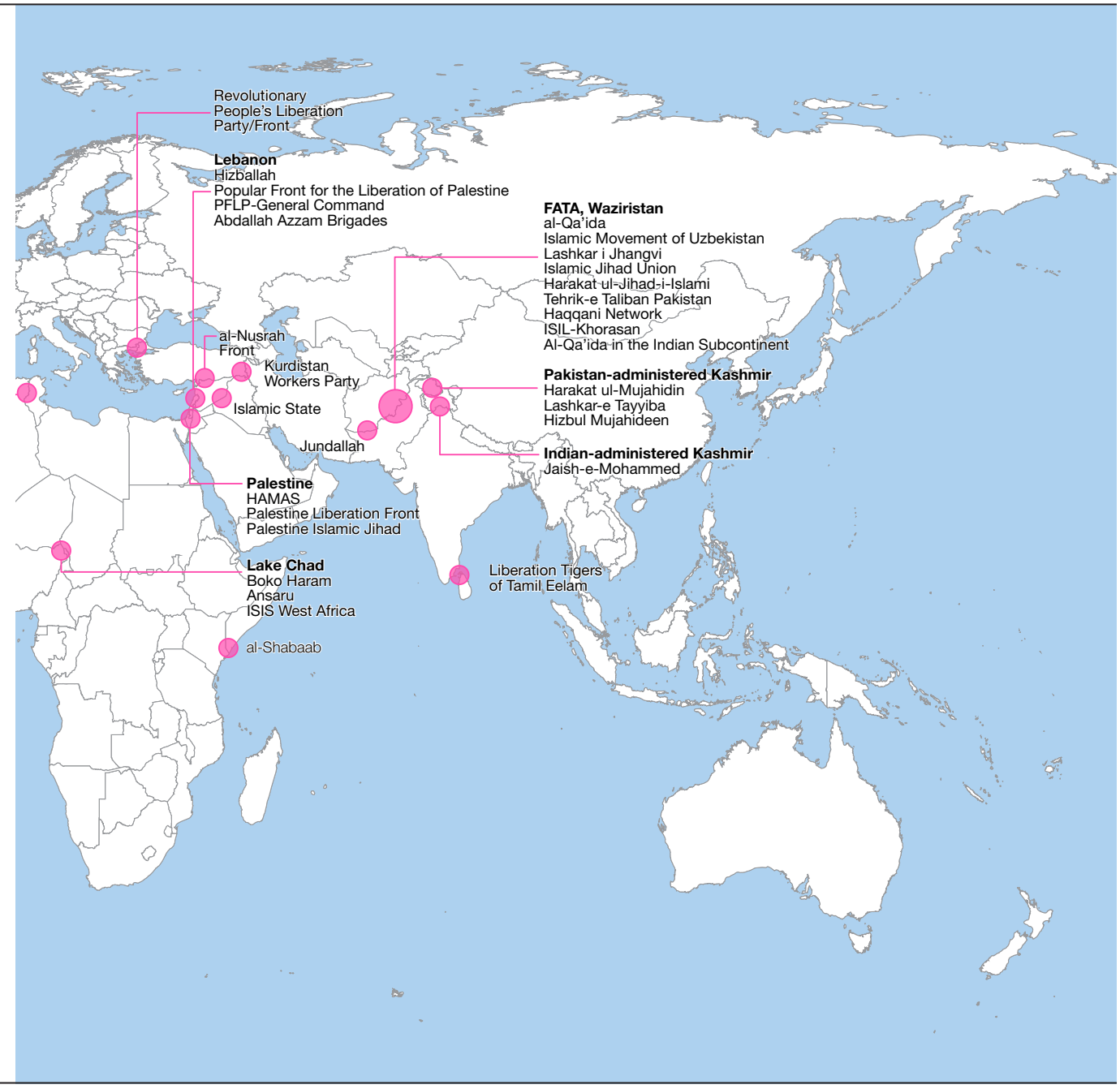
Map 2.2

Foreign terrorist organisations operating in border sanctuaries



Note: Red circles indicate the location of border regions, not the area of operation of each organisation. Only the foreign terrorist organisations designated by the United States in June 2019 are included. Global organisations such as Al-Qaeda are represented only in key border sanctuaries, not globally. The names and spelling used for the terrorist organisations in this map follow those used by the US Department of State.

Sources: US Department of State 2019, Arsenault and Bacon 2015. Border sanctuaries identified by Walther and Leuprecht 2015 and the authors.


Revolutionary
People's Liberation
Party/Front
Lebanon
Hizballah
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-General Command
Abdallah Azzam Brigades
FATA, Waziristan
al-Qa'ida
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
Lashkar i Jhangvi
Islamic Jihad Union
Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami
Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
Haqqani Network
ISIL-Khorasan
Al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent
al-Nusrah
Front
Kurdistan
Workers Party
Islamic State
Pakistan-administered Kashmir
Harakat ul-Mujahidin
Lashkar-e Tayyiba
Hizbul Mujahideen
Jundallah
Indian-administered Kashmir
Jaish-e-Mohammed
Palestine
HAMAS
Palestine Liberation Front
Palestine Islamic Jihad
Lake Chad
Boko Haram
Ansaru
ISIS West Africa
Liberation Tigers
of Tamil Eelam
al-Shabaab

alternative forms of governance (Campana and Ducol, 2011). Even in regions such as northern Mali or Nigeria where the central state is unable to exert its functions, other forms of power based on customary or civil law can be quite resilient.

Englebert (2009) has argued that the objective of African rebel movements is not to challenge the integrity of the state — however weak it is — but to preserve it to reap some of its benefits. This approach explains why African rebel groups rarely seek to replace the state and its institutions by providing public services. Instead, their struggle against the state is motivated by a search for the benefits of sovereignty, which can then be used to control and extract resources from their own population. In a similar vein, Dowd and Raleigh (2013) have argued that understanding the local drivers of conflict helps challenge narratives on ungoverned spaces, and how political elites use these narratives to deflect attention away from poor governance. In countries where ethnicity drives the allocation of national resources, dissident groups excluded from power have few alternatives but to label themselves as "Islamists".

The geographic expansion of AQIM and other groups should not obscure the fact that transnational terrorism is a costly, risky and uncertain business, even where borders are porous (Skillicorn et al., 2018). Organisations that operate regionally must endure physical costs due to the necessity of co-ordinating movements across long distances, social costs related to the necessity of establishing relationships with other insurgents and local populations, and strategic costs due to state reactions to external threats (D'Amato, 2018). In the Sahel, AQIM has taken years to learn how to overcome long distances, cross numerous borders and build support with local populations (Walther et al., 2018). Boko Haram has followed a similar path: the jihadist movement has first expanded geographically within Nigeria before establishing military bases in neighbouring countries (Dowd, 2018). During its geographical expansion around Lake Chad, Boko Haram also established alliances with local Fulani herders whose cattle is used for cross-border smuggling and, later, with the Buduma fishermen who control the lake (Seignobos, 2018).

Territory

Territory generally refers to a bounded politico-institutional space linked to systems of governance that try to regulate and control people and their activities within a defined geographical region (Antonsich, 2009). A key debate has been whether terrorist groups tend to behave in state-like ways or tend to ignore or eschew territorial control (Elden, 2009; Medina and Hepner, 2013). This concern has emphasised the strategic dimensions of territory, particularly the element of control over space. Hoffman (2017), for instance, observed that while terrorist groups generally do not attempt to hold territory there were numerous examples of terror organisations that did try to exert control over territory and an associated population. Similarly, Asal and Rethemeyer (2008) also argued that holding territory was important for terrorist organisations not least because territorial control is useful in terms of increasing the groups' operational capabilities and resources. This understanding of territory is reflected in Kydd and Walter's (2006) recommendation that states should always seek to deny groups territorial control.

These interpretations of territory reflect an understanding of territory as a kind of resource that groups can use to pursue their aims. However, others have pointed out that this is not the only connection between territory and terror (Castan Pinos and Radil, 2018). As territory is intertwined with the development of political identity, it evokes a special commitment from groups, including a willingness to use extreme acts of violence in its defence (Pape, 2006). Defending territory, or in many cases, altering the territorial status quo can then become an essential aim or ambition of a terrorist group. The nationalist or separatist aspiration was the main driving force for many groups, including Corsican, Basque and Irish. In such "nationalist" cases, territorial control appears more as an aspiration — of regaining control of the perceived homeland — rather than as a strategic concern.

Territory then matters for terrorism for at least two reasons, a strategic one and a more ideological one. This has been described as the difference between "effective control" and "sovereign claims" over certain territory

(Castan Pinos and Radil, 2018). Contrasting these differences can highlight a great deal of variability over how and why territory matters for such groups. For instance, the geography of many groups is often represented as limited to a series of 'sanctuaries' or 'terrorist bases' (Walther and Retaillé, 2015). However, the reality is more complex. While some organisations maintain a well-delimited turf where they enjoy massive popular support (Taliban in Afghanistan, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland), others do not control any territory on an exclusive basis and can hardly be assigned to a particular region (AQIM). Further, the setting of a group can alter its territorial behavior. The inability to garrison a sparsely populated region such as the Sahara makes any attempt at holding territory futile. Violent organisations in the region then seek to control the movement of people and (often illicit) goods by restricting access to cities, markets, watering places and roads (Bøås, 2015).

Scale

Geographical scale is a contested concept but most conventionally refers to the geographic scope or reach of social processes, authority, or jurisdictions. These processes may only involve small distances (generally referred to as the local), or vast distances (the global), distances in between, or often at multiple scales simultaneously. Scales and the processes behind them also often result in territorially-defined regions of different areal extents, such as states, provinces, counties, municipalities, or neighbourhoods. Connected to this interpretation is the notion of boundaries and borders that are associated with such delineated spaces and the potential for such features to affect interaction.

Political violence is rarely limited to one scale in particular. Rather, it feeds on local disputes, national grievances, expresses itself through global channels and mobilises global resources. A group such as Boko Haram, for example, exploits local fish, pastoral, and agricultural resources in the Lake Chad Basin, directs most of its attacks within its country of origin, and has established bases regionally. The group's narrative also transcends several scales: Boko Haram exploits the historical narrative of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, which reigned over the Lake Chad Basin and its Saharan extension for around 1 000 years, to contend that its political claims follow a historical continuity interrupted by colonial conquest (Barkindo, 2016). By situating its roots in local history, the group can justify its policy of political renewal and its rejection of institutional structures tied to colonisation, including the Federal Republic of Nigeria. At the same time, Boko Haram exploits the pan-Islamist vision of a unified Muslim world, whose boundaries transcend national borders to embrace all believers. Similarly, AQIM is a "glocal" organisation that is simultaneously deeply rooted into its local context in Algeria and capable of extracting global resources through the kidnapping of European hostages (Marret, 2008; Werenfels, 2015).

Recent research shows that domestic issues rather than narratives of global Islamic terrorism drive violent extremism in the region (Steinberg and Weber, 2015). Instead of opposing the local and the global, it is more appropriate to speak of a continuum. "Groups such as Ansar Dine and others are seeking a position that locates them within a strategically significant global Islamist discourse" explain Dowd and Raleigh (2013: 6). Simultaneously, however, these groups "seek to distance themselves from the pariah status of openly Al-Qaeda–affiliated groups in order to allow for potential engagement at the national level". Local embeddedness provides access to new recruits and intelligence, allow weak insurgent groups to avoid conflict with security forces, and contributes to increases legitimacy. Global connections provide international recognition, logistical resource sharing, and a narrative that goes beyond local, tribal, ethnic divisions.

One of the ways in which local movements try to build a global narrative and attract international recognition is by pledging allegiances to global Jihadi movements.

In 2007, GSPC pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda to become AQIM under the leadership of Abdelmalek Droukdel. In 2015, Al Mourabitoun pledged allegiance to the IS to become the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) under the leadership of Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi (Warner, 2017).

Boko Haram received financial support and some training from AQIM in 2010 (Thurston, 2018). In March 2015, a faction of Boko Haram under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the IS to become Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA). In August 2016, the IS announced that it had appointed Abu-Musab al-Barnawi as leader of ISWA instead of Shekau.

In Libya, the Shura Council of Islamic Youth declared its allegiance to the IS in October 2014 and was formally recognised as IS-Wilayat Barqa (or Cyrenaica Province) (Truitte 2018).

The results of this strategy are mixed. If the allegiance to global Jihadi movements has contributed to strengthening the international recognition of some groups and contributed to bringing in additional resources, it has also been interpreted as a sign of weakness when the pledges intervened at a time when the organisations were successfully countered by African states (Thurston, 2018).

If so many observers emphasise the global dimension of terrorism, it is also because the states in the region tend to present themselves as bulwarks against global Islamist movements. This political strategy is not so different from the domino theory of the 1950s that suggested that political change in one nation would quickly lead to communist takeovers in neighbouring states. Two conferences were organised at the end of 2017 in Paris to avoid that prospect. Chad, for example, raised USD 20 billion dollars for its national development plan. A few weeks later, Niger adopted the same approach and raised USD 23 billion at a "Renaissance Conference". These amounts are out of proportion to the foreign aid received by these countries, which amounted to USD 229 million for Chad and USD 427 million for Niger in 2017 (OECD, 2019). In Nigeria, President Jonathan used the war on terror narrative to leverage international involvement and weapons (Campbell, 2014).

Armed conflicts have developed in sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s due to a combination of political factors that demand more attention to local drivers, national trends and global forces. The spatialisation of conflicts is required to better understand the impact of geographical features, such as places, distance, borders, territory and scale, on conflicts as well as the diffusion of armed struggles across space. In a broad sense, a meaningful body of knowledge on political violence has taken shape over the past few decades. For example, the drivers of political instability, the common sources of grievance and rebellion, and the conduct and decision-making of violent groups have all been well-documented within the Sahel and West Africa. Yet, when thinking about the region as a whole, it appears that a lot is known about the "trees" but relatively little about the "forest". In short, what is known has been gleaned from various case studies of individual groups or struggles within a single state. The literature has also largely relied on old-fashioned binaries, such as the difference between state and non-state actors, that have yielded few clues as to why conflicts emerge, develop and spread across a region. Accordingly, little effort has been made to systematically investigate these issues across the entire region. Without such an effort, a larger understanding of contemporary political violence remains elusive.

A spatial approach provides an important opportunity to build knowledge at a regional scale, particularly when incorporating new geolocated data sources on armed conflict. As described in the next chapter, the tools and techniques of spatial analysis can be leveraged to fill in the gaps identified above while also considering the dynamics of conflicts in both space and time. The study of the spatial dimension of conflicts is still in its relative infancy and much remains to be done to build a comprehensive approach in which space is explicitly considered. This will require two important innovations. First, a new theory of the spatial dimensions of conflict must be proposed to support the development of testable hypotheses. Second, new corresponding methods must be introduced to allow systematic and replicable inquiries at the regional scale.

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Annex 2.A1

Foreign terrorist organisations operating in border sanctuaries, June 2019

Date designated	Name	Main areas of operation	Border sanctuary
8 October 1997	Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)	Spain, France	Spain-France borderlands
8 October 1997	HAMAS	Gaza, West Bank, Israel, Lebanon	Southern Lebanon
8 October 1997	Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM)	Afghanistan, Pakistan	Pakistan-administered Kashmir
8 October 1997	Hezbollah	Lebanon and global	Southern Lebanon
8 October 1997	Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK, aka Kongra-Gel)	Turkey, Iraq, Europe	Turkish-Iraqi Kurdistan
8 October 1997	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)	Sri Lanka, India	Sri Lanka-India
8 October 1997	National Liberation Army (ELN)	Colombia-Venezuela	Colombia-Venezuela borderlands
8 October 1997	Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)	Gaza, West Bank, Israel, Lebanon	Lebanese refugee camps
8 October 1997	Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ)	Gaza, West Bank, Israel, Syria, Lebanon	West Bank, Lebanon
8 October 1997	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)	Syria, Lebanon, Gaza	Lebanon-Syria border
8 October 1997	PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC)	Syria, Lebanon, Gaza	Lebanon-Syria border
8 October 1997	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador	Venezuela, Colombia-Peru-Ecuador borderlands
8 October 1997	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)	Turkey	Turkey, Turkey-Greece borderlands
8 October 1999	Al-Qaeda	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sahara, Sahel, Somalia and worldwide	Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Brazil-Paraguay-Argentina trinational region, Sahara-Sahel
25 September 2000	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan	Pakistan's North Waziristan
26 December 2001	Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM)	Afghanistan, Pakistan, India	Indian-administered Kashmir
26 December 2001	Lashkar-e Tayyiba (LeT)	Afghanistan, Pakistan, India	Pakistan-administered Kashmir
27 March 2002	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	Algeria, Mali, Niger, Mauritania	Algeria-Mali, Niger-Libya borderlands
30 January 2003	Lashkar i Jhangvi (LJ)	Afghanistan, Pakistan	FATA
17 December 2004	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (formerly al-Qaida in Iraq)	Iraq, Syria, Jordan, worldwide	Syria-Iraq borderlands
17 June 2005	Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan	FATA
18 March 2008	Al-Shabaab	Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Yemen	Southern Somalia

Date designated	Name	Main areas of operation	Border sanctuary
6 August 2010	Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI)	Pakistan, Bangladesh, India	Pakistan's South Waziristan
1 September 2010	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	Afghanistan, Pakistan	FATA
4 November 2010	Jundallah	Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan	Baluchistan, Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan
30 May 2012	Abdallah Azzam Brigades (AAB)	Lebanon, Arabian Peninsula	Southern Lebanon
19 September 2012	Haqqani Network (HQN)	Afghanistan, Pakistan	Pakistan's North Waziristan
22 March 2013	Ansar al-Dine (AAD)	Mali, Libya	Algeria-Mali, Libya-Niger borderlands
14 November 2013	Boko Haram	Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger	Lake Chad Basin
14 November 2013	Ansaru	Nigeria	Lake Chad Basin
19 December 2013	Al-Mulathamun Battalion (AMB)	Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger	Algeria-Mali, Libya-Niger borderlands
13 January 2014	Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia	Tunisia, Libya	Tunisia-Libya borderlands
15 May 2014	Al-Nusrah Front	Syria	Syria-Turkey borderlands
14 January 2016	ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K)	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, India	FATA
1 July 2016	Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent	Pakistan, Bangladesh, India	FATA, Afghanistan
17 August 2017	Hizbul Mujahideen (HM)	Pakistan, India	Pakistan-Jammu and Kashmir borderlands
28 February 2018	ISIS-West Africa	Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger	Lake Chad Basin
6 September 2018	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM)	Mali, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Niger	Mali-Burkina Faso borderlands

Note: The names and spelling used for the terrorist organisations in this table follow those used by the US Department of State.

Sources: U.S. Department of State 2019, Arsenault and Bacon 2015. Border sanctuaries identified by Walther and Leuprecht 2015 and the authors.

Chapter 3

Mapping political violence in North and West Africa

Chapter 3 shows that political violence is very unequally distributed in North and West Africa. In order to better understand the geography of conflicts in the region, the chapter develops a new spatial indicator of violence, called the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi), that examines the intensity and concentration of violent events. The indicator highlights which regions experience the most conflicts, how conflicts change geographically over time, and how military interventions affect the geography of conflicts. The analysis of the evolution of political violence is conducted at the regional level (North and West Africa) and through three case studies (Mali and Central Sahel, Lake Chad, Libya). It leverages political event data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED) that catalogues violent extremist incidents in Africa since 1997.

KEY MESSAGES

- **Political violence is very unequally distributed in North and West Africa: the major hotspots are located in Nigeria, Libya, and Central Sahel.**
- **The new Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) measures both the intensity and concentration of conflicts.**
- **The indicator examines which regions experience the most conflicts, how conflicts change geographically over time, and how military interventions affect the geography of conflicts**

HOW TO ASSESS THE GEOGRAPHY OF VIOLENCE

Political violence is very unequally distributed in North and West Africa. While some regions such as the Lake Chad region or the Inner Niger Delta in Mali tend to experience a disproportionate number of attacks, other regions are largely devoid of violent incidents. The location of violent events in the region is also likely to change over time: before the Jihadist insurgencies developed in the 2000s, neither the Lake Chad nor the Inner Delta were known as hotspots of violence in West Africa. Understanding why, how and when a region becomes a hotspot of violence is crucial to assess the evolution of conflicts in the region.

The objective of this work is to map this changing geography of violence. To do so, the report develops a new spatial indicator of violence, called the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi). The indicator examines which regions experience the most conflicts, how conflicts change geographically over time, and how military interventions affect the geography of conflicts. Each research question is addressed using a spatial approach and involves metrics specifically designed to study the geography of conflicts in the region (Table 3.1). In order to assess the intensity of violence, the report maps the density of violent events that took place in North and West Africa since 1997. The geographical clustering or dispersion of conflicts is assessed using the average nearest neighbour analysis, a metric that provides a measure of the degree of concentration of violent incidents. The impact of military interventions on conflicts is measured using the SCDi, which incorporates both metrics.

A focus on organisations

In recent decades, the level of analysis of armed conflict has shifted from macro-, to micro-factors, to meso-factors. Until the mid-2000s,

Table 3.1
Questions, approaches and metrics for assessing the geography of violence

Research questions	Approaches	Metrics
Which regions experience the most conflicts?	Assess spatial intensity of violence over study region over time	Density analysis: number of violent events per geographical unit
How do conflicts spread geographically?	Assess spatial concentration of violence over time	Average nearest neighbour analysis: distance between each violent incident and its nearest neighbour's location
How do military interventions affect the geography of conflicts?	Assess impact of military interventions on intensity and concentration of violence	Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi)

large-N studies focused essentially on social inequalities, poverty, education, natural resources and commodity exports data collected at the national level. While these macro data helped characterise the context in which conflicts developed, they were not particularly well suited to explain why civil wars broke out, how alliances emerged and why civil wars were so difficult to end (Bultmann, 2018). In the late 2000s, these approaches eventually gave way to micro-level studies that focused on social interactions between insurgents (Wood, 2008) and on change during conflict (Kalyvas, 2006). One of the major contributions of micro-studies was to show that individuals had a multiplicity of motives to join armed groups. Far from being exclusively motivated by greed or grievances, they also fought for political recognition, physical protection, or to defend their property.

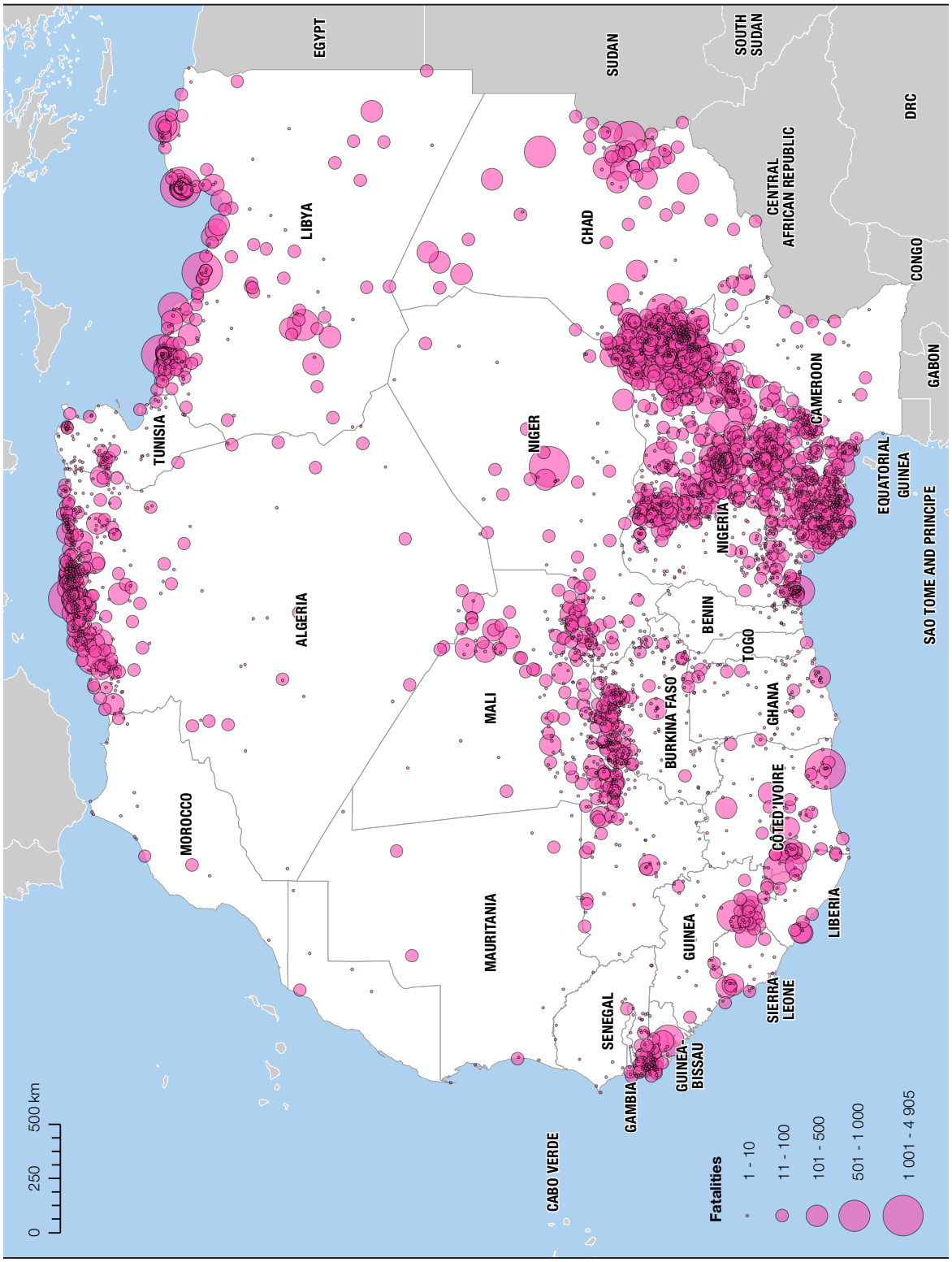
In recent years, a new strand of literature has argued that the meso-level, which reflects the organisation of armed groups, is best suited to understand conflict dynamics (Price, 2019). This report follows this trend by using the "organisation" as its main unit of analysis. Organisations are defined as political actors with a particular purpose and a distinct structure. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), for example, is a formal organisation with a leader, an executive Council of Notables, a Sharia Council that governs Islamic legal matters, and several committees responsible for military affairs, finance, medical care, politics and international relations (CEP, 2019; Werenfels, 2015). As an organisation, AQIM has developed a professional media wing in charge of promoting the doctrine of the organisation domestically and disseminating audio and video statements that claim attacks in Arabic and English (DHS, 2016).

Organisations are an intermediary unit of analysis that lie below political movements but above subgroups and individuals (Table 3.2). In Mali, for example, the rebellion comprises the Co-ordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), a coalition of several nationalist organisations, and Plateforme, a pro-government coalition of militias and other "popular" fronts. Each of these movements contains numerous organisations such as the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) that maintain separate structures, and only join the movement for advancing their individual goals.

Organisations are far from homogeneous blocs, especially in North and West Africa, where factions often reflect tribal or ethnic lines. Each organisation is composed of different subgroups that often split from the main entity or merge with existing organisations. Islamist groups, for example, are quite diverse when it comes to their ethnic composition, political objectives, and military tactics. They rarely form a single entity such as a "global terrorist network" or "jihadi network" (Dowd and Raleigh, 2013). In North and West Africa, infighting can occur within each social level and among the various actors that comprise it. Violent extremist organisations can simultaneously struggle with internal rivalries while they fight against other organisations that have different goals than theirs. Some authors argue that intra-organisational alliances that bring together subgroups, factions and tribes

Map 3.1

Victims of political violence in North and West Africa, 1997-2019



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019a.

Table 3.2
Four social levels of analysis

Level	Definition	Example in Mali
Movements	Movements are a collective effort by people working toward a common objective	Jihadist movement
Organisations	Organisations are discrete institutions or associations that have a particular political purpose; they are made up of members and have administrative and functional structures	Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM)
Subgroups	Subgroups are collective subcomponents of organisations; they usually perform different functions under the direction of the overall organisation	Katiba Serma
Individuals	Individuals are single human beings	Abu Jalil al Fulani

are different from inter-organisational alliances that tie several different organisations under a common umbrella (Bencherif and Campana, 2017). The same idea is true for fragmentation across organisations operating under different names and intra-group factionalism that occurs within each organisation (Dowd, 2015). These questions are particularly relevant in North and West Africa, where the distinctions between a movement and an organisation can be rather blurry. For example, the MNLA calls itself a 'movement' because it results from the fusion of several rebel groups but it is also an organisation with its own leadership hierarchy, political and military wings, public relations and social media office, and flag (Lecocq and Klute, 2019).

Regional and local analyses

The analysis of the evolution of political violence in North and West Africa is conducted at the regional and local levels. The study examines the major trends of violence in the region, including Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Tunisia (Map 3.1). This rather large geographical scope reflects both the origins and mobility patterns of violent organisations, who tend to conduct their attacks across the Sahel and the Sahara instead of being contained within a single country or region.

In the region, the geographic distribution of the 138 000 victims of violence between 1997 and 2019 is quite uneven (Walther, 2017). This means that political violence occurs in a number of specific sub-regions rather than on nationwide scales. There are three main geographic zones or "hotspots" of violence:

- The main geography of conflict is in Nigeria. However, this is composed of three distinct conflicts in the country: the jihadist insurgency led by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, the acts of violence carried out by the armed groups in the Niger Delta against the federal government and the oil companies, and communal violence between pastoral herders and farmers in the Middle Belt. Taken together, these conflicts accounted for 30% of the violent events and half (49%) of the victims in the overall region since 1997.
- The second geographic epicentre of violence is located north of the Sahara. In Libya, tensions related to the fall of Colonel Gaddafi in 2011, as well as fighting between Islamic militias and pro-government forces during the civil war, have resulted in 19 000 deaths since 1997 or 14% of the overall number of victims. In neighbouring Algeria, a large proportion of the 13 000 deaths reported there are due to the civil war that took place between the government and Islamist groups until the early 2000s.
- The third hotspot of violence has been located in the central part of the West African Sahel, which comprises eastern Mauritania, much of Mali, the north of Burkina Faso, and the west of Niger. In this region, civil wars, rebellions and clashes with groups affiliated

Box 3.1
The Chadian Civil War (1998-2002, 2005-10)

The first Chadian Civil War began when an armed rebellion by the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT) erupted in 1998. With the help of France, the government of President Idriss Déby Itno was able to quell the rebellion and a peace treaty was signed in 2002. Political opposition to Déby's repressive policies and perceived lack of legitimacy has steadily grown and led armed political and rebel factions to emerge since the 1990's (Ploch, 2008). Idriss Déby Itno originally seized power in a coup against Hissène Habré in 1990 and has ruled Chad since then. Although Déby implemented Chad's first multi-party, democratic election in its history in 1996, he has gradually concentrated and consolidated power within his Beri (Zaghawa) ethnic group, while also repressing opposition through various mechanisms (Debos and Tubiana, 2017; Eizenga, 2018). The Beri constitute 3% of the population but occupy the majority of government positions, and this political patronage has antagonised other groups.

In 2005, Déby abolished term limits, allowing him to run indefinitely for re-election (Debos and Tubiana, 2017). Just prior to winning election for his fourth term in 2011, his party, the Mouvement Patriotique du Salut (MPS), captured a majority in the National Assembly legislature and was accused of cheating and rigging the election. A national dialogue between presidential and opposition parties ensued, with superficial reforms passed (Eizenga, 2018). These concessions included establishing an electoral commission (CEN), representation for opposition political parties, municipal elections, and a biometric census and electoral lists (Eizenga, 2018). Steadily escalating opposition toward Déby and his party has grown in Chad due to a fiscal crisis over oil prices, a crackdown a civil liberties, and repeatedly derailed elections (Debos and Tubiana, 2017).

The second war began in 2005 with a series of raids in the east of Chad on strategic government positions by the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT). Various Sudanese rebel groups have backed Chadian rebel groups throughout their campaigns. Other militias and rebel groups joined the MDJT's offensives, including the Rally for Democracy and Liberty (RDL) and the United Front for Democratic Change (FUC), a coalition of eight rebel groups). In 2006, Déby announced a state of emergency, while in 2007 in Sirte, Libya the major rebel groups in eastern Chad signed a peace agreement. In early 2008, rebel forces advanced on the capital in an unsuccessful coup attempt.

The French military has supported Déby through numerous coup attempts (Eizenga, 2018; Massey and May, 2006). The United States likewise considers Chad a critical geo-strategic partner in the regional war on terror. In 2007, the UN Security Council passed Revolution 1778 that established a multinational presence called the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) (UN Security Council, 2007). A number of anti-regime civil society groups have formed to protest Déby's authoritarian and repressive policies, including Ça Suffit, IYINA, and "Trop c'est Trop" (Debos and Tubiana, 2017).

Source: Matthew Pflaum.

with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) are responsible for the bulk of violent events and fatalities. Violence has shifted over time. In Chad, the 7 600 victims reported since 1997 result from the civil wars that ended in 2010 (Box 3.1) and the current insurgency led by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region. In Mali, the northern Tuareg rebellion of the late 2000s, communal violence, and the more recent civil war have killed almost 7 000 people. In Niger, over 3 000 people have died because of the Tuareg rebellions of the late 2000s, the Islamist insurgency that developed from Mali since 2012, and the Boko Haram insurgency in the far east of the country. In Burkina Faso, the development of Islamist terrorism in the north of the country has led to a rapid increase in the number of violent events and victims.

Table 3.3

Number of violent events and fatalities per country, 1997-2019

Country	Number of events	Number of fatalities	Major conflicts
Nigeria	9 017	67 512	Boko Haram insurgency (2009-), Middle Belt communal violence, Niger Delta insurgency (2003-)
Libya	6 369	19 048	First Libyan Civil War (2011), Second Libyan Civil War (2014-)
Algeria	2 758	13 460	Algerian Civil War (1991-2002)
Chad	658	7 642	Chadian Civil War (1998-2002, 2005-10), Boko Haram insurgency (2014-)
Cameroon	1 793	6 879	Boko Haram insurgency (2013-)
Mali	2 211	6 845	Tuareg rebellion (2007-09), Malian Civil War (2012-)
Côte d'Ivoire	979	3 822	First Ivorian Civil War (2002-07), Second Ivorian Civil War (2010-11)
Niger	623	3 265	Tuareg rebellion (2007-09), Islamist insurgency (2012-), Boko Haram insurgency (2013-)
Guinea	420	2 767	Sierra Leone-Liberia conflict (2000-03), Guinea clashes (2013)
Burkina Faso	697	1 716	Islamist insurgency (2016-)
Senegal	443	1 403	Casamance conflict (1982-2014)
Liberia	(824)*	(1 168)*	Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003)
Guinea-Bissau	135	946	Guinea-Bissau Civil War (1997-99)
Tunisia	621	615	Tunisian Revolution (2010-11), Islamist insurgency (2015-)
Ghana	286	491	No major conflict
Sierra Leone	(2 195)*	(143)*	Sierra Leone Civil War (1991-2002)
Mauritania	59	129	No major conflict
Morocco	111	119	No major conflict
Gambia	64	97	No major conflict
Benin	53	83	No major conflict
Togo	44	57	No major conflict
Total	**30 360**	**138 207**	

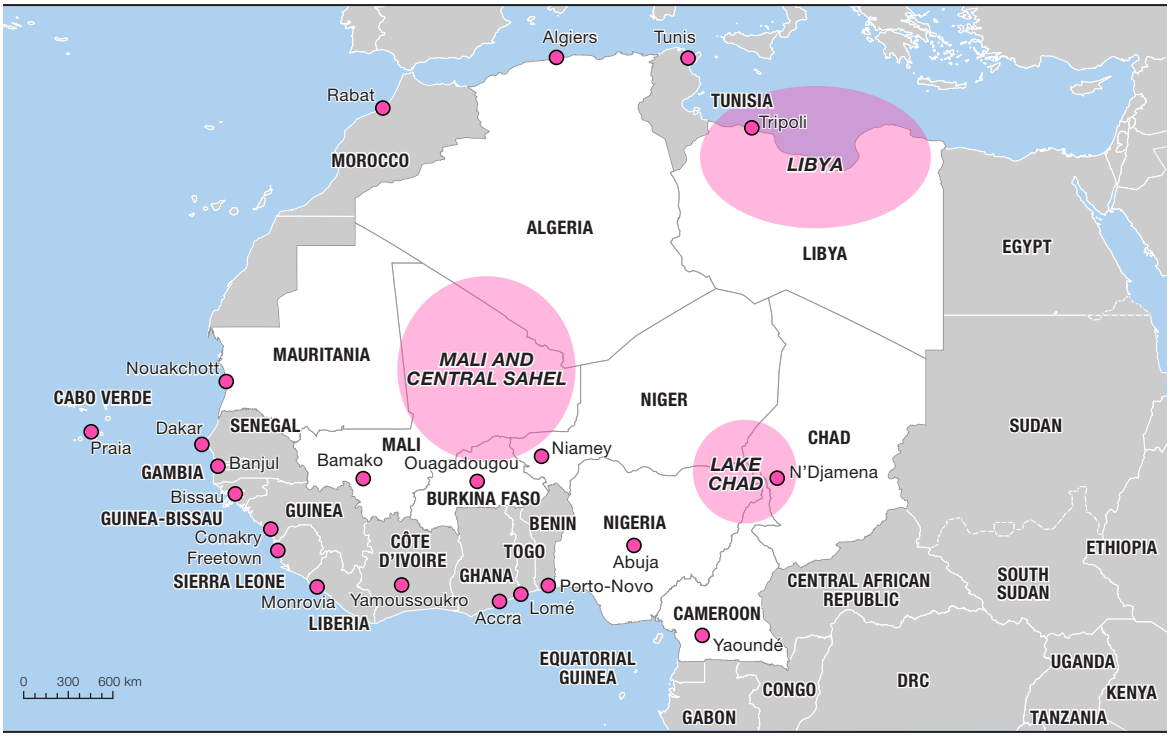
Note: *The number of events and fatalities for Sierra Leone and Liberia are underreported.

Source: Calculations by the authors based on ACLED data 2019a. The dataset, which starts in 1997, only partially covers the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991-2002) and the Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003).

Outside of these three main hotspots, the largest number of events and victims is observed on the Gulf of Guinea, where several related conflicts have taken place in Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s.

The report draws on this understanding of the geography of conflict to focus on three case studies where violent organisations: (1) have developed particularly rapidly since the late 1990s, (2) have extended beyond state boundaries, (3) have caused a significant number of violent events and fatalities, and (4) have led external powers to intervene militarily. As shown on Map 3.2, these cases are the Mali insurgency and its consequences in Central Sahel (since 2012), the Lake Chad region insurgency (since 2009), and the First and Second Libyan Civil War (since 2011). In Mali and Central Sahel, the conflict opposes the governments of Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso and their international allies to a number of secessionist rebels and Jihadist organisations such as AQIM, ISGS and other groups. In the Lake Chad region, the conflict opposes the governments of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, organised into a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), to the Jihadist organisation Boko Haram and its splinter group. In Libya, the conflict initially opposed Colonel Gaddafi's forces to revolutionary militias before

Map 3.2
Location of case studies



degenerating into a military struggle between competing governments, each supported by numerous militias, the IS or Al-Qaeda.

In additional to the exploration of the three case studies, the report also uses spatial metrics to identify trends of violence at the subnational level. The choice to consider subnational data is motivated by the fact that much of the political violence observed in the region has localised roots that would be difficult to understand at the regional or national level. For this reason, the new spatial indicator developed in this report (the SCDi) is calculated at a small scale by dividing all of North and West Africa into a 50 by 50 kilometres grid containing 6 540 individual "cells" or "regions" (Map 3.3 and Box 3.2).

A disaggregated dataset

The report leverages political event data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED) that catalogues violent extremist incidents in Africa since 1997 (ACLED, 2019a). Compared with other databases such as the Worldwide Incident Tracking System (WITS), the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), or UCDP PRIO Armed Conflict dataset, ACLED provides detailed and georeferenced information on actors in conflict without imposing a threshold on the number of fatalities recorded for each event (Raleigh et al., 2010). From January 1997 to June 2019, the ACLED dataset provides detailed information on 30 360 events involving 2 551 unique organisations and 138 207 fatalities.

The study uses the actors listed in the ACLED dataset to identify the organisations involved in political violence in the region (Table 3.4). The dataset distinguishes between eight categories of actors (Box 3.3) based on their goals and structure and, where possible, on their "spatial dimension and relationships to communities" (ACLED, 2019b: 19).

The main factor of classification in the ACLED database is the "event", which necessitates some adjustments when the data is used to map political events. For this reason, the study creates a unique name for each organisation. In the ACLED database, some government forces

Box 3.2

Choosing the right grid for the region

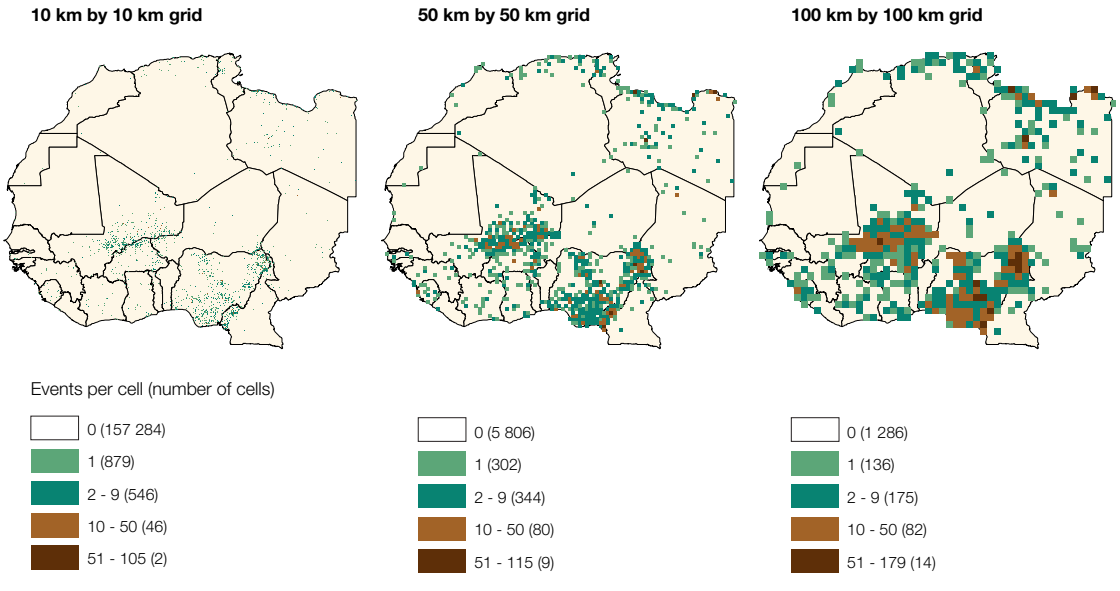
The chosen grid was developed and adapted specifically to study political violence in this region: each cell in the grid is large enough to aggregate a sufficient number of violent events for meaningful analysis while still small enough to provide a localised assessment of political violence across the region.

Alternative cell sizes were explored. For example, using a much smaller grid of 10 by 10 kilometres would have potentially provided a more granular location of violent events. However, because political violence is geographically clustered in a limited number of regions, 99% of the cells would have been empty in 2018. Of the 1% of cell that would have had events within them, only 40% would have had more than one event. The indicator would not have been particularly meaningful with such small numbers of points in each cell. Alternatively, larger cells such as a 100 by 100 kilometres grid would have aggregated distant events that would not be necessarily linked to one another.

By comparison, the 50 by 50 kilometres grid provides a balanced approach to these issues, with large enough areas to encompass multiple events for the standardised metrics of the study without being so large as to necessarily group together events that are unconnected. This allows comparing the evolution of conflicts from Dakar to N'Djamena, and from Lomé to Algiers. It also provides a much more homogeneous representation of violence than existing administrative units, whose size differs enormously across countries and bioclimatic zones. Administrative regions tend to be much bigger in the sparsely populated Sahara than anywhere else, for example, which would greatly affect the density and diffusion of violent events as calculated in this report.

Map 3.3

Size of grids and number of events by cells



Box 3.3
Categories of actors

- State forces are collective actors that exercise de facto state sovereignty over a given territory. They include military and police forces. In the particular case of Libya, competing groups that have a claim to government functions, such as the National Salvation Government, are coded as state forces.
- Rebel groups are organisations whose political agenda is to overthrow or secede from a given state. When splinter groups or factions emerge from a rebel group, they are recorded as distinct actors in the dataset.
- Political militias are organisations whose goal is to influence and impact governance, security and policy in a given state through violent means. Unlike rebel groups, political militias "are not seeking the removal of a national power, but are typically supported, armed by, or allied with a political elite and act towards a goal defined by these elites or larger political movements" (ACLED, 2019b: 22).
- Identity militias are a rather heterogeneous group of militants structured around ethnicity, religion, region, community and livelihood. Events perpetrated by identity militias are often portrayed as "communal violence" as they involve groups embedded in local conflicts over resources and power.
- Rioters are individuals or groups of individuals engaged in disorganised violence during demonstrations. They are unarmed yet may engage in violent activities against civilians, government forces or other armed groups. Rioters are identified by their country of origin. Those affiliated with a political party or leading an event are named in the respective associated actor category.
- Protesters are peaceful and unarmed demonstrators who engage in a public event. They are identified by their country of origin. Those affiliated with a political party or leading an event are named in the respective associated actor category.
- Civilians are unarmed victims of violent events. They are identified by their country of origin.
- External forces include international organisations, foreign military forces, private security firms and independent mercenaries engaged in violent events. When military forces operate outside of their home state, they are coded as "Other".

Source: ACLED 2019a.

are sometimes called differently depending on their patterns of behavior or time period. The Military Forces of Liberia, for example, are listed six times according to the regime they have served and the type of unit that was in charge of the events. The study simplifies this classification and considers the military and police forces of each country as a unique actor.

In a few cases, the code assigned to an actor can change over time if, for example, a militia is incorporated into government forces or if a rebel group successfully secedes from a state. In other cases, some actors can sometimes be listed either as a movement or as an organisation depending on the incident. For example, incidents in Mali can be attributed to the CMA or Plateforme, which would normally be considered as political movements, and to MNLA, HCUA, which are two organisations of the larger CMA and Plateforme movements. To address this issue, the study assigns violent events to an organisation, rather than a movement, when possible.

ACLED data is used to select state and non-state actors involved in terrorism, rebellion and communal violence from 1997-2019, as well as their allies and their enemies. This rather broad definition of violence is made necessary by the fact that actors can be involved in different types of violence over time. ACLED distinguishes between violent events, demonstrations and non-violent actions, 6 types of events and 25 sub-event types. The study focusses on politically motivated violent events exclusively. The following referents are considered: battles,

Table 3.4

Number of actors by category, 1997-2019

Type	Number	Examples
State forces	339	Military forces of Algeria, police forces of Morocco, Government of Ghana
Rebels	128	Polisario Front, National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)
Political militias	448	Democratic Alliance of 23rd May for Change (ADC), Janjaweed, Operation Libya Dawn
Identity militias	1 065	Chaamba Ethnic Militia, Raffour Communal Militia, Dozo Militia
Rioters	3	Rioters (Chad)
Protesters	6	Protesters (Togo)
Civilians	507	Aid Workers, Ashanti Ethnic group, Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights
External forces	50	Military forces of France, International Organisation of the Red Cross, United Nations Missions
Others and unknown	6	Free Karim Movement, Nigeria Petroleum Development Company
Total	**2 551**	

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019a.

explosion and remote violence, and violence against civilians (Table 3.5). Demonstrations and non-violent events such as agreements, arrests, disrupted weapons use, headquarters established, looting and non-violent transfer of territory are excluded from the analysis.

- A battle is "a violent interaction between two politically organised armed groups at a particular time and location" (ACLED, 2019b: 7). Battles can occur between any state and non-state actors and involve at least two armed and organised actors. Violence against civilians is categorised separately although civilians can be harmed as an indirect result from battles. This category includes events that did not cause fatalities. Battles are subdivided into three sub-event types, depending on whether non-state actors or government forces overtake territory or whether there is no territorial change.
- Explosions/remote violence are "one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the target to respond" (ACLED, 2019b: 9). Explosions/remote violence can be carried out using devices such as bombs, grenades, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), artillery fire or shelling, missile attacks, heavy machine gun fire, air or drone strikes, or chemical weapons.
- Violence against civilians is defined as "violent events where an organised armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants. By definition, civilians are unarmed and cannot engage in political violence. The perpetrators of such acts include state forces and their affiliates, rebels, militias, and external/other forces" (ACLED, 2019b: 11). Violence against civilians include beating, shooting, torture, rape, mutilation, kidnapping and disappearances.

INTRODUCING A NEW SPATIAL INDICATOR

The report introduces a new geographic indicator of political violence, the SCDi, that measures whether conflicts increase or diminish in intensity and contract or spread geographically. The SCDi builds on spatial analysis, a quantitative approach that measures the intensity, direction, and distribution of violent events over time (Box 3.4). In recent years, spatial analysis has been facilitated by the availability of disaggregated data and important advances in software such as

Table 3.5
ACLED violent event types

Event type	Sub-event type	Number of events	Number of fatalities
Battles	Armed clash	12 206	59 733
	Government regains territory	898	4 748
	Non-state actor overtakes territory	827	4 277
Explosions/remote violence	Chemical weapon	0	0
	Air/drone strike	1 487	5 564
	Suicide bomb	483	4 882
	Shelling/artillery/missile attack	725	1 176
	Remote explosive/landmine/IED	2 137	7 605
	Grenade	53	48
Violence against civilians	Sexual violence	119	887
	Attack	9 948	49 287
	Abduction/forced disappearance	1 477	0
Total		**30 360**	**138 207**

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019a.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that can store, manage, display and analyse spatial data. Today, such systems are able to integrate and link data sets from various sources to uncover previously hidden relationships between violent activities and space (Chainey and Ratcliffe, 2013; Boba Santos, 2017).

The intensity of violence

In order to study whether the intensity of conflicts tends to decrease or increase, the report maps the density of violent incidents in each 50 by 50 kilometres region (or cell). Formally, the density (d) is calculated as a count of events in a region for a defined time period divided by the measurement of the region's area. The density d has a lower limit of 0 when there are no events in a cell but no theoretical upper limit. However, the larger the time period, the more likely the density is to increase. The example below assumes identical areas (grids) of 10 square kilometres for a single time period (Figure 3.1).

It is important to note that the density d is not a measure of the location of points within the region. In the example below, both region A and B have a density of 0.6 (6 events/10 kilometres^2) despite the fact that violent events tend to be distributed rather unequally between the two regions (Figure 3.2).

The concentration of violence

The study uses the average nearest neighbour analysis to determine if violent events are dispersed, clustered or randomly distributed throughout the study area. This metric first measures the distance between each violent incident in a region and its nearest neighbour's location. It then averages all these nearest neighbour distances. The distribution is considered clustered if the average distance is smaller than the one for a random distribution and considered dispersed otherwise.

The average nearest neighbour ratio (ANN) determines whether the patterns of violent events exhibit clustering or dispersion. The ANN ratio is calculated as the observed average distance among a set of points in a cell divided by the expected average distance that would have been obtained if the events were distributed randomly (ESRI, 2019a). ANN ratios smaller

Figure 3.1
Density of violent events

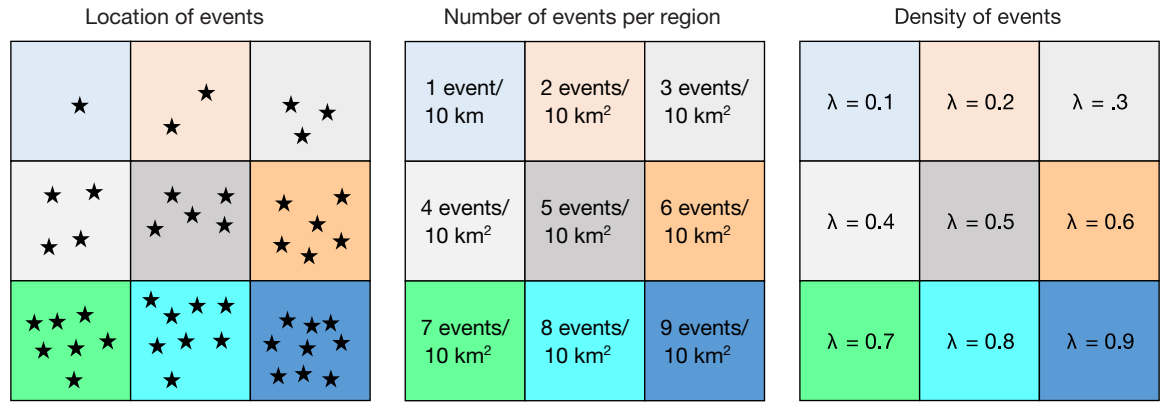
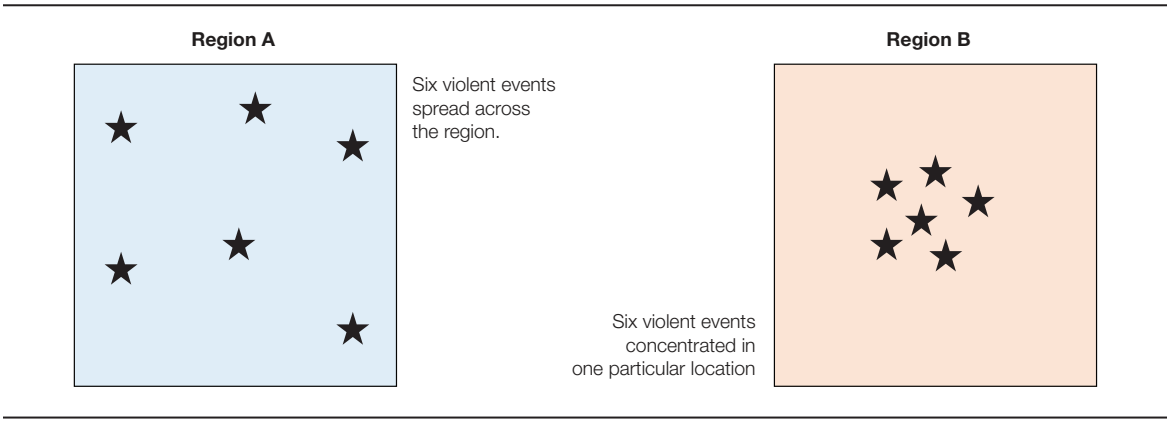


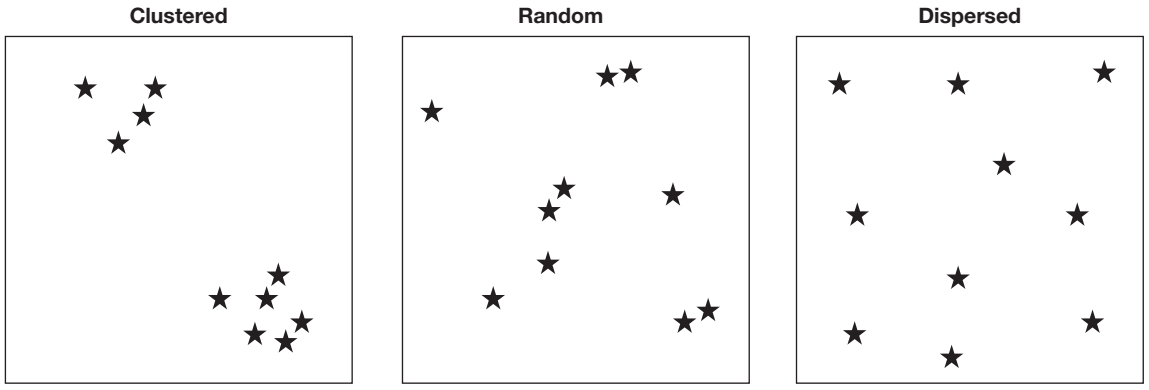
Figure 3.2
Identical density but different locational pattern of violent events



than one indicate clustered events while ratios greater than one indicate dispersed events. The distribution of events on the left-hand side of Figure 3.3, for example, is clustered compared with a random distribution of the same number of events, as shown by its ratio of 0.5, while the distribution on the right-hand side is dispersed, with a ratio of 1.5.

The combined study of the spatial intensity and concentration of political violence allows to identify four typologies of conflict geography (Chapter 1). Regions where violent events tend to become less frequent and more concentrated spatially are perhaps the most common indicating that conflict is relatively localised. On the contrary, regions where violent events tend to be more numerous and spread across the territory are the most worrying. Apart from these two extreme cases, some regions tend to experience lingering conflicts, when a low density of events is combined with a diffuse distribution. Other regions experience an increasing number of events but on a much smaller scale, suggesting that the conflict is spatially contained.

Figure 3.3
Clustered, random and dispersed events as measured by the average nearest neighbour ratio



MEASURING THE IMPACT OF MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

The study measures how military interventions affect the geography of conflict in the region. This requires the identification of interventions that have had the potential to disrupt conflicts over the last 22 years. Four main types of external actors are taken into consideration: intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and NATO, regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), nation-states on other continents such as France and the United States, and African countries (including their multinational task forces). Some of the military interventions are still ongoing or have lasted for years. Therefore, for each intervention, it was necessary to identify one or several time periods during which military operations had a direct impact on insurgents on the ground.

This is achieved by identifying when and where the military operations launched by actors in each conflict took place. For example, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) established by Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin has conducted several operations against Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria from January 2015 onwards (LCBC, 2018). In order to detect changes in the geography of these conflicts, the study identifies the areas most affected by each military operation in each conflict. In northeastern Nigeria, for example, some operations have targeted the Lake Chad basin while other have focused on the Sambisa Forest near the border with Cameroon, where Boko Haram insurgents are also active.

In order to detect changes in conflict geographies that can be attributed to a military intervention, the study uses the two metrics developed as part of the SCDi. The spatial effect of military interventions is assessed by first considering the events that are connected to the cases shown by Map 3.2 and then analysing how these external shocks may have contributed to the reduction, intensification, contraction and diffusion of conflicts.

The study measures the change introduced by military interventions into the spatial structure of conflict by considering shifts in both aspects of the SCDi. Comparing the proportion of cells that are classified as high or low intensity prior to an intervention with those following an intervention allow an evaluation if conflict is being reduced or not (a key goal of any intervention),

Box 3.4
Data processing steps

The study uses several software and programming tools to process the data, implement the indicator, and visualise results. These tools primarily include the statistical software R (R Core Team, 2019) and the visualisation package ggplot2 (Wickham, 2016), ArcGIS 10.6.1 (ESRI, 2019b), and Python 2.7 (Python Software Foundation, 2019) to explore the relationships between fatalities, event type, and location. Initially, ACLED data was georeferenced in ArcMap as point locations over the 21 countries of the study region. When mapped, all the outputs used the Lambert Conformal Conic projection.

A 'fishnet' grid of 50 kilometres cells was then made in ArcGIS to cover the entire study region. Each grid cell encompasses the same amount of land area (2 500 square kilometres). The grid was overlaid onto the event locations in ArcGIS and then used to determine the two separate calculations needed for the indicator: the spatial density of events per cell and the concentration of event locations within each cell.

These calculations were completed using arcpy, a library for Python 2.7 that interacts with ArcGIS. The script, developed by the research team, primarily consists of two nested loops that performed both calculations (the spatial density and the concentration of event locations) for each cell, year, and type of event. Because the clustering calculation requires a minimum input of two points, the script also selects only the cells that contained more than one violent event within them. The resulting output for any given year is a new fishnet grid with the density and clustering measures for each cell containing two or more events. Using ArcGIS, the study used the resulting grids to map the results across the region.

and where such shifts are taking place. Similarly, comparing shifts in concentration or diffusion before and following an intervention allows an interrogation of how an intervention may be affecting the spread of violence in either direction.

The SCDi makes it possible to take into account the great diversity of current African conflicts. By combining density and concentration, the indicator contributes to identify regions that experience the most conflicts, assess whether conflicts tend to spread across the region, and measure to what extend military interventions shape the geography of armed struggles. Assessing the spatial dynamics of conflict is crucial to inform and design security and development strategies adapted to local contexts. For example, conflicts that tends to make numerous victims in a spatially contained area call for different political responses than conflicts that have a lower than average density and a diffuse distribution of violent events.

The new indicator complements existing approaches to conflicts currently implemented in the region, such as the Violence Early-Warning System (ViEWS) project, which models how geographical, social, economic and political factors lead certain groups or individual to resort to organised violence (Hegre et al., 2019). The SCDi can also contribute to current initiatives that aim at mapping the temporal evolution of food and nutrition in the region. The relative simplicity of the new indicator would make it easy to integrate its results into the *Cadre Harmonisé* analysis, collectively managed by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and other members of the RPCA (FAO, WFP, UNICEF, FEWS NET, ACF, CARE, OXFAM, Save The Children, JRC-EC, FICR, IPC-GSU…) (CILSS, 2019). This could facilitate a better understanding of the interdependence between food and political insecurity.

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Chapter 4

The changing geography of conflict in North and West Africa

Chapter 4 analyses the changing geography of conflict in North and West Africa since the late 1990s. The chapter shows that conflicts tend to involve numerous non-state actors with diverging agendas, and target civilians more systematically than before. Border regions tend to attract a disproportionate number of violent events and casualties. Using a novel Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi), the chapter then shows that violence has both relocated and expanded over time. Contrary to popular belief that global extremist ideas fuelled by transnational groups spread like wildfire across the region, the chapter shows that conflict is largely localised. Less than one-third of the regions with violence exhibit signs of diffusion. However, it also confirms that the geography of violence is less isolated than 20 years ago. Multiple clusters of high-intensity regions have formed in the Sahel, where violence is spilling over to adjacent regions and countries. These clusters are more likely to be surrounded by a periphery of lower-intensity regions than in the past.

KEY MESSAGES

- **The last five years were the most violent ever recorded in the region with more than 12 000 violent events and 50 000 fatalities through June 2019.**
- **The number of regions experiencing a local intensification of political violence has increased significantly faster than other types of conflicts.**
- **Political violence is highly concentrated in border regions. More than 40% of the violent events and fatalities occur within 100 kilometres of a land border.**
- **Violence is increasingly targeting civilians, especially in West Africa, where attacks against civilians now exceed clashes between the government and armed groups.**
- **Conflict are largely localised and violent events are more likely to occur near one another. However, since 2016 more regions have demonstrated a dispersed pattern in the Sahel, where violence is spilling across borders to previously unaffected regions.**

For the last 15 years, North and West Africa have been faced with exceptional political instability. From the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Chad, a growing number of countries are now affected by armed conflicts or terrorism (Walther and Miles, 2018). This situation reflects differing dynamics of violence based on a mix of rebellions, jihadist insurgencies, bombings, hostage taking, coups d'état, protest movements from the Arab Spring, and military interventions (Eizenga, 2019).

When considered individually, none of these forms of violence is new in the region. Rebellions, for instance, have shaken the Sahara since the start of the colonial era. In the Aïr Mountains of today's Republic of Niger, Ag Mohammed Wau Teguidda Kaocen led the first Tuareg rebellion, more than a century ago. There have also been several waves of jihadism in the region since the holy war led by Usman Dan Fodio in 1804 in what is now northern Nigeria. In the late 19th century, for example, Samori Touré founded a large Islamic empire in southern Mali and Guinea, while Al-Hajj Umar Tall and Al-Hajj Muhammad al-Amin waged jihad along the Niger and upper Senegal River respectively (Miles, 2018). Coups d'état and political demonstrations are almost as old as the African states themselves (Elischer, 2019). Since the Egyptian Revolution

of 1952, 26 heads of state have been successfully overthrown in the region. Military interventions, finally, have punctuated the history of many countries since the French launched Opération Limousin to support the regime of President Tombalbaye against the National Liberation Front of Chad (FROLINAT) in 1969 (Buijtenhuijs, 1995).

The evidence of past forms of violence in North and West Africa questions the specificities of today's conflicts. Of particular importance is the question of whether the region is experiencing an intensification of the wars and conflicts that marked the 20th century, or if it is instead characterised by armed struggles of a different kind. The study of the changing patterns of violence in the region shows that while the nature of warfare has not changed, North and West Africa are now facing three types of organised violence: armed struggles for political power, criminal activities for personal gain, and human rights violations to create ethnically and religiously homogeneous areas (Walther, 2017). The fact that these types of violence combine in a globalised setting makes conflict resolution more difficult than before.

PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE IN NORTH AND WEST AFRICA

Contrary to common assumptions, sub-Saharan Africa is not the most war-endemic region in the world (Carter and Straus, 2019). While sub-Saharan Africa includes long-lasting conflicts (Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda), wars on the continent are not more frequent and they do not on average last longer than in the rest of the world. Conflict against states have become less frequent in sub-Saharan Africa since their peak in the 1990s, and civil wars are by far the most frequent type of conflict, two trends that mirror the evolution of conflicts at the world level.

Specificities of modern conflicts in the region

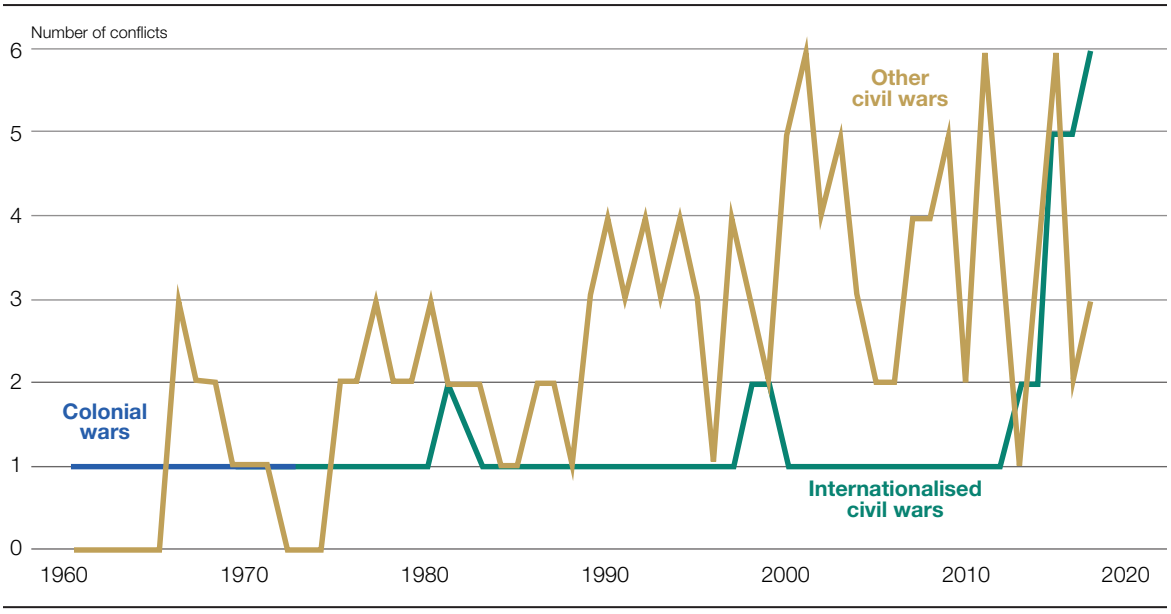
The first characteristic of modern conflicts in North and West Africa is to spill over state boundaries, which tends to blur the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs. The recent history of the region demonstrates when placed under increasing pressure, armed groups relocate to countries where there is less military capacity or political inclination to fight them. Modern conflicts also tend to be local, national and global at the same time: they leverage global ideas such as jihad and global resources such as Western hostages to pursue local and national claims.

Another characteristic of modern conflicts in North and West Africa is that the relationships between warring parties are characterised by contradictory and unpredictable changes. Groups that were allied one day can fight each other the next day. Individuals can shift allegiance from the army to militias and extremist groups depending on circumstances. Alliances resulting from a temporary agreement among local actors frequently dissolve when a better deal comes along or when a common enemy disappears. The changing patterns of alliances and conflicts between belligerents blurs the distinction between government, the national army and the society upon which modern states were built in the region.

A third specificity of the conflicts of the region is that the objectives and military strategies of the belligerents are less ideological or geopolitical than before. These conflicts are driven by assertions of identity designed to promote an idealised vision of the past, such as the Caliphate promised by the Islamic State (IS) and Boko Haram. This political vision, which tends to mix politics and identity, is using fear, hatred and destruction to create homogeneous ethnic or religious areas. One of the consequences of these politics is the deliberate killing of civilians, thereby marking a departure from earlier guerrillas that aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the population.

As a result, modern conflicts in North and West Africa tend to have a great proportion of organised violence against civilians. The military strategies and tactics used by the insurgents revolve around great mobility and small numbers of fighters, whose attacks are designed not so

Figure 4.1
Conflicts in North and West Africa by type, 1960-2019



Source: UCDP/PRIO 2019.

much to defend territory as to control the population. The militias, violent extremist organisations and self-defence groups (ex. hunters) involved in today's conflicts in West Africa are poorly trained and much less hierarchically organised than traditional armies. However, the lack of access to heavy weaponry does not make them less deadly, as the Rwanda genocide of the 1990s and the mass atrocities committed in Darfur, Sierra Leone and Liberia clearly show.

The military weakness of many African insurgencies mirrors the fragility of many governments. Since the 2000s, however, Western powers have intervened to strengthen local states that fight insurgencies, as in the Sahel today. While insurgents could hope to receive external aid during the Cold War, now states receive most of the aid. Despite these efforts, African armies remain ill equipped to fight transnational groups. In consequence, in many conflicts, neither the rebels nor the governments are capable to conduct a decisive strike against the enemy, contributing to prolong conflicts rather than resolve them. Only in weak states where government structures have crumbled, as in Mali, can rebellions hold territory. In consequence, conflicts in which insurgents can overthrow governments and secede are rare. Conflicts are often fought in border regions by factionalised insurgents that fight against each other instead of joining forces against the government.

A more violent region

All countries except Tunisia have experienced at least one armed conflict since 1960 in North Africa, while almost three-quarters of the West African countries (72%) have been involved in an armed struggle. These figures are slightly higher than those for sub-Saharan Africa, where 68% and 61% of the countries have experienced an armed conflict and a civil war in recent history (Strauss and Carter, 2019). In North and West Africa, the number of interstate wars has been very low since 1960. The most dramatic change of the 60 last years is the rise in the number of civil wars, particularly those that have a transnational dimension, such as in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire between the 1990s and 2000s and in the Sahel today (Figure 4.1). A majority of these conflicts oppose governments to violent extremist organisations with a reformist religious agenda (Ibrahim, 2017).

Political violence is unevenly distributed across North and West Africa (Chapter 3). Because

Box 4.1
The Casamance conflict (1982-2014)

The Casamance conflict started in the early 1980s, when the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) called for greater autonomy from the Senegalese state (Theobald, 2015). Complaints centered on what local populations perceived as "internal colonialism" and sociopolitical factors including pro-Dakar regional favoritism, state preference for the Wolof and French languages, political disenfranchisement, and land policies biased against southern groups (Sanchez, 2018).

The MFDC shifted in 1982 toward a more aggressive secessionist group with both political and military (named Atika) wings. The conflict started with students protesting in the capital Ziguinchor's streets against marginalisation and centralisation of state resources. Atika further divided after the first cease-fire agreement in 1999 into the Front Nord and Front Sud. These two divisions further branched into three competing groups: Baraka Mandioka, the extremist faction, and Cassolol and Diakaye, the more moderate factions. The Senegalese government and military opposed their protests with troops stationed in Casamance.

The MFDC and the government signed a peace agreement in 2004, but a number of hardline factions that split from the MFDC have persisted with low-level violence throughout Casamance and also expanded into other areas of crime and trafficking (Marut, 2010). The MFDC has failed overall in its objectives of independence for Casamance, though throughout the conflict certain governments and presidents have tried to pass policies to benefit the southern region. Further, the increasingly violent conduct and goals of MFDC have alienated the citizens of Casamance. MFDC's gradual demands for secession also conflicted with the more common sentiment in Casamance for national integrity. The government troops, meanwhile, have been accused of human rights abuses and killing civilians.

Casamance is now undergoing recovery efforts by the state as well as international aid organisations, including relocating Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees. Although the Casamance conflict is one of the less violent conflicts in Africa, and has avoided mass killings, the MFDC was involved in 326 violent incidents causing the deaths of 1 428 people in the period 1997 to 2019 according to ACLED (2019).

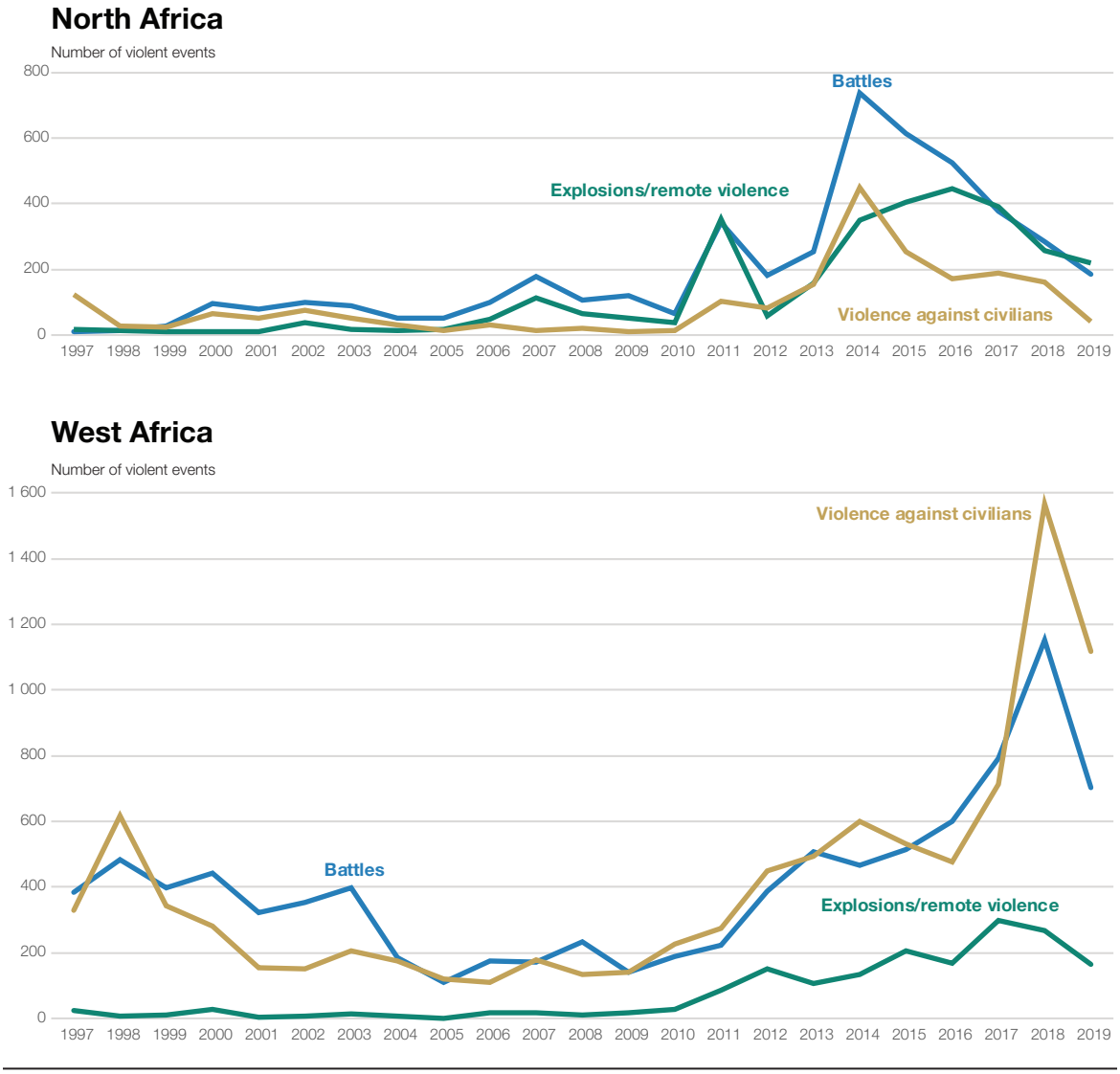
Source: Matthew Pflaum.

interstate wars are much less frequent than civil wars, violent events usually take place in a number of regions rather than at the national level. These major clusters of violence have shifted considerably over time, with the exception of Nigeria, which has remained a major source of violence during the last 20 years (Map 4.1 and Map 4.2).

The majority of the 5 000 violent political events and 25 000 deaths recorded from 1997 to 2002 were clustered in three sub-regions. North of the Sahara, the largest conflict was by far the Algerian Civil War (1991-2002), which de-escalated significantly after the surrender of the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) and the defeat of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) at the start of the 2000s. South of the Sahara, the high number of victims along the Gulf of Guinea was due to the civil wars in Liberia (1989-97 and 1999-2003),Sierra Leone (1991-2002) and Guinea-Bissau (1998-99).

The 2000s experienced a decrease in political violence, with 3 200 violent events and 14 000 deaths recorded from 2003 to 2008. Most of the violence took place south of the Sahara. It is during this period that the long-lasting Casamance conflict opposing the Senegalese government to the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) finally came to a halt (Box 4.1). A return to political stability in Liberia and Sierra Leone coincided with the start of the first civil war in Côte d'Ivoire (2002-07), and an increase in the intensity of the Darfur conflict between the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), on one side, and the Sudanese government and Janjaweed Arab militia on the other.

Figure 4.2
Violent events by type in North and West Africa, 1997-2019 (June)

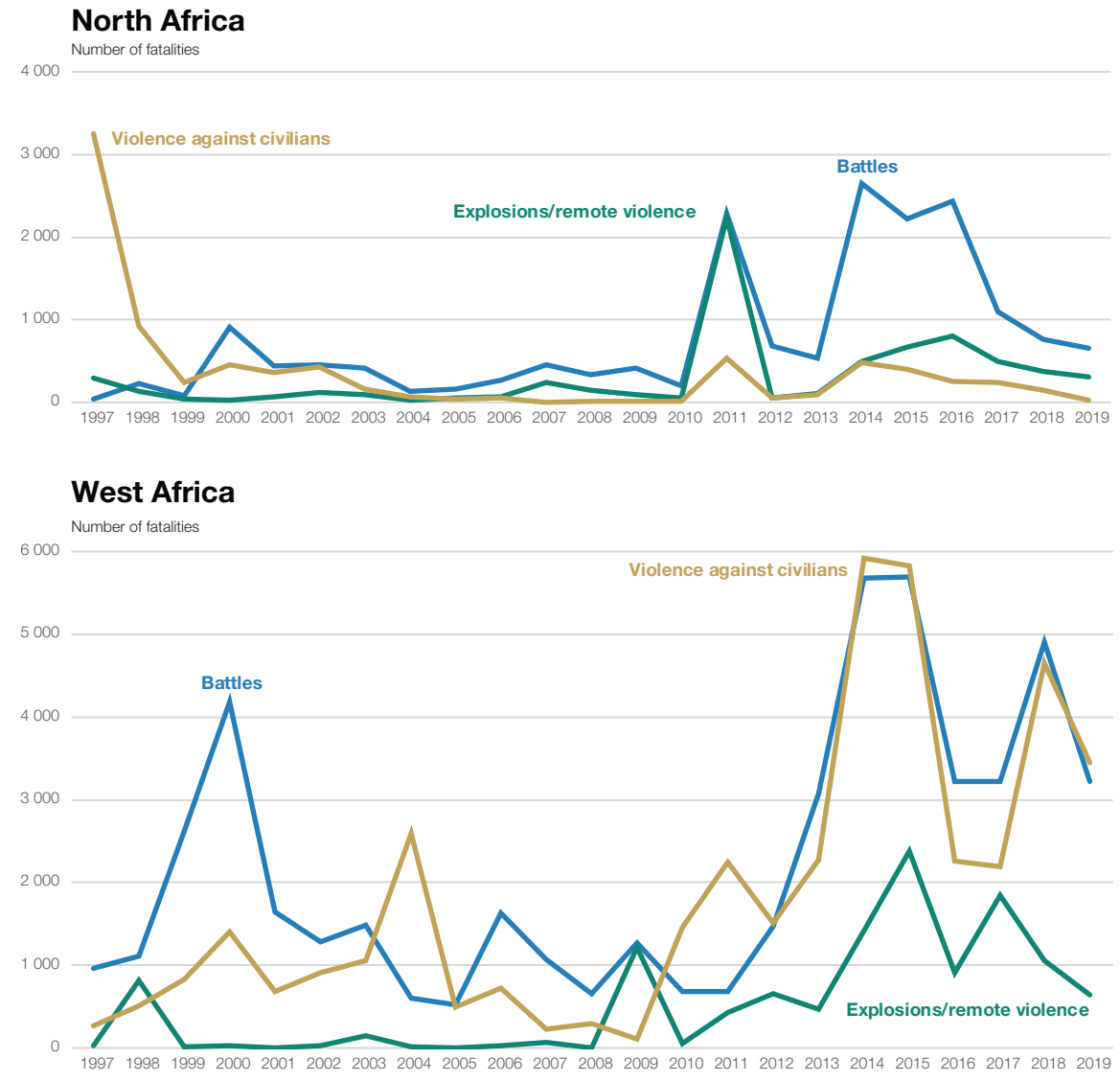


Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

The overall number of victims rose significantly from the late 2000s onwards because of conflicts pitching rebels and religious extremists against governments in the region. Almost 8 000 violent events and more than 40 000 fatalities were recorded from 2009-2014. The security situation reached a first peak in 2014 under the combined impact of the conflict in Mali, the civil wars in the Central African Republic and Libya, the conflicts in Darfur and South Sudan, and insurgencies in several regions of Nigeria.

The last five years are the most violent ever recorded in the region with more than 12 000 violent events and 50 000 fatalities through June 2019. While political violence has left the Gulf of Guinea largely unaffected, it has engulfed Mali and the neighbouring countries, several parts of Nigeria, and nearly all the populated regions of Libya. North of the Sahara, violent events are still associated with major battles in cities, while a great deal of violent events take place in rural areas in West Africa. Map 4.1 and

Figure 4.3
Fatalities due to violent events by type in North and West Africa, 1997-2019 (June)



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Map 4.2 visualise these patterns quite clearly: the number of victims is much more concentrated on the coast and interior of Libya than in the Sahel where hundreds of isolated attacks are recorded.

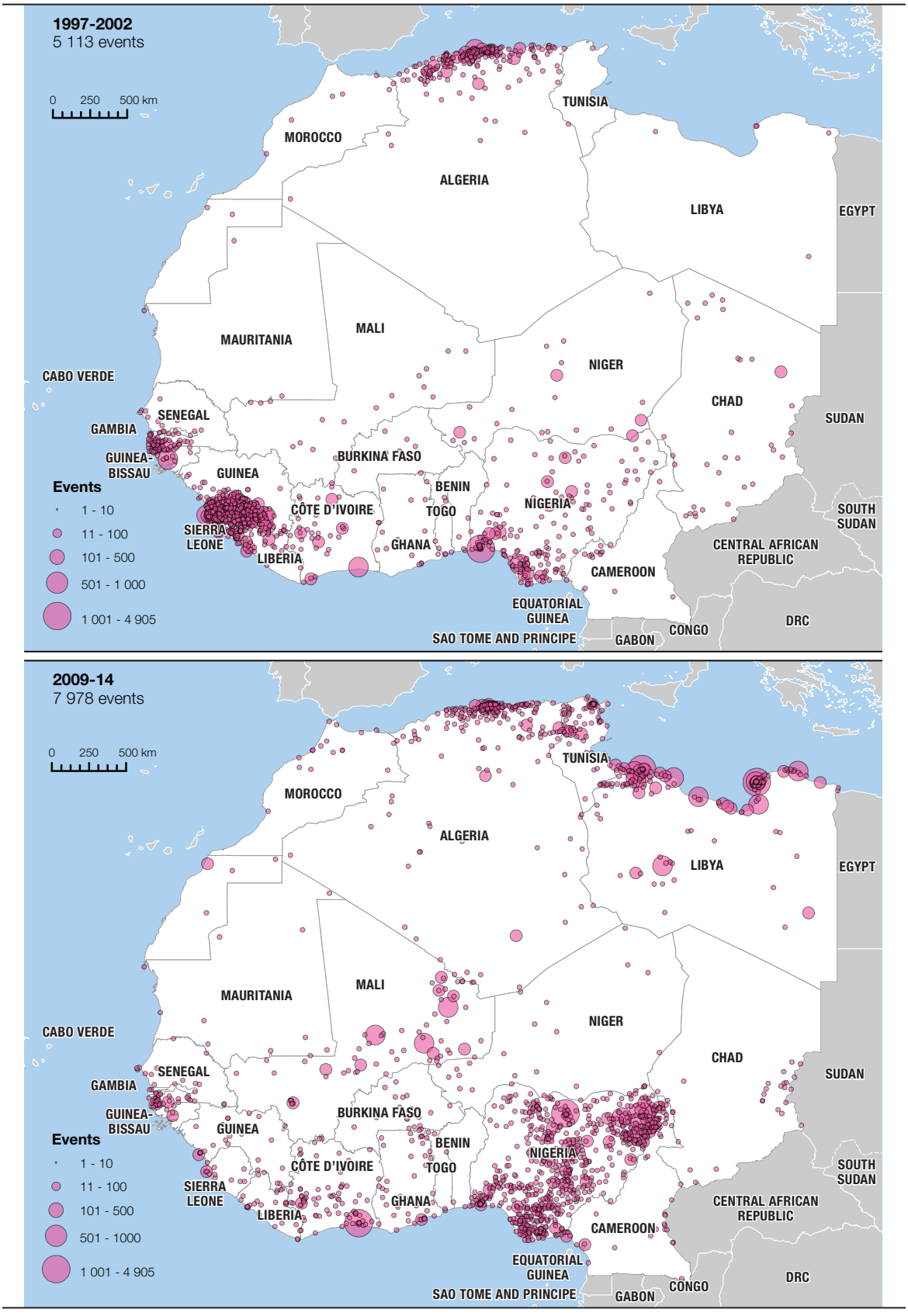
More violence against civilians

Since 1997, there have been 30 360 violent events and 138 207 deaths in North and West Africa, according to ACLED. Battles have caused the greatest number of victims (68 758), followed by violence against civilians (50 174), and explosions and remote violence (19 275).

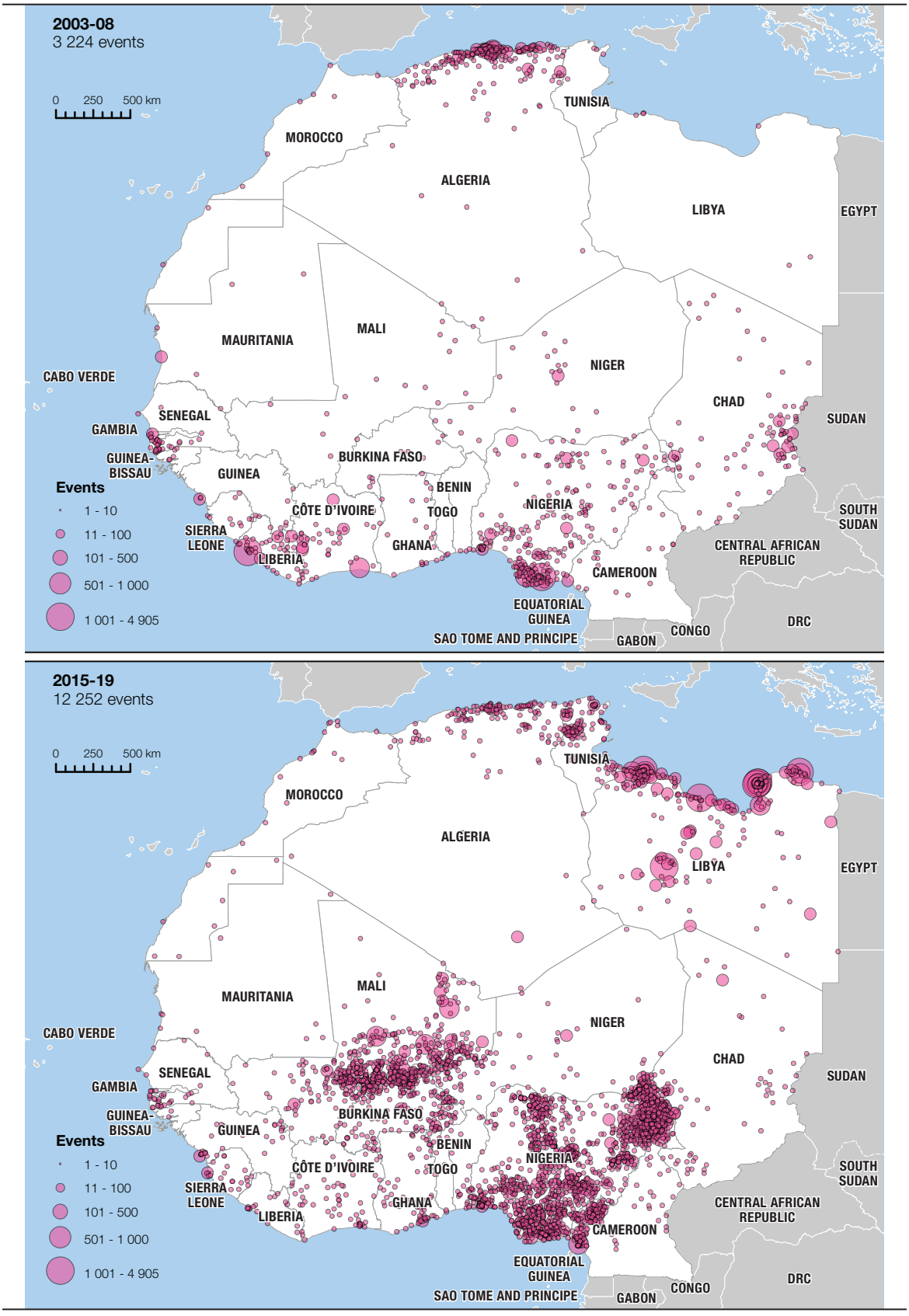
The most significant change is the increase in the use of violence against civilians since the early 2010s (Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3). Attacks against civilians are particularly numerous in West Africa, where the number of victims of sexual violence, civil attacks and kidnappings exceeds the violence associated with armed clashes between governments and non-state

Map 4.1

Violent political events in North and West Africa, 1997-2019

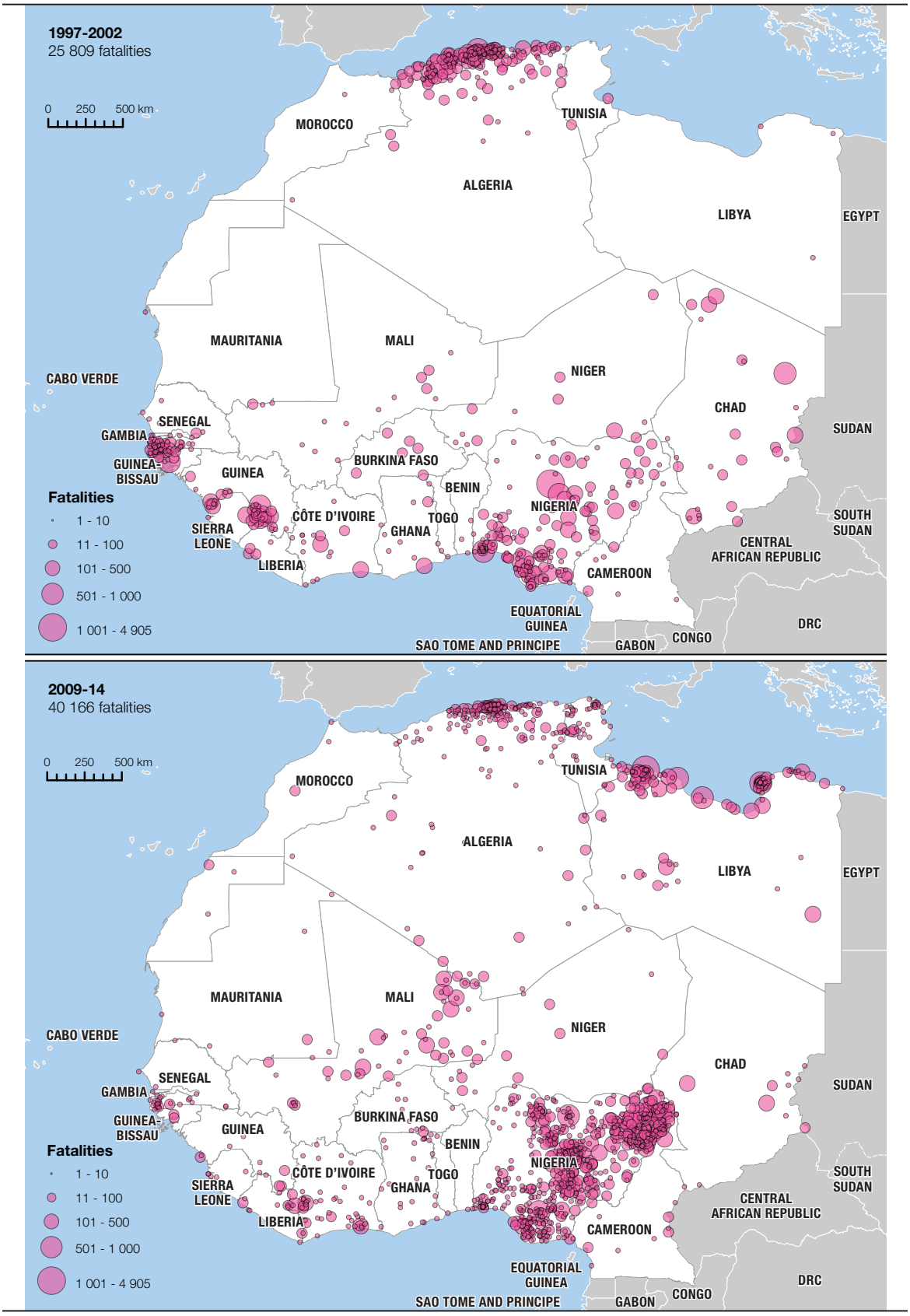


Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.



Map 4.2

Politically-motivated fatalities in North and West Africa, 1997-2019



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

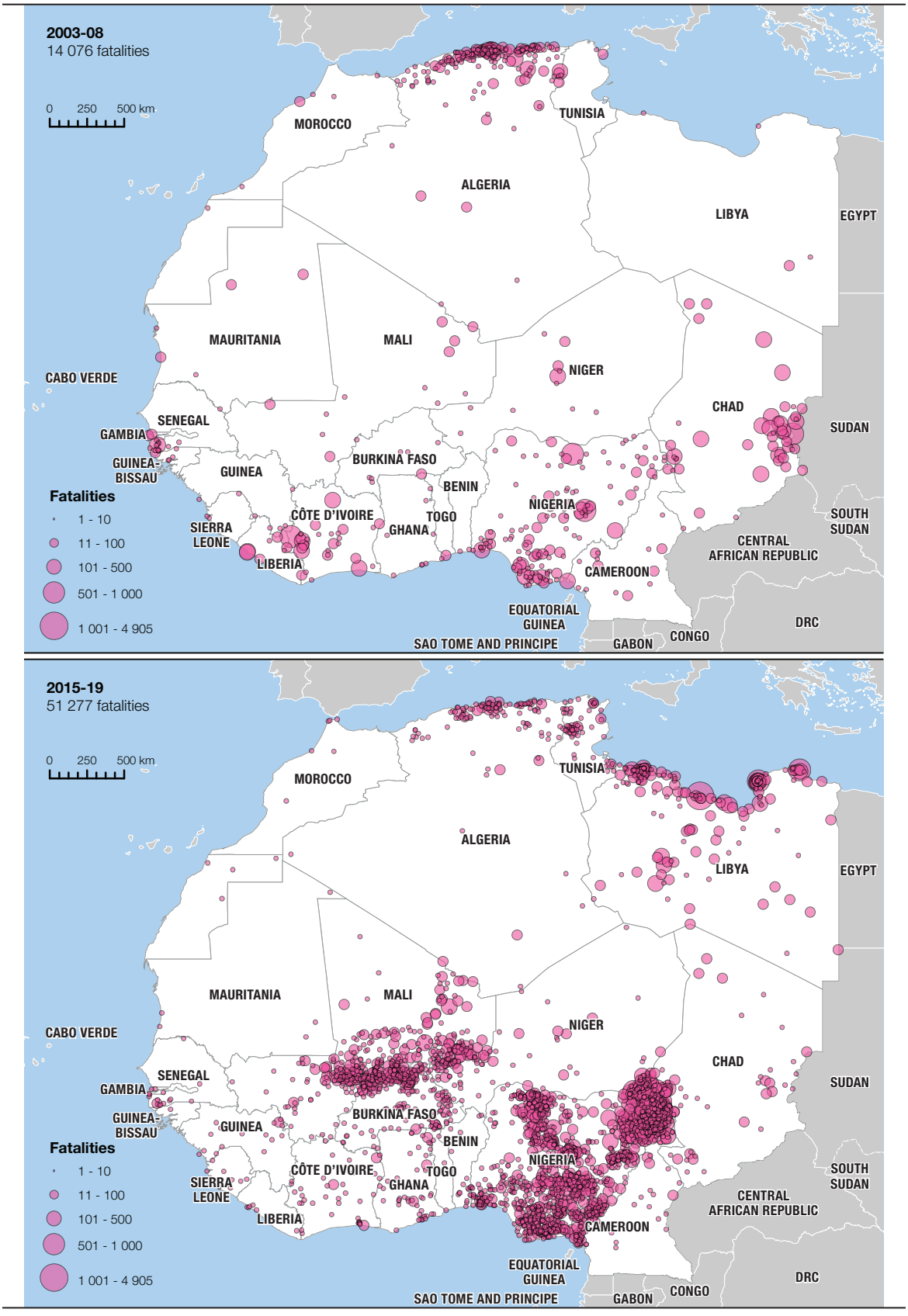
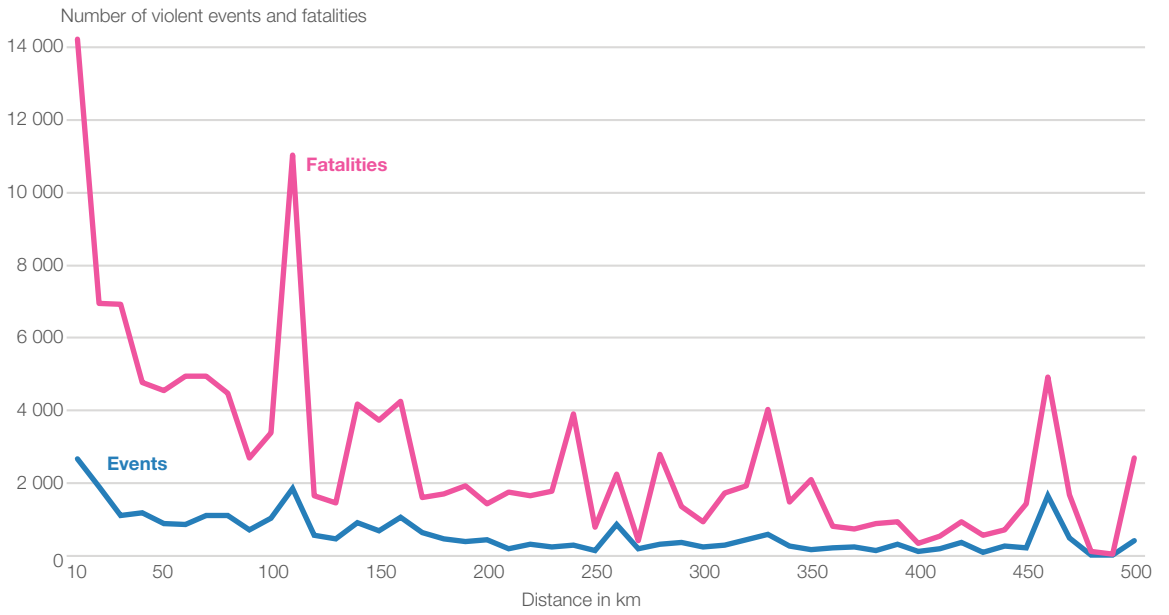


Figure 4.4

Violent events, fatalities and distance to land borders, 1997-2019 (June)



Source: Walther 2019 based on ACLED data 2019.

actors. Their number has reached 4 645 victims in 2018, an all-time record. Worse still, 2019 is on track to be the deadliest year for civilians since 1997 with 3 451 victims through June. This development is mainly due to Boko Haram's attacks on schools, churches and other civilian targets.

Battles between two politically organised armed groups have also been on the rise in both North and West Africa since the beginning of the current decade. North of the Sahara, the two peaks observed in 2011 and 2014 correspond to the First and Second Libyan Civil Wars, which mobilised a large number of troops and weapons. South of the Sahara, the increase in the number of battle deaths is explained by the Jihadist offensive against the Malian government in 2012, followed by the counter-offensive led by France in the country. Major battles have also taken place in northern Nigeria between Boko Haram, the Nigerian government and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) that comprises troops from neighbouring countries. In West Africa especially, battle deaths and violence against civilians tend to follow similar temporal patterns, suggesting that insurgents attack both government and civilian targets systematically. This is less clear in North Africa, where the militias fighting for the control of the government do not target civilians as systematically as in West Africa.

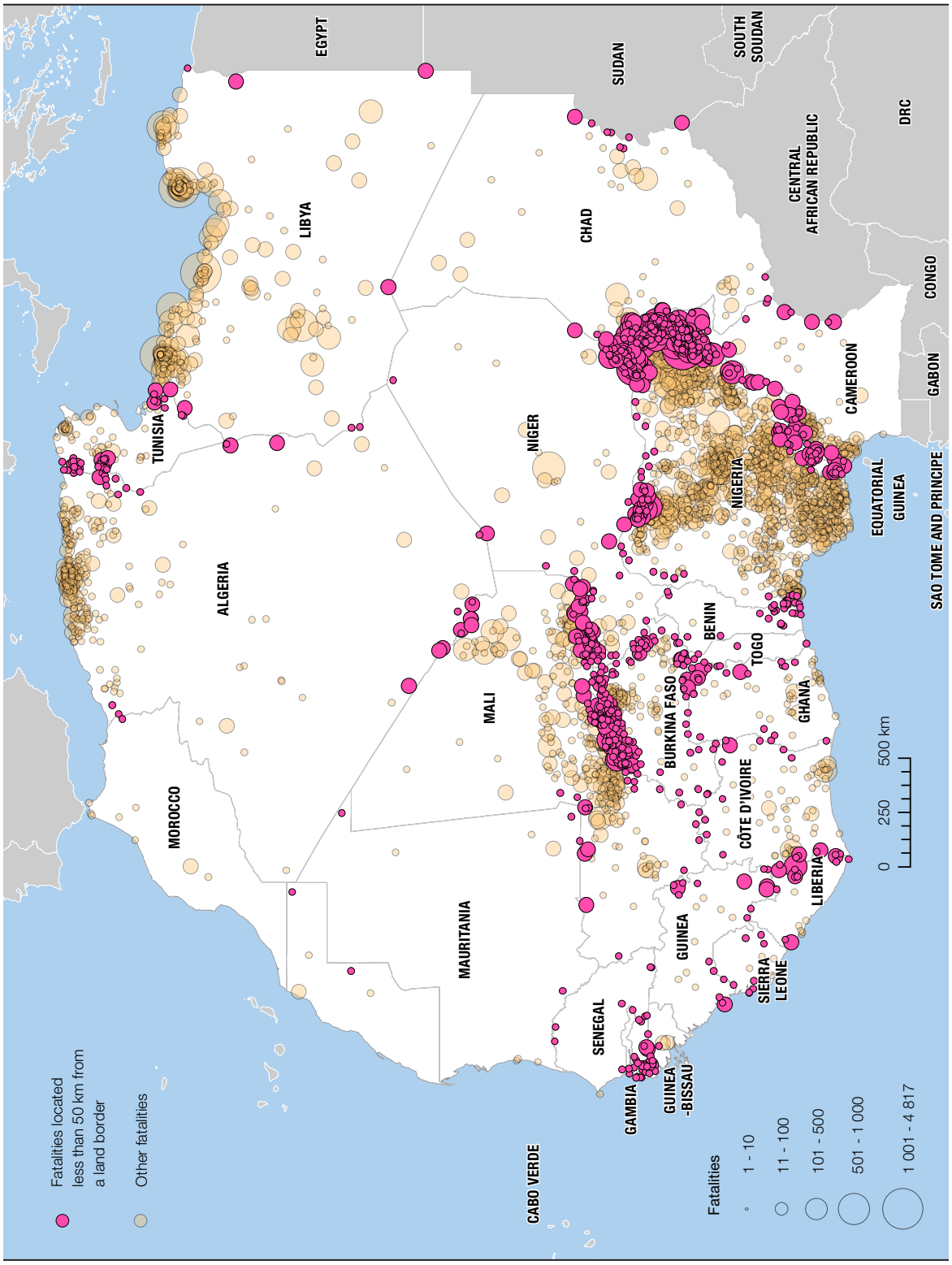
Remote violence is carried out using devices such as bombs, grenades, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), artillery fire or shelling, missile attacks, heavy machine gun fire, air or drone strikes, or chemical weapons. It has increased in both North and West Africa since 2010 due to air strikes conducted by NATO and the Libyan National Army in Libya, the French air forces in Mali, and Nigeria's air force around Lake Chad. The increasing use of suicide attacks by Boko Haram and the IS, as well as the use of improvised explosive devices in Mali, Nigeria and Cameroon against government and UN forces, have also contributed to the rise in remote violence over the last ten years.

More violence in border regions

Political violence is highly concentrated in certain regions of North and West Africa, particularly in border regions, where armed groups often locate their military bases and from which they launch

Map 4.3

Fatalities according to distance to land borders, 2009-19 (June)



Source: Walther 2019 based on ACLED data 2019.

Table 4.1
Most affected locations in the region and within 50 kilometres of a land border, 2009-19

Rank	North and West Africa			Within 50 kilometres of a land border		
	Location	Country	Fatalities	Location	Country	Fatalities
1	Maiduguri	Nigeria	4 817	Baga	Nigeria	2 140
2	Sirte	Libya	2 540	Sambisa Forest	Nigeria	1 042
3	Tripoli	Libya	2 183	Bama	Nigeria	900
4	Baga	Nigeria	2 140	Fotokol	Cameroon	884
5	Benghazi	Libya	1 536	Gamboru	Nigeria	752
6	Damboa	Nigeria	1 200	Madagali	Nigeria	732
7	Asaba	Nigeria	1 076	Gwoza	Nigeria	719
8	Sambisa Forest	Nigeria	1 042	Damasak	Nigeria	621
9	Konduga	Nigeria	973	Rann	Nigeria	607
10	Bama	Nigeria	900	Diffa	Niger	528
11	Fotokol	Cameroon	884	Dikwa	Nigeria	495
12	Darna	Libya	804	Kolofata	Cameroon	488
13	Misratah	Libya	772	Amchidé	Cameroon	484
14	Gamboru	Nigeria	752	Mubi	Nigeria	456
15	Kano	Nigeria	749	Bazza	Nigeria	378
	Monguno	Nigeria	749			

Source: Walther 2019 based on ACLED data 2019.

attacks in neighbouring countries. Between 1997 and 2019, 42% of violent events and victims have been located within 100 kilometres of a land border, a proportion similar to the population living in these regions (41%, according to GPW, 2015). The narrow 10-kilometres border strip that separates the countries in the region alone accounts for 10% of the victims registered since 1997 (Figure 4.4). This is far more than the proportion of the population that lives in these regions in North and West Africa (3.5%), which suggests that the regions located in close proximity to borders are proportionally more dangerous than others.

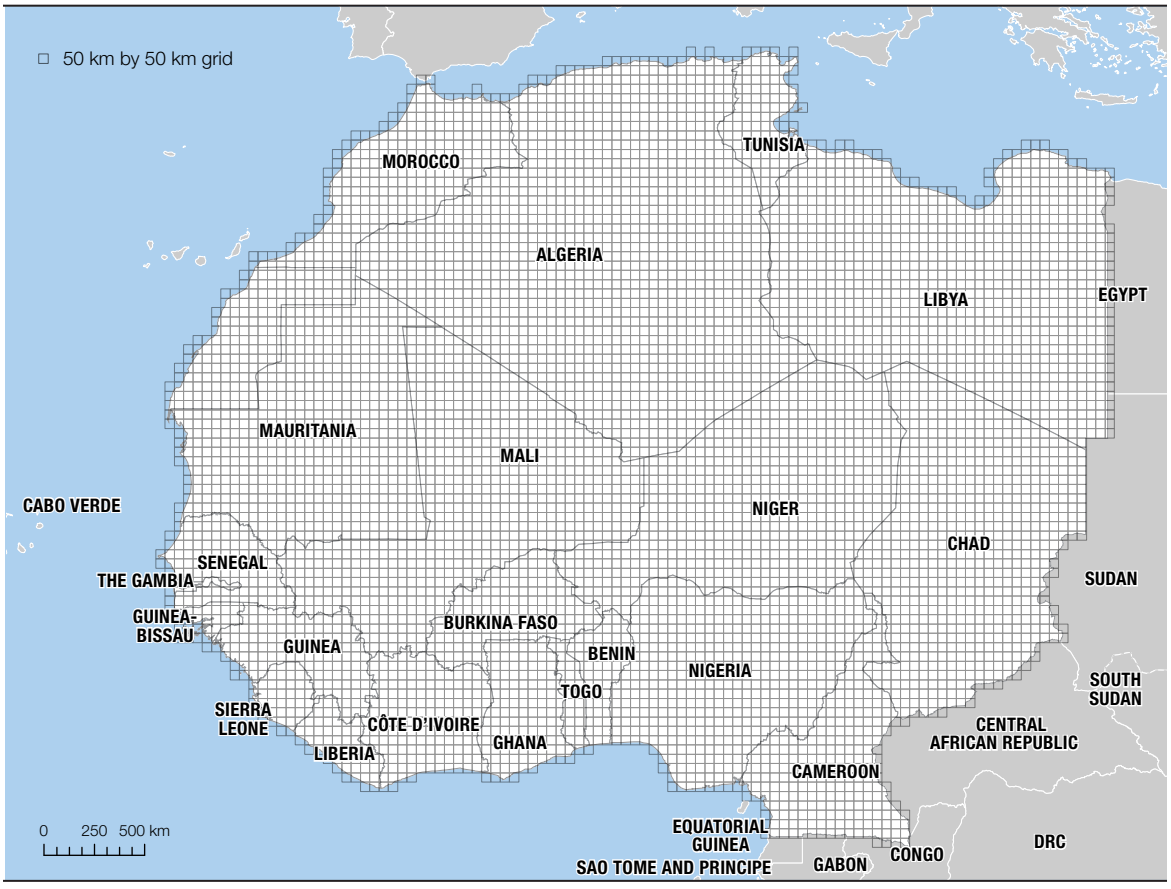
Historically, the borders of Sierra Leone and Liberia have been most affected by political violence, as a result of civil wars that relied on transnational forces. Another historic focus of border instability is in Casamance, a region where the Senegalese government has been facing the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) since 1982 (Box 4.1). However, the extent of the conflict has significantly decreased since the mid-2000s and only 93 incidents and 119 deaths have been recorded in the border region since 2007. Over the past decade, the importance of border areas has increased for armed groups and governments in North and West Africa. One-third of the events and victims of political violence in the region have occurred within 50 kilometres of a land border since 2009 (Map 4.3).

In border regions, the main victims of the political violence of the last ten years are the inhabitants of the small and medium-sized towns of the Lake Chad Basin. The Boko Haram massacres and Nigerian army retaliation in the Baga, Bama, Damasak, Gamboru, Rann and Madagali communities in Nigeria, Fotokol, Amchidé, Tourou in Cameroon, or Bosso and Diffa in Niger weigh heavily in this situation. The cities of Baga and Bama are the most affected border cities within 50 kilometres with 2 140 and 900 victims respectively, while 1 042 people were killed in the forest of Sambisa southeast of Maiduguri (Table 4.1).

No Malian city counts more than 500 victims between 2009 and 2019 (Gao has 448). This peculiarity is explained by the fact that the intensity of the Malian conflict is globally lower than that of the Boko Haram insurgency and by the absence of large urban centres near the borders.

Map 4.4

North and West Africa divided into 6 540 "cells" or "regions"



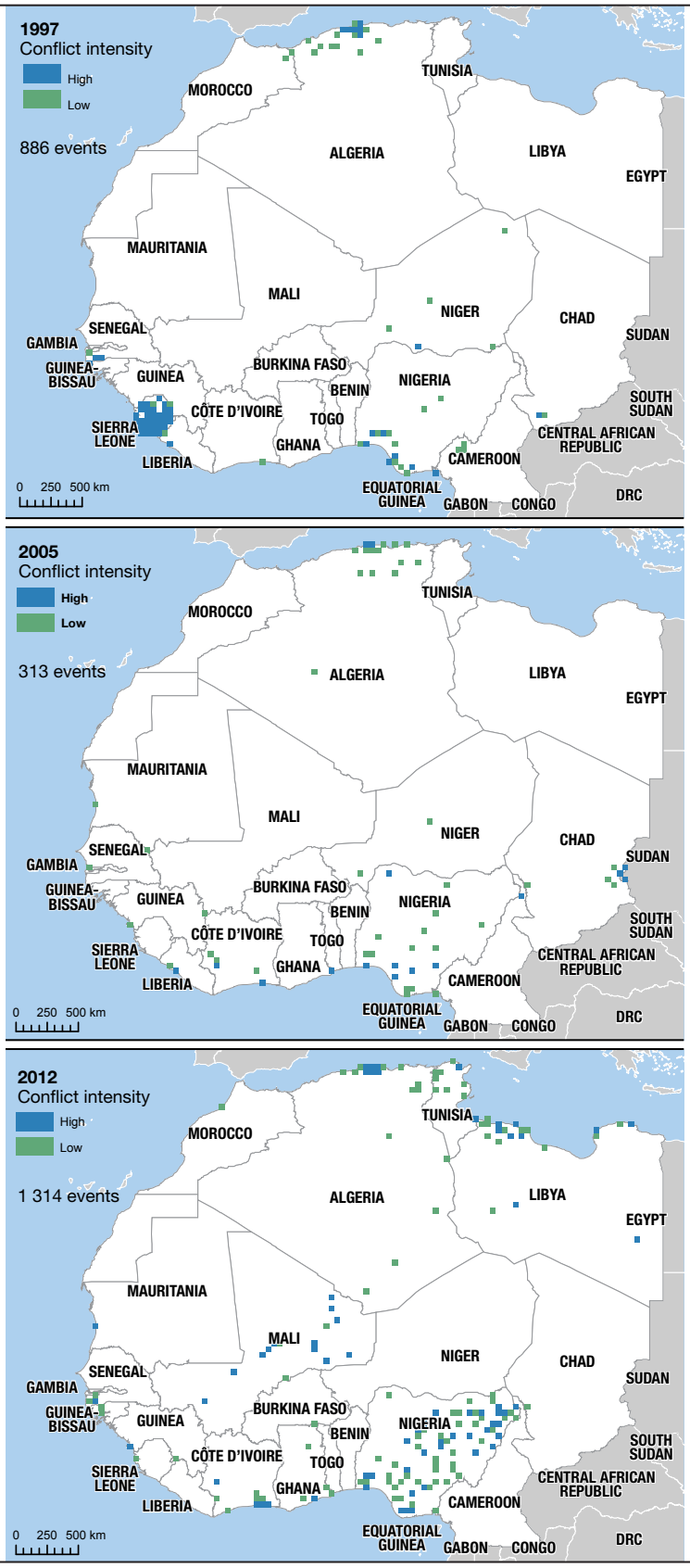
In addition to these demographic factors, many violent events committed by armed groups in the Sahel and Sahara take place far from human centres, in the border strip bordering Algeria, the Ansongo-Ménaka region or the Azawagh zone in Mali and Niger. These events often reflect power struggles between rebels, religious extremists and smugglers around the control of the Trans-Saharan roads and their trafficking.

The Liptako-Gourma region is the second epicentre of contemporary border violence because of the spread of the Malian conflict to neighbouring countries. In the border strip, the most numerous attacks affect the provinces of Soum, Louroum and Soutou in Burkina Faso, the circles of Koto, Bankass and Douentza on the fringes of the Dogon country of Mali, the extreme north of the Tillabéri region in Niger and the region of Ansongo-Ménaka to Abderamboukane in Mali.

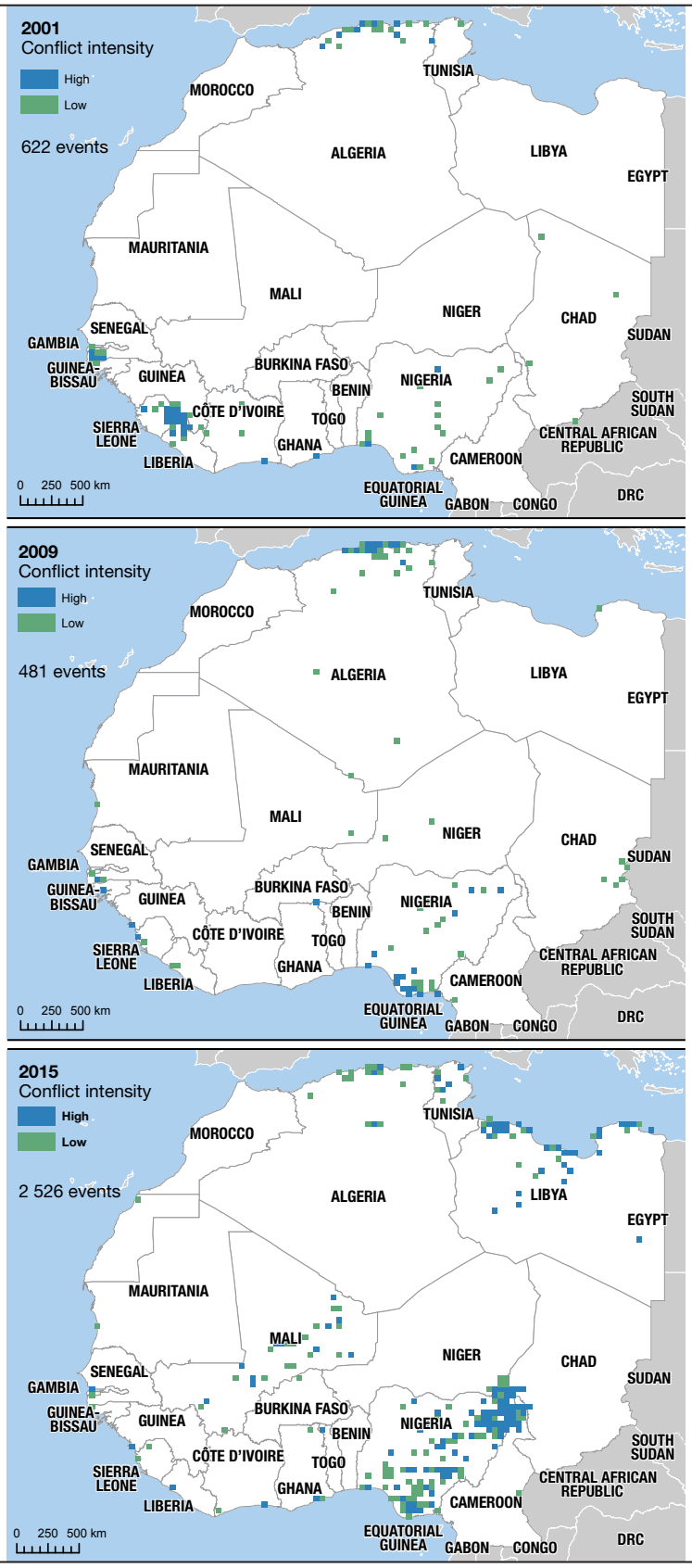
In addition to the border areas, cities within 100 kilometres of land borders appear as a major focus of political instability. Nearly 10% of the victims and violent incidents recorded since 1997 take place between 100 and 110 kilometres from a border, as indicated by the spectacular peak of Figure 4.3. This concentration of violence is due to the fact that several secondary cities have been the scene of intercommunal violence or deadly battles between extremist groups and government forces over the last twenty years. This is particularly the case in Maiduguri, in north-eastern Nigeria, where fierce fighting has taken place between Boko Haram and the Nigerian army since 2009. Maiduguri has the highest number of casualties since 1997 (4 817), followed by the Libyan cities of Sirte, Tripoli, Benghazi, Darna and Misratah.

Map 4.5

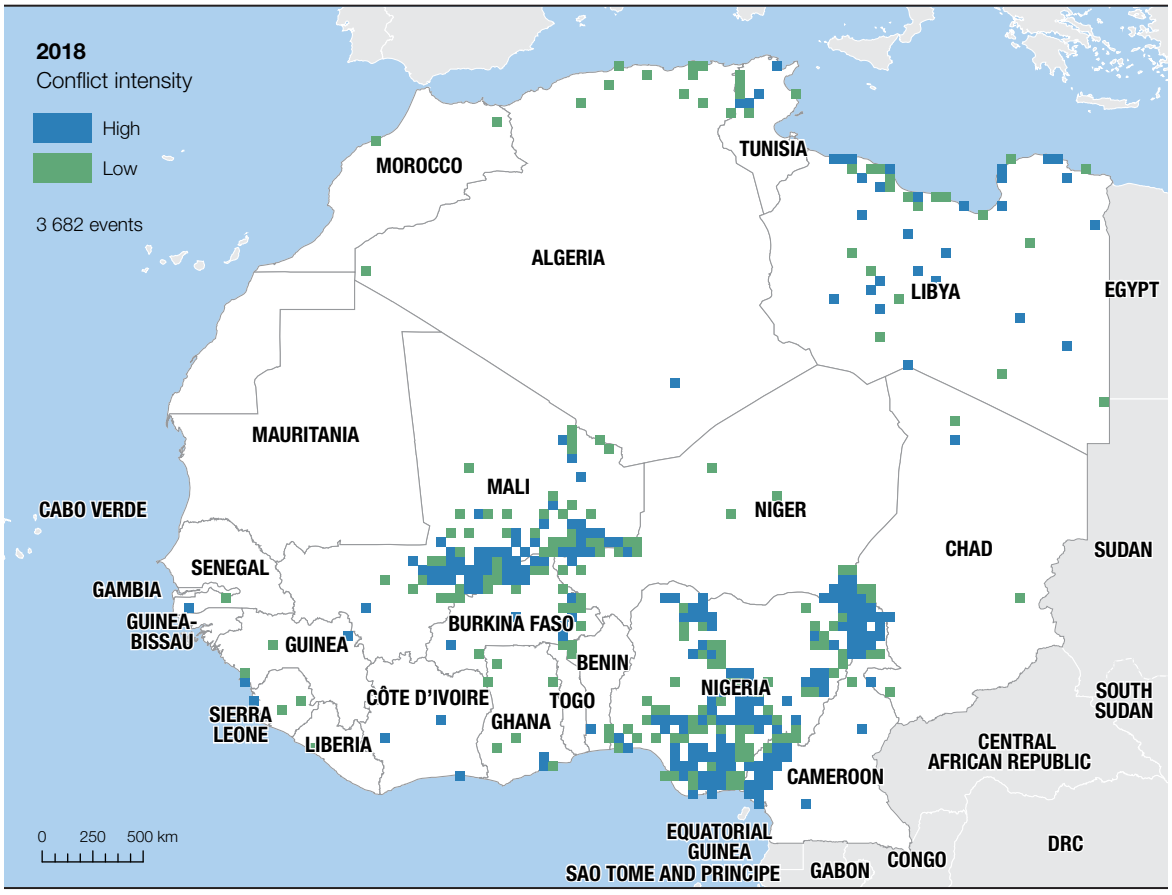
Intensity of conflict in North and West Africa, 1997-2015



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.



Map 4.6
Intensity of conflict in North and West Africa, 2018



Note: North and West Africa are divided into a 50 by 50 kilometres grid containing 6 540 individual "cells" or "regions". The map shows whether the intensity of violent events tend to be higher or lower than the average in each of these regions. Because the grid is uniformly superposed over North and West Africa, some regions can be divided by international boundaries.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

A GROWING INTENSITY OF CONFLICTS

The geography of violence is uneven in North and West Africa as many of the issues that underlie the violence are also geographically uneven (population, resources, etc.). Nigeria, Mali/Burkina Faso, and Libya concentrate the majority of the areas of high-intensity violence. Regions of high-intensity violence are more numerous than in the past. High-intensity violence regions cluster together and are often surrounded by regions of lower-intensity violence. The geography of violence also changes over time. Comparing the annual amount of violence between North and West Africa shows that violence has declined in one part of the study region while increasing in another. While violence may ebb and flow in some places, in others it can remain a relative constant, becoming a part of daily life over long periods.

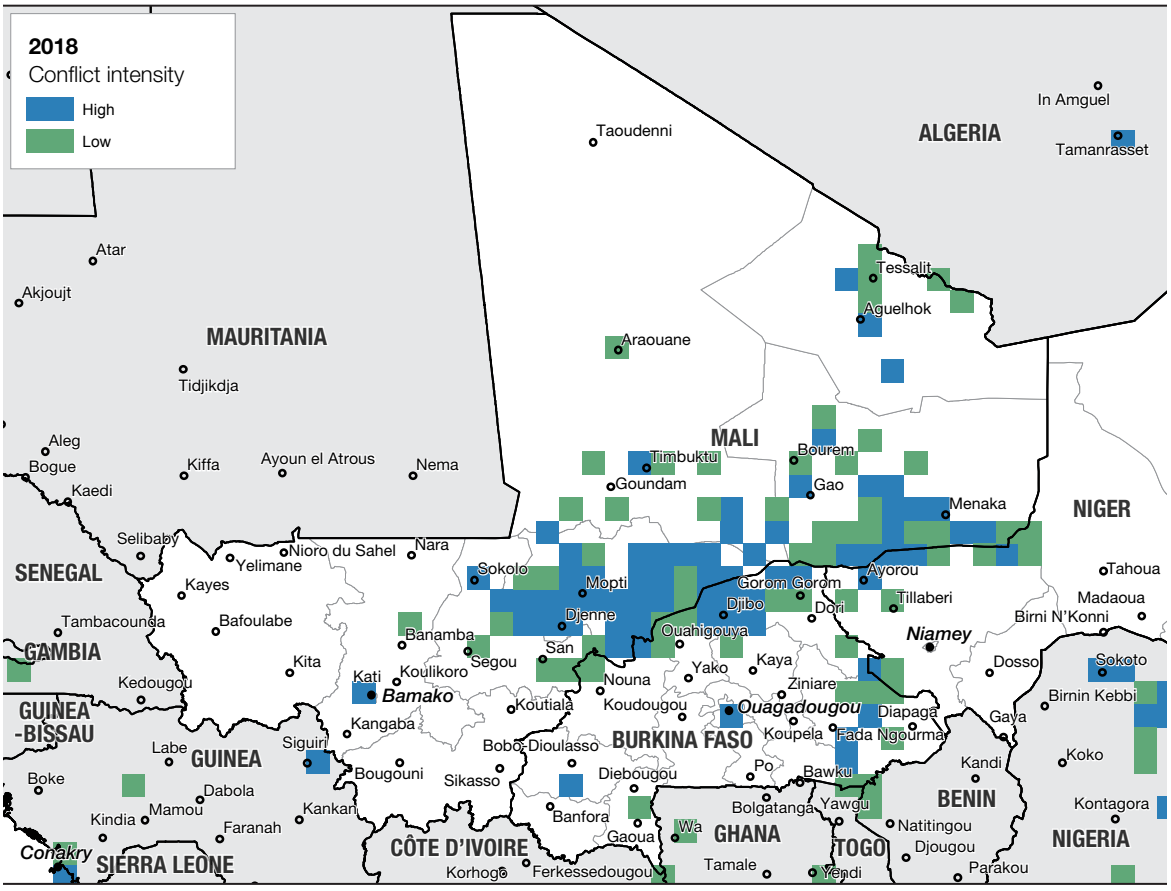
Measuring the intensity of violence

The SCDi was developed to assess the changing geography of violence, over space and through time. As discussed in Chapter 3, North and West Africa are divided into a 50 by 50 kilometres grid that contains 6 540 "cells" or "regions" (Map 4.4).

The indicator is comprised of metrics that focus on two interrelated but different spatial properties of violence: the relative intensity of conflict across a region (spatial density), and the

Map 4.7

Intensity of conflict in Mali and neighbouring countries, 2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

relative distribution of conflict locations relative to each other (spatial concentration).

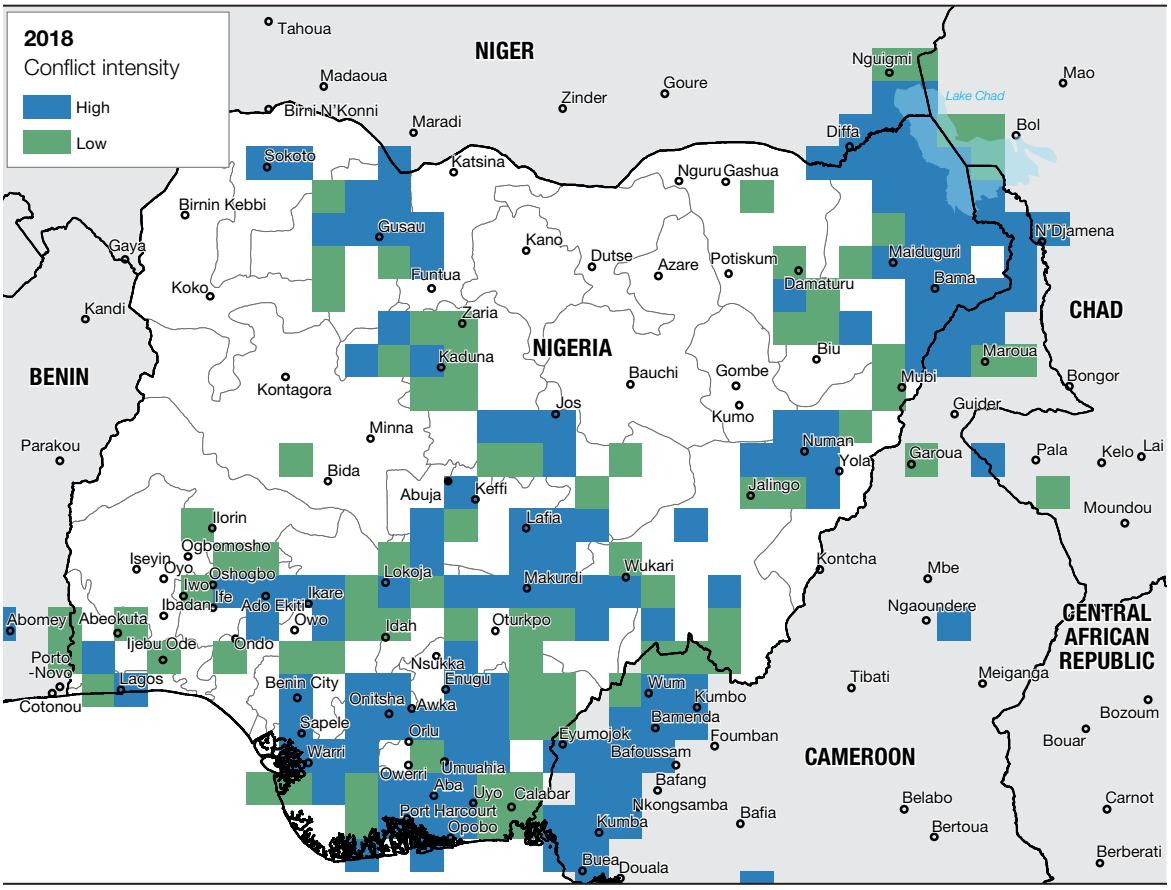
The first SCDi metric, Conflict Intensity (CI), measures the number of events in a given region within some duration, which is then divided by the area of the region to provide a metric suitable for comparing regions. More plainly, CI measures the overall intensity of violence within a given region without measuring the absolute location of violent events within the region. Because the number of events is standardised by the amount of area within the region, it produces a metric that can be used to compare areas of any size. However, this analysis uses a uniform grid of 50 x 50 kilometres and calculates CI for each of those regions for each calendar year between 1997 and 2018.

The CI measure has a lower bound of 0 (which would represent no events within the region during a given year) and no upper bound. As the measure increases from 0 it reflects a higher intensity of events within the region. Because of the vastness of the study area and the relatively small size of the grid that defines the study region, most regions have a CI score of 0 in any given year.

Classifying a CI score for a region as higher or lower than expected is also possible. To do this, a cutoff value must be established to create a threshold value. This was done by first calculating the CI score for every region for every year between 1997 and 2016 (20 years), then calculating the mean CI score (excluding zeros) over that time span. This resulted in what is called the CI 'generational mean' or the 20-year average conflict intensity. Between 1997 and 2016, the CI generational mean was 0.0017 events per square kilometre. Therefore, a region has a high density if it is greater than the generational mean and a low density otherwise. The study uses a

Map 4.8

Intensity of conflict in Nigeria, 2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

50 x 50 kilometres region (4 events/2500 square kilometres=0.0016), which is less than the cutoff value of 0.0017.

More regions are experiencing intense violence

Applying the CI metric to every grid by year shows how the geography of conflict had changed in the region (Map 4.5 and Map 4.6). For example, in 1997, most of the violence was within Sierra Leone with small pockets along the Algerian and Nigerian coasts. However, in 2018, violence has shifted and amplified with Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Libya all experiencing concentrated areas of intense violence.

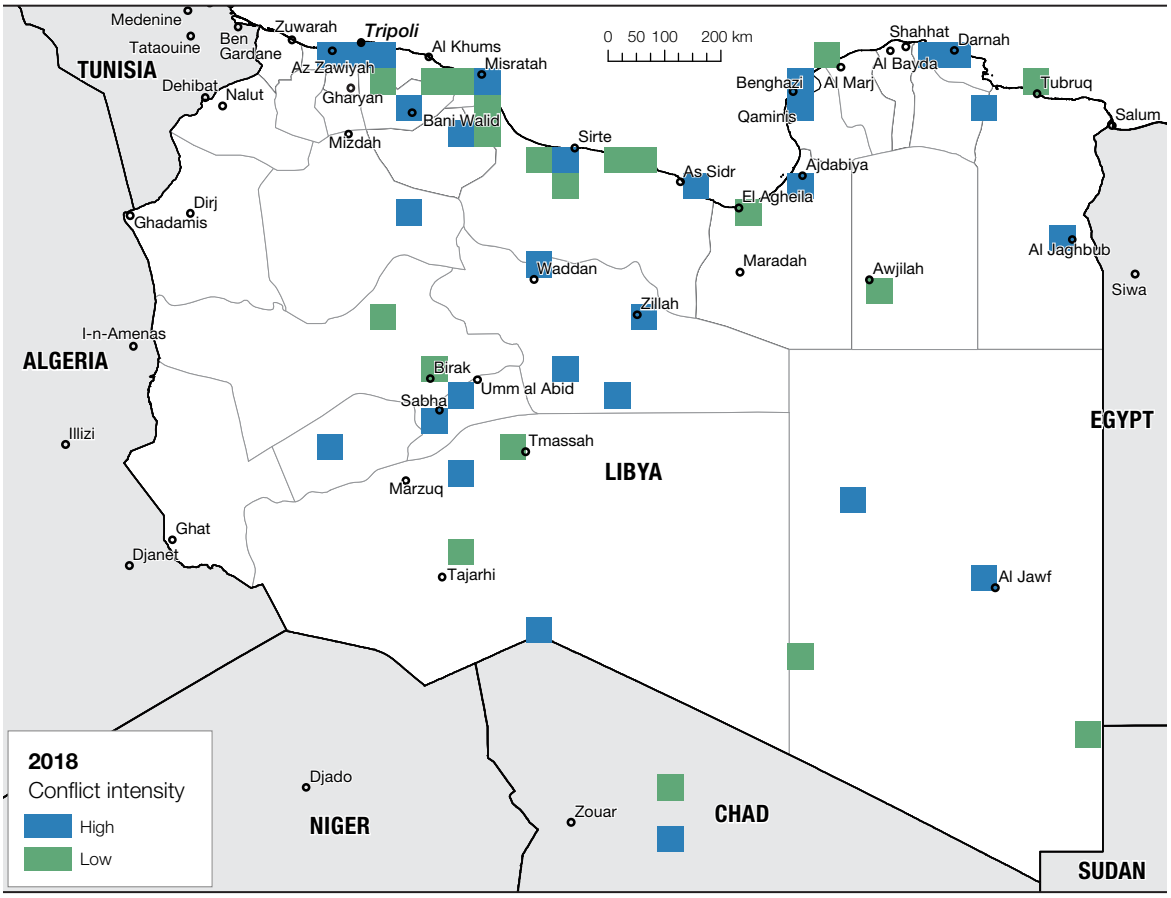
Not only has the location of violence shifted over time, but the number of regions experiencing violence has been multiplied by 5: In 1997, 85 regions had two or more events but in 2018 that number increased to 433. This increase is consistent when considering regions of both high- and low-intensity. The mix of high- and low-intensity violence regions are nearly the same between the years (59% high in 1997, 55% high in 2018).

Violence is spilling over into adjacent regions

The location of regions with low or high intensity of violence relative to each other is a point of concern. For example, in 1997, only 40% (14 out of 35) of low-intensity regions were immediately adjacent to a high-intensity region. By 2018, 68% of low-intensity regions (132 out of 193) were adjacent to a high-intensity region. This means

Map 4.9

Intensity of conflict in Libya, 2018



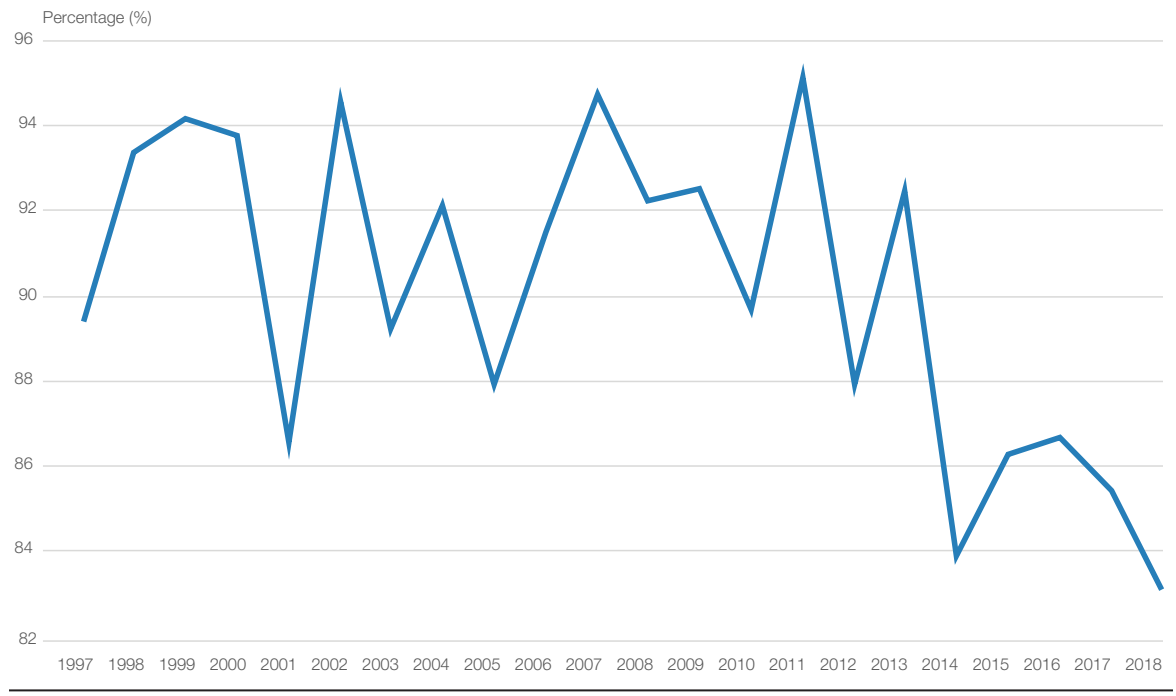
Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

violence in a high-intensity location is now more likely to "spill over" into surrounding regions.

This is troubling when considering the coincident locations of such conflict clusters along borders. For instance, large clusters of high-intensity regions surrounded by low-intensity regions are found along the borders between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger (Map 4.7). This points to the potential for low-intensity regions to become pathways for the spread of violence not just to new regions in the context of this study, but to new countries altogether. This circumstance is also found in the Lake Chad region and along the southern Nigerian-Cameroon border (Map 4.8).

The spread of conflict to rural areas and neighbouring countries observed in the Central Sahel stands in contrast to the patterns of low- and high-intensity regions in Libya where conflict is largely focused on cities. Where low-intensity regions occur, they correspond to outlying areas adjacent to cities and, to a lesser extent, to transportation routes between them (Map 4.9).

Figure 4.5
Regions classified as clustered, percentage, 1997-2018



Note: North and West Africa are divided into a 50 by 50 kilometres grid containing 6 540 individual "cells" or "regions". The graph shows the proportion of regions for which violent events recorded from 1997 to 2018 are more clustered than if they were randomly distributed.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

LOCAL AND DISPERSED POLITICAL VIOLENCE

In North and West Africa, as elsewhere in the world, political violence tends to cluster geographically, meaning acts of violence often occur near other acts of violence. This reflects the fact that political violence is partly a means by which control over spaces and places is resolved; a contested location then will be more likely to be the site of repeated acts of violence. This can be seen in the presence of the groups of adjacent high-density regions discussed above. However, a formal assessment of this promises to aid in the understanding of how conflict geographies change over space and time. This requires the application of another spatial metric.

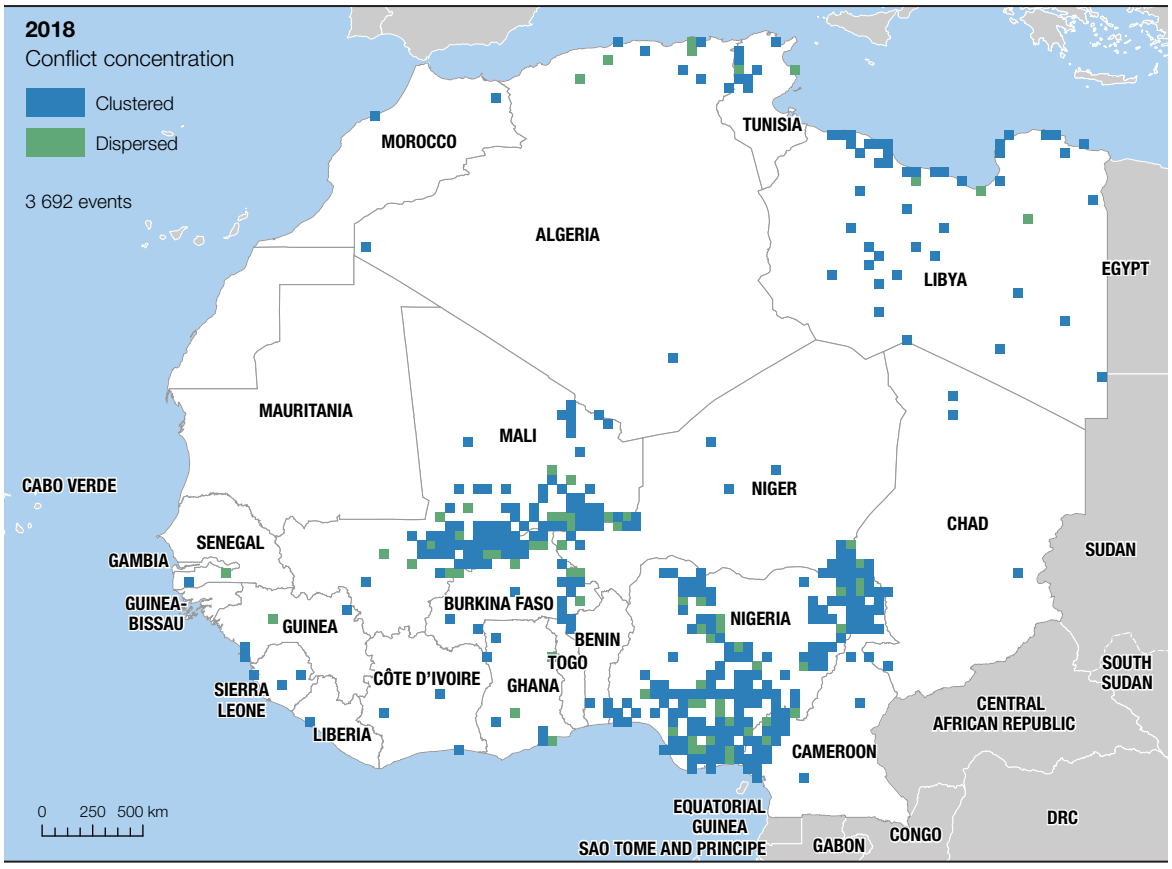
Measuring the concentration of violence

The second SCDi metric introduced in this study measures the relative distribution of conflict locations relative to each other within a given region. This metric, Conflict Concentration (CC), measures the observed average distance between events in a given region within one year divided by the expected average distance if the events were randomly distributed in the region (Chapter 3). The CC metric measures the overall location of violence within a given region but is not a measure of intensity within the region. For the purposes of this study, CC is only calculated for regions where the number of events was two or more in a given year (one-event regions are excluded as the both the observed and expected distances between events cannot be meaningful derived).

When the number of events is two or more, the CC metric has a lower bound of 0 with no conceptual upper bound. A score of 0 would represent a series of events at the exact same location and therefore an extreme geographic clustering of events together in a region. A score of 1 would represent a random pattern of event locations as some would be near each other with others far away. Overall,

Map 4.10

Concentration of conflict in North and West Africa, 2018



Note: North and West Africa are divided into a 50 by 50 kilometres grid containing 6 540 individual "cells" or "regions". The map shows whether violent events tend to be clustered or dispersed in each of these regions.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

there would be no detectible locational pattern. A score more than 1 would represent the relative dispersion of events across the region as they will be further apart from each other than expected by chance. In short, CC scores lower than 1 in a region can be classified as clustered and scores higher than 1 classified as dispersed.

Most regions exhibit clustering of violent events

Between 1997 and 2016, the average percentage of clustered regions (CC < 1) is nearly 91%. This means that within most regions, conflict is largely localised and events are more likely to occur near one another. As a side effect of this geography, the sundry negative impacts of violence are more likely to be felt in the same places repeatedly.

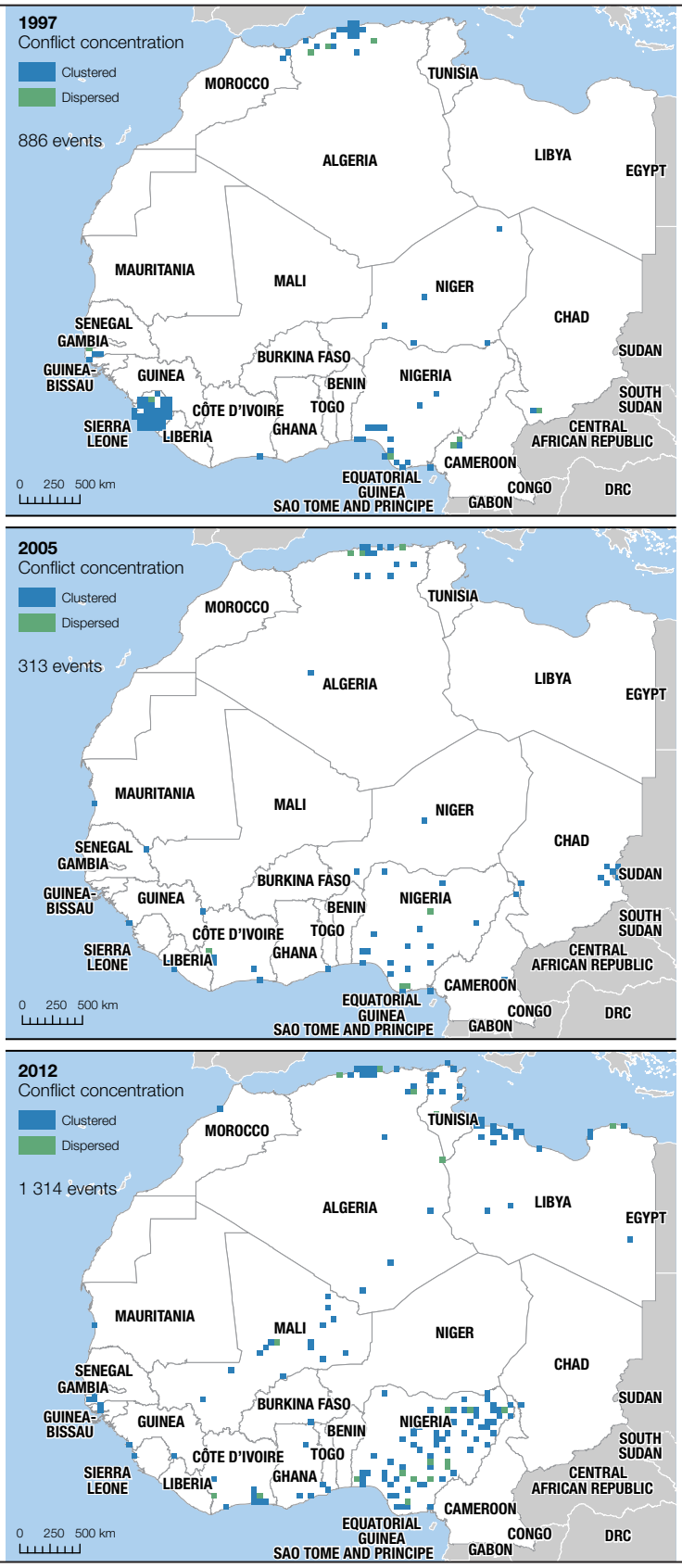
In recent years, the percentage of regions that exhibit clustering of violence has dropped from 95% in 2011 to 82% in 2018 (Figure 4.5) which may indicate that violence is become more slightly dispersed. This is a likely consequence of shifting tactics, including the marked increase in the numbers of attacks against civilians as these events are less likely to occur in similar locations over time.

Patterns of violence have become more dispersed

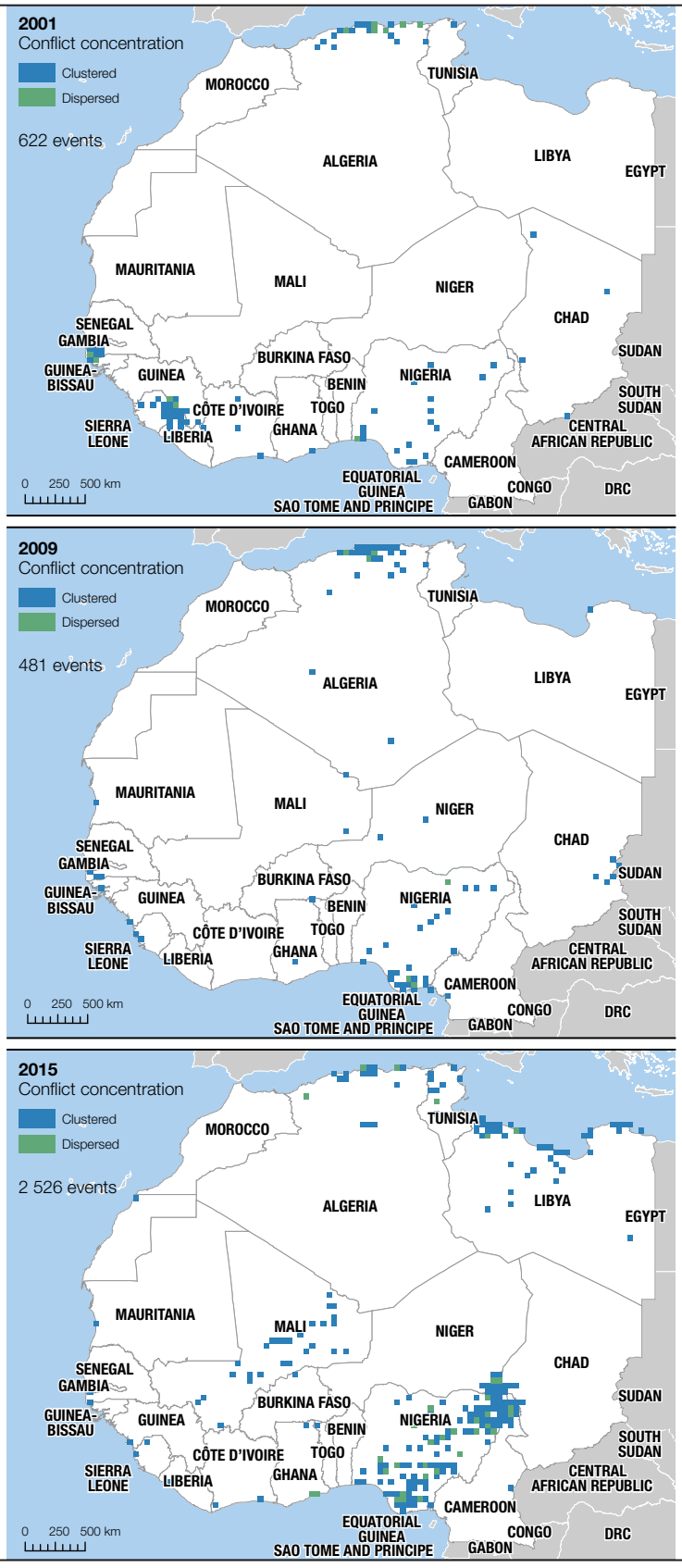
Regions with dispersed violence locations are a particular cause for concern. A region with dispersed events may be evidence of the spread of conflict to a new area from a neighbouring region. Conversely, a dispersed pattern may be evidence that a conflict is weakening or that one

Map 4.11

Concentration of conflict in North and West Africa, 1997-2015

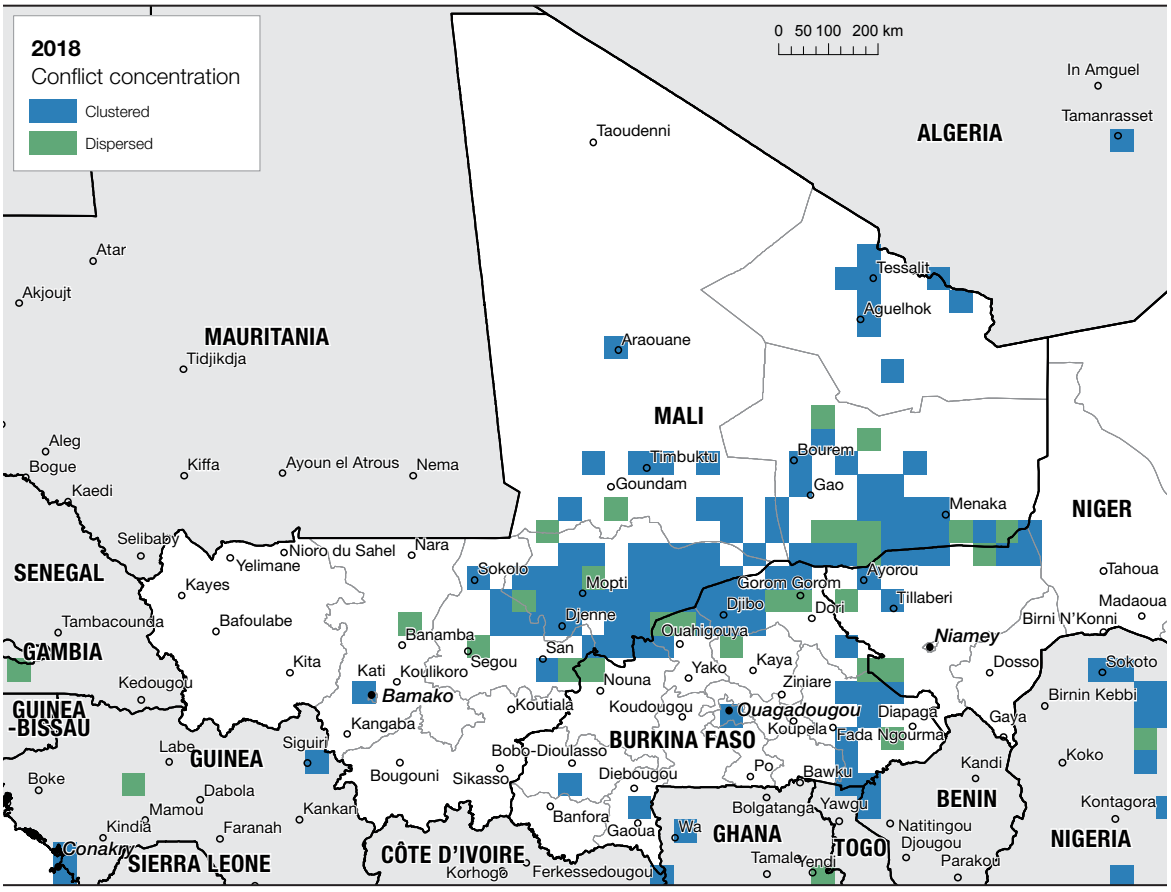


Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.



Map 4.12

Concentration of conflict in Mali and neighbouring countries, 2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

party is dominant in a region, as fewer violent events occur in nearby locations. In other words, a dispersed pattern can identify regions where a transition is underway in either direction.

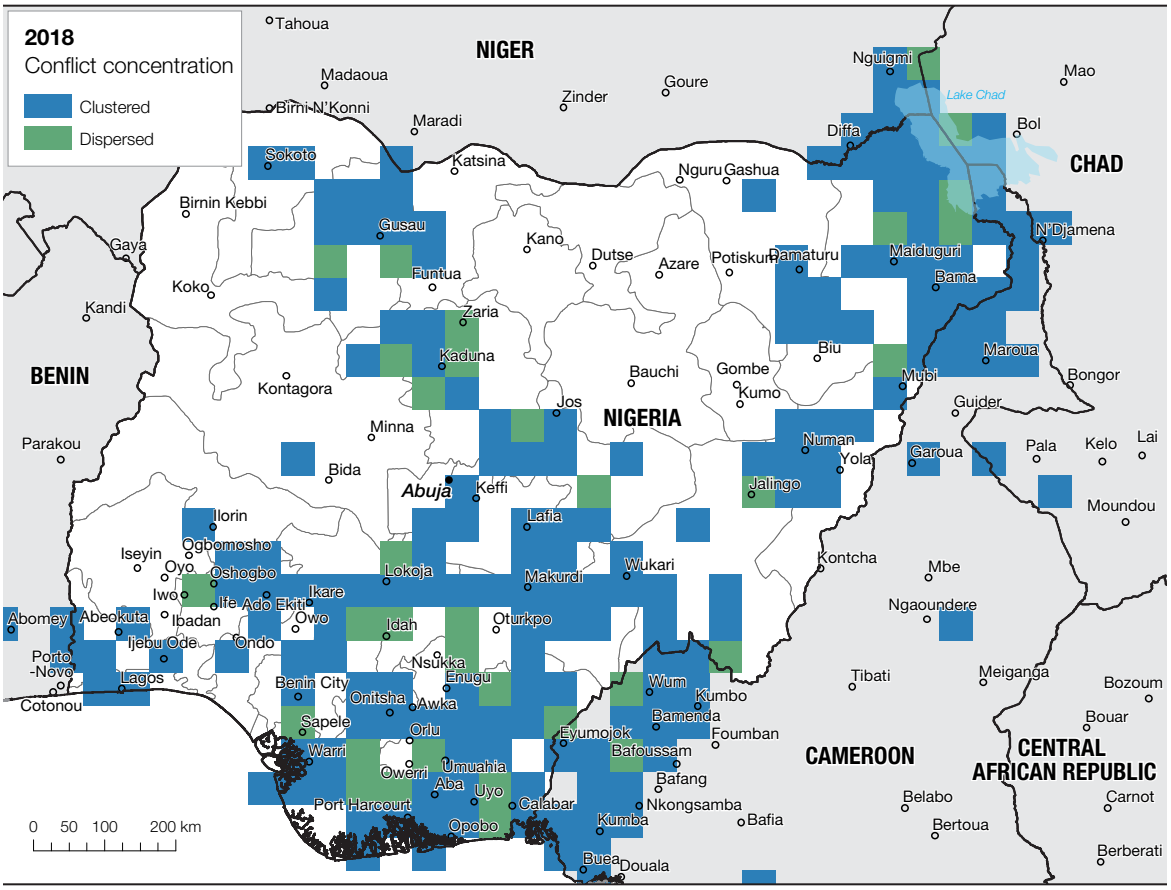
Alarmingly, the percentage of regions in 2018 with dispersed events (CC > 1) is nearly 17%, the highest percentage of the 23 years of data used in the study. This is 7% higher than the historical baseline between 1997 and 2016 and may be a sign of the incorporation of new places into the already intensely localised geography of conflicts. If correct, this would result in a negative feedback cycle by exposing more locations within the region to the effects of violence and incorporating new places into the geography of conflict.

The relative locations of clustered and dispersed pattern regions have also shifted over time. For example, all of the major conflict areas (Map 4.10) across the study region include clustered regions in 2018. Over time, dispersed patterns have mostly been associated with all the different conflict zones in Nigeria (Delta, Middle Belt, and Lake Chad (Map 4.11).

Similar to the previous discussion on conflict intensity, in 2018 dispersed conflict regions were mostly associated with Mali/Burkina Faso (Map 4.12) and Nigeria (Map 4.13). Conversely, the conflict in Libya remains largely concentrated with only three regions in total exhibiting a dispersed pattern (Map 4.14).

Map 4.13

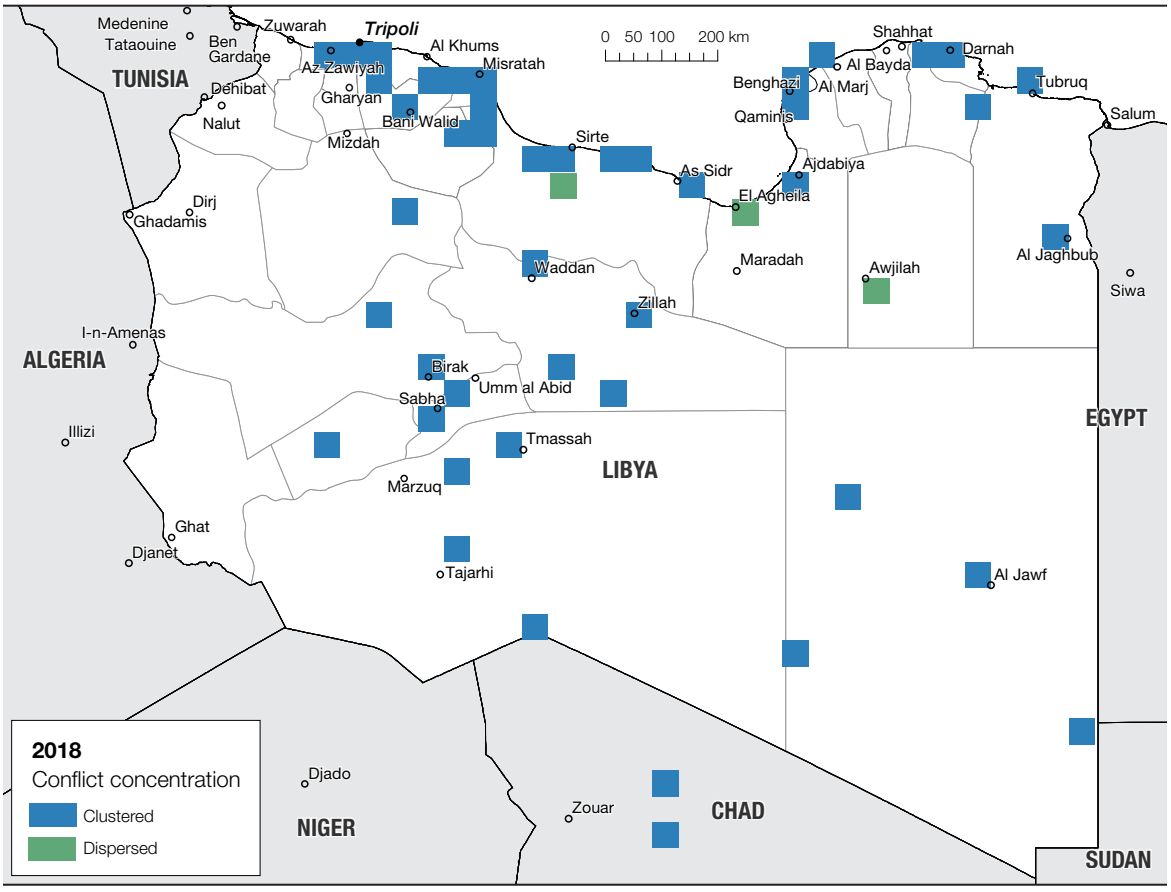
Concentration of conflict in Nigeria, 2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Map 4.14

Concentration of conflict in Libya, 2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Figure 4.6

Four types of conflicts

	High intensity of violent events	Low intensity of violent events
Clustered events	(1) The conflict is **intensifying locally**	(3) The conflict is **decreasing**
Dispersed events	(2) The conflict is **accelerating**	(4) The conflict is **lingering**

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE INTENSITY AND CONCENTRATION OF CONFLICTS

The geography of conflict throughout the region is obscured by the large number of belligerents, their divergent political strategies, and a focus on individual countries as the primary context of the continuing violence. While violence remains on the increase, it remains unclear whether violent organisations are intensifying their efforts in particular localities, spreading insecurity to a growing number of regions, or relocating under the pressure of government forces. In order to provide evidence for these crucial questions, the SCDi analyses the evolution of the intensity and concentration of conflict since 1997.

Four types of conflicts

The SCDi identifies four types of conflict according to whether violence is more or less dispersed or clustered, and intense or diffuse (Figure 4.6).

- The first type applies to regions where there are an above average intensity and a clustered distribution of violent events, suggesting that violence is intensifying locally.
- The second type is when a conflict is characterised by a higher than average intensity and a dispersed distribution of events, indicating that the violence is accelerating.
- The third type applies to regions where there are fewer violent activities and most of them take place near each other, possibly indicating a decreasing range of violent groups.
- The fourth type, in which a lower than average intensity and a dispersed distribution of events are combined, suggests that a conflict is lingering. This situation may be indicative of a region in which opponents are highly mobile or are unlikely to face protracted opposition in a given locality

The regions in which conflict is intensifying locally (type 1) often form the core of large epicentres of violence, as in central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, around Lake Chad, in the Middle Belt and the Niger Delta in Nigeria, and in Libya (Map 4.15). The regions in which conflicts are accelerating (type 2) are located in the Inner Niger Delta in Mali, southern Nigeria, the Liptako-Gourma between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, and the border region between Nigeria and Cameroon. Regions in which conflict are probably decreasing because political violence is clustered and of low intensity (type 3) are often found on the periphery of more intense conflict zones, such as on the outskirts of major cities in Libya. Similarly, regions in which violence is dispersed and of low intensity (type 4) are located at the periphery of the major war zones or in some countries with fewer violent events, such as Ghana, Guinea or Algeria.

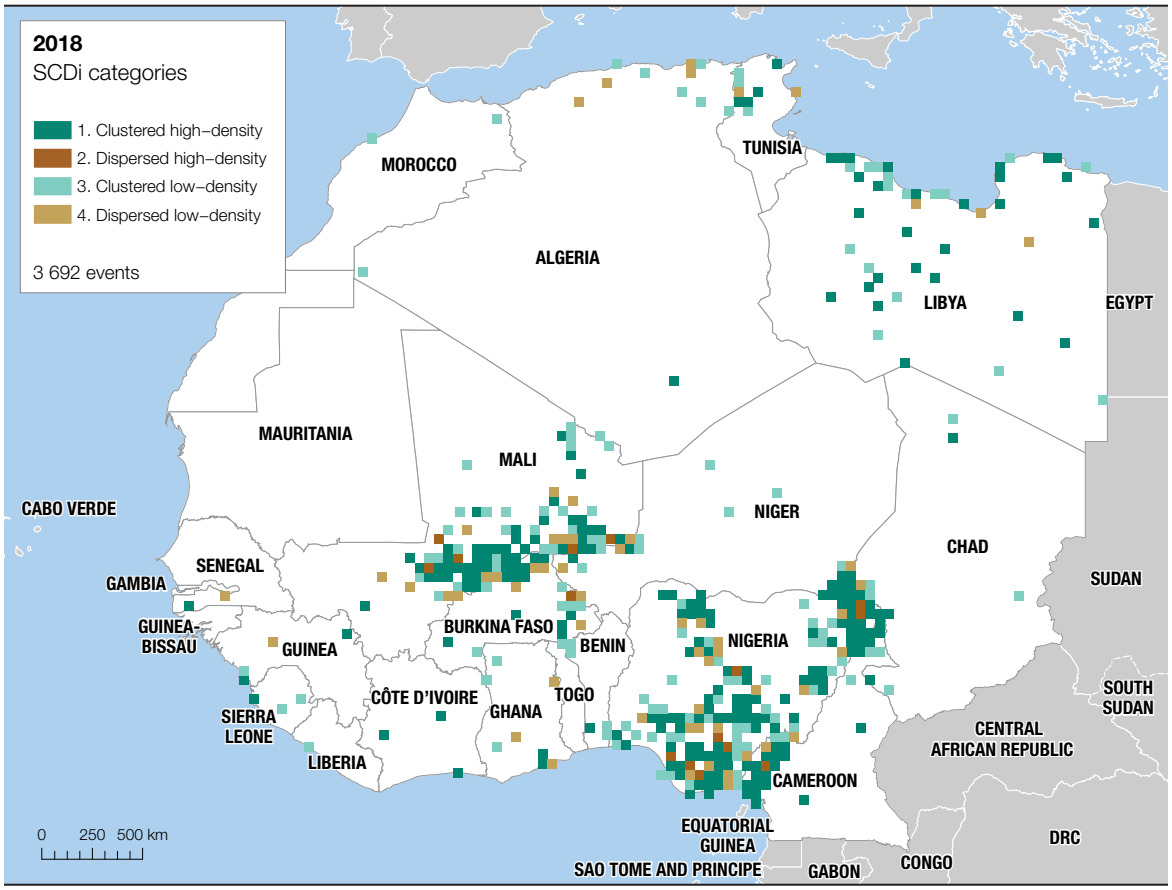
More conflicts are intensifying locally than before

The nature of conflicts has changed quite abruptly over the last 20 years: while the first decade saw few differences in the intensity and concentration of political violence, the last 10 years have been marked by a strong increase in all types of conflicts (Figure 4.7).

- The number of regions experiencing a local intensification of political violence (type 1) has increased significantly faster than other types of conflicts. These conflicts where violence is both clustered and intense are the most widespread in the region. Historically, this type has always been the most represented in North and West Africa (Figure 4.8) but its proportion has continuously increased since the mid-2000s, from 38% in 2008 to more than half ten years later.
- Regions in which conflicts are accelerating (type 2), as showed by a high intensity of dispersed events are fortunately quite rare in the region. They concern only 3% of the cells, a proportion that has not changed much over the last 20 years. Several gaps with no cells of dispersed-high density are recorded, indicating that the acceleration of conflicts is a rather unusual occurrence in the region.
- The number of regions in which political violence is both clustered and of low density (type 3) has experienced a strong growth since 2010. This type concerns one-third (31%) of the cells of the region. These conflict regions are less represented

Map 4.15

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) in North and West Africa, 2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

than in the mid-2000s, when they accounted for half of the conflicts.

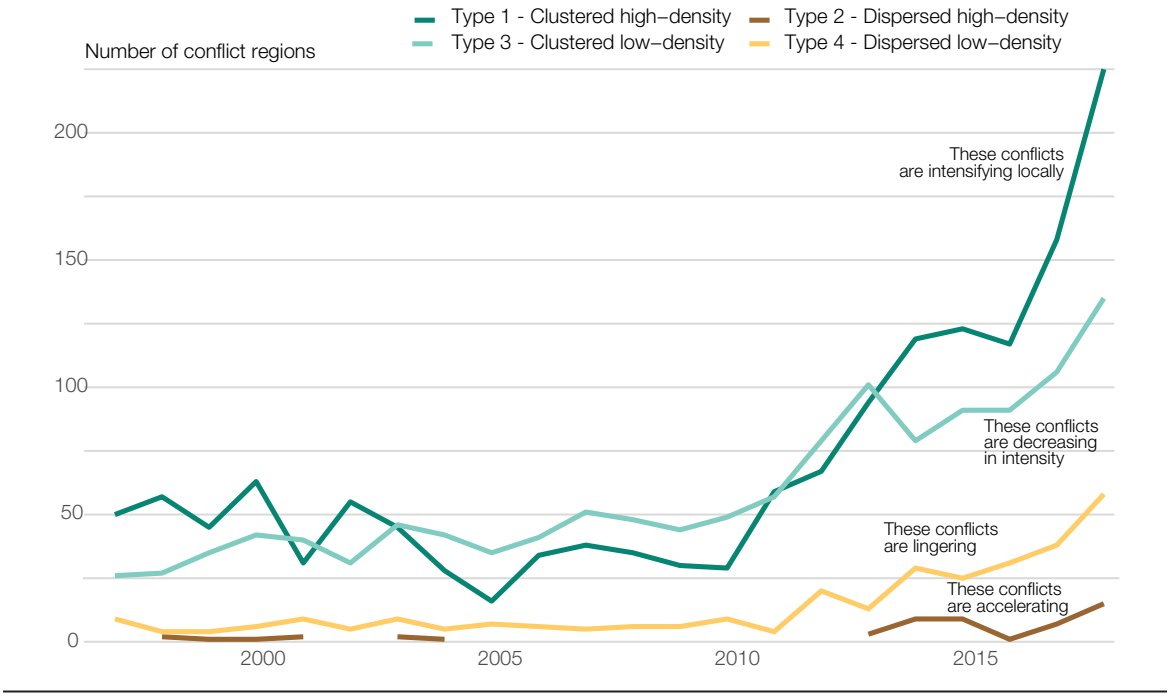
- Regions that experience lingering conflicts due to dispersed and low-intensity events (type 4) are also rare. This type is found in only 13% of the cells but the percentage of those regions has doubled over the last 10 years.

The shifting geography of political violence

The study of the indicator confirms that political violence has experienced major shifts over the last 20 years (Map 4.16). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, most of the conflicts were highly localised and extremely violent, as during the civil wars in Algeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia. A number of localised and moderately violent conflicts also affected the southern part of Nigeria and its Middle Belt over the same period. In the mid-2000s, much of the major conflicts ended or decreased significantly, with the exception of the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, which appears on the map as a combination of clustered conflicts. The development of violent extremist organisations is clearly visible from the early 2010s, with the emergence of an increasingly large group of clustered and violent conflict regions in northern Nigeria, northern Mali and Libya.

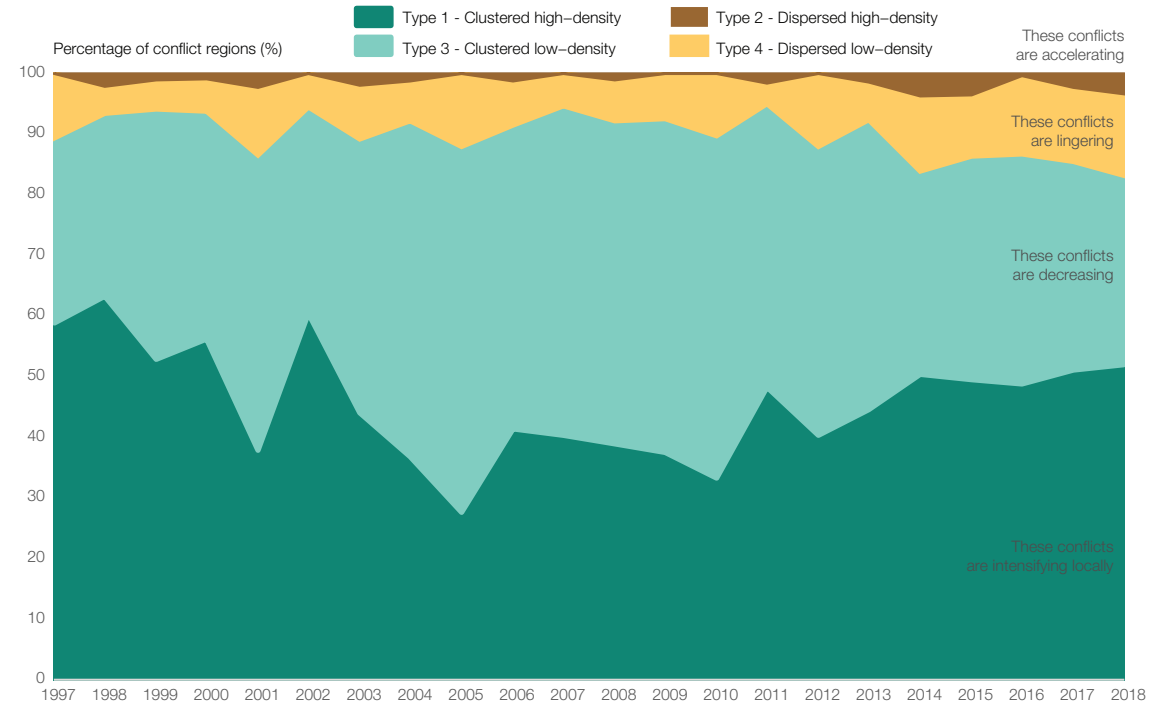
How have these types of conflict evolved over time? Understanding the trends over time in SCDi scores over time requires an extra step. In a given year, each region receives a SCDi score if it experienced two or more events. Otherwise, regions with no or only one event receive no score. Every region undergoes this process for each year in the study, which allows an evaluation of shifts between SCDi categories over time. For example, violent events in a region may be clustered high–density in 2003, clustered low–density in 2004, and absent in 2005.

Figure 4.7
Number of conflicts by type, 1997-2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

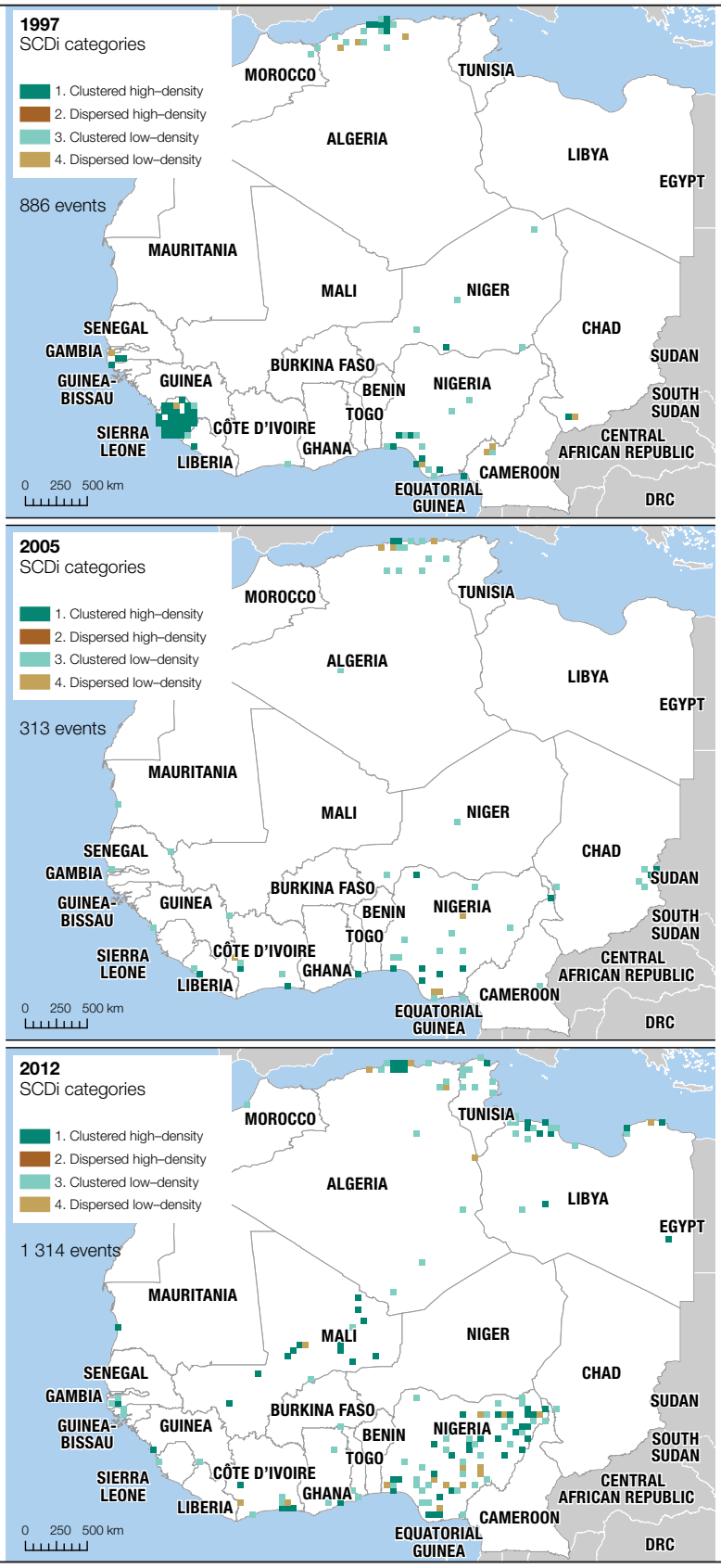
Figure 4.8
Proportion of conflict regions by type, 1997-2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Map 4.16

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) in North and West Africa, 1997-2015



Source: ACLED 2019. Calculations and cartography by the authors.

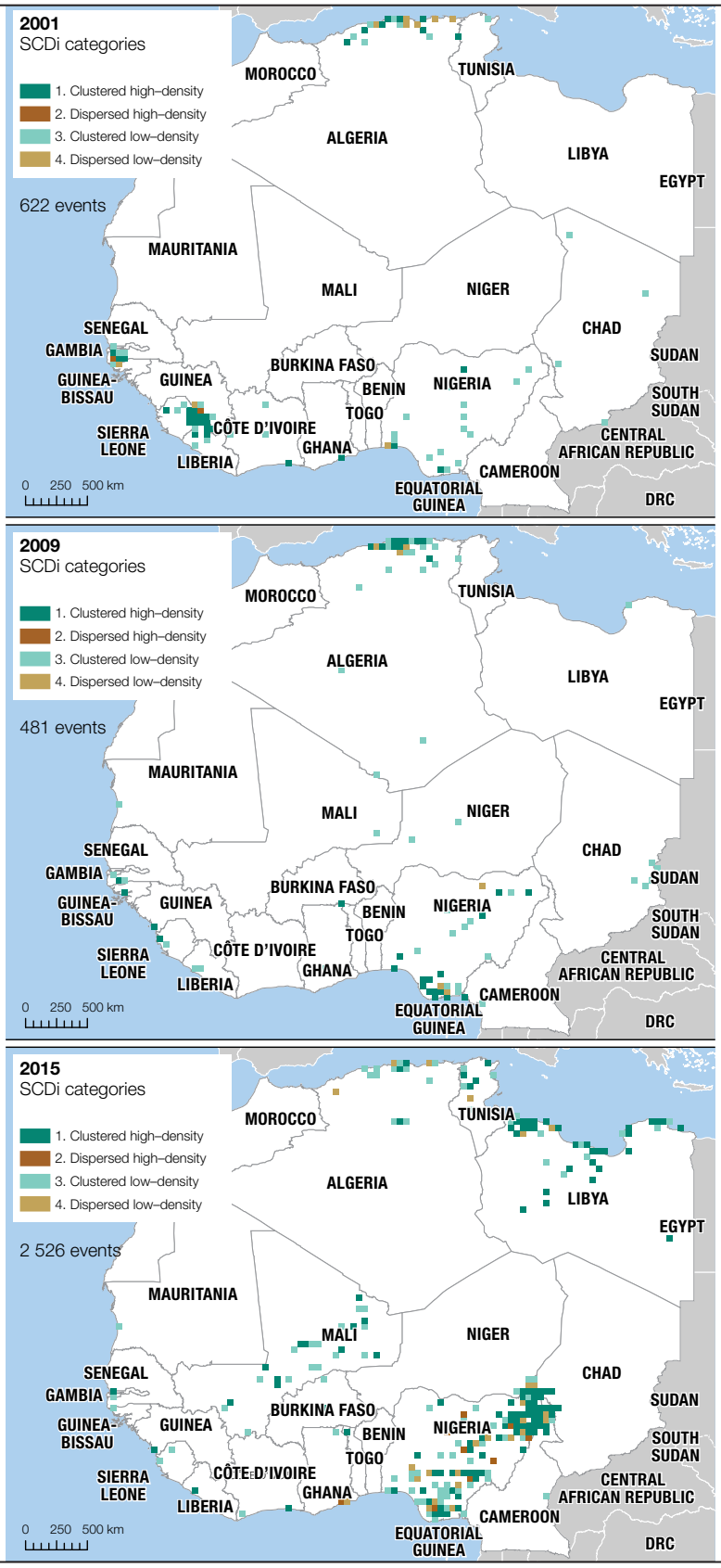
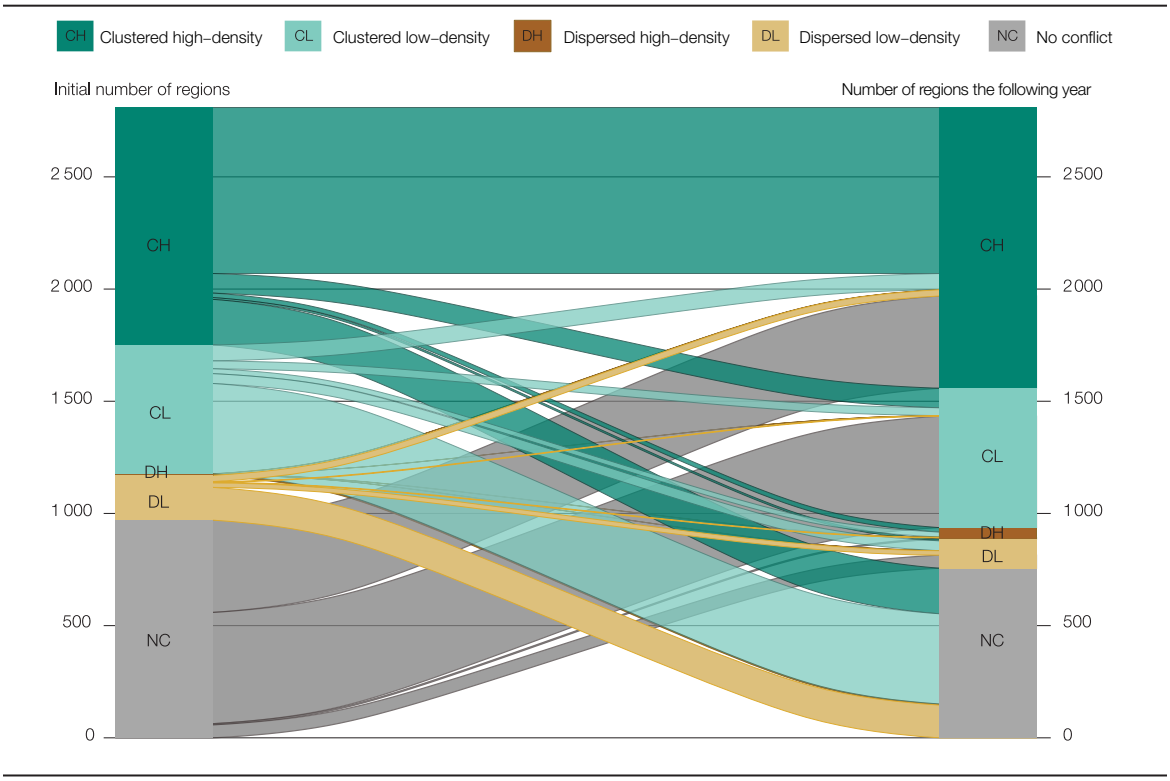


Figure 4.9

Yearly shifts in the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi)



Note: The figure shows how many regions have experienced a change in conflict from one year to another between 1997 and 2019. Each region is classified according to its initial and final intensity and concentration of violent events. The figure excludes regions that never receive a SCDi score over any year in the study.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Tallying these shifts can highlight how conflict geography evolves over time. Figure 4.9 visualises the year-to-year interplay between the various SCDi categories.

- **Regions where violence is both clustered and intense (type 1, CH) are likely to remain unchanged**. The most common outcome is for a Clustered-High Density region in one year to remain Clustered-High Density in the following year, which occurs 70% of the time. This captures the likelihood for the continuation of a localised conflict over multiple years, a common occurrence in the various conflict zones in Nigeria for instance. However, the second most common outcome for a Clustered-High Density region is to have no score the following year (19%), meaning that even intense localised conflicts can come to a rather abrupt end. The last meaningful shift is to Clustered-Low Density (8%), which is interpreted as a transition state along the way to conflict de-escalation. For example, many of the major cities in Libya (Tripoli, Benghazi, Misratah, Al Khums) continue to have higher than average numbers of events year-to-year. Between 2017 and 2018, the event locations within those conflict zones remained clustered together within the cities' extents rather than occurring at dispersed locations around the countryside.
- **Regions where violence is clustered but of low intensity (type 3, CL) are likely to change for the better**. The most common shift for Clustered-Low Density regions is to have no conflict the following year (70% of the time) or to become Clustered-High Density (12%). This reinforces the idea that Clustered-Low Density regions are in a state of transition and unlikely to persist year-to-year, which only happens 6% of the time. For example, several conflict regions in Yobe and Gombe states in northeast Nigeria changed from low intensity

but clustered conflict locations in 2017 to no conflict the following year.

- **Regions where violence is dispersed and intense (type 2, DH) are also likely to improve**. These are the rarest regions in the study, a positive sign as they may represent both an intensifying and diffusing conflict. Helpfully, the most common outcome is for such regions to receive no score the following year (71%) which points to their instability. The other most common outcomes are to either remain unchanged or to shift to Clustered-High Density (each happens 14% of the time). For example, conflict around Biu in Nigeria's Borno state changed from dispersed but high intensity to no conflict between 2017 and 2018. Similar examples over that same time period were found in rural areas of Nigeria's Benue and Edo states and in Chad around Moundou in Logone Occidental.
- **Regions where violence is both dispersed and of low intensity (type 4, DL) are likely to recover**. As with Clustered-Low Density and Dispersed-High Density regions, the most common outcome for Dispersed-Low intensity regions is to receive no score the following year (73%). Fourteen percent of the time, these regions become Clustered-High Density; 10% of the time, they remain unchanged. For example, between 2017 and 2018, numerous examples of conflict zones changing from dispersed and low intensity conflict to no conflict were found in Nigeria (Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Edo, and Imo states), in Mali (Timbuktu region), and Libya (near Benghazi).
- **Regions that are not affected by conflicts are likely to remain peaceful but, when a change happens, it is likely to be a localised low intensity conflict (type 3, CL)**. Most regions never experience conflict over the study's time range. However, regions that shift from no score to one of the other categories are troubling as this resents a sudden introduction or re-introduction of conflict into a previously peaceful region. When conflict does emerge in a region where it was previously absent, it is most often as Clustered-Low Density (51%). However, it also commonly jumps directly to Clustered-High Density (42%). This is the worst possible outcome given the persistence of the Clustered-High Density category over time. For example, several areas in the central part of Mali's Mopti region that had no conflict events in either 2016 or 2017 were classified as clustered and high intensity in 2018. When conflict emerged, it erupted into the category that has the most persistence over time.

LOCAL CONFLICT IN MALI, NIGERIA AND LIBYA

Mali, Nigeria and Libya are three hotspots of violence in the region. The spatial indicator developed in this study reveals that the nature of the conflict differs significantly across these regions: while political violence tends to form large clusters that spread from northern Mali and northern Nigeria to rural areas, much of violent events in Libya are clustered in a few key locations, both on the coast and the Fezzan.

The Malian Civil War and Central Sahel insurgency

Mali has experienced four Tuareg rebellions since its independence in 1960 (Bourgeot, 2012) (Box 4.2). The latest one, which marks the beginning of the Malian Civil War in January 2012, is primarily described as the result of the fall of Muhammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011 and the return of Tuareg fighters from Libya to northern Mali (Pezard and Shurkin, 2015). Other causes explain also the trigger of this conflict, such as the desire for autonomy for some Tuareg communities, the (perceived) economic and political marginalisation of these communities in Mali and internal rivalries between tribes, traditional leaders and emerging elites (Bencherif, 2019). Overall security in the region was also disrupted by decades of illicit trafficking, crime, drugs passing through northern Mali and smuggling networks spread across northern Mali since the 1990s.

Box 4.2

The Tuareg rebellions in Niger and Mali (2006-09)

The Mali rebellion was initiated in 2006 by the Democratic Alliance for Change (ADC), a rebel group dominated by Iyad Ag Ghali, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga and Hassan Ag Fagaga, who came from different factions of the Ifoghas tribe (Wikileaks, 2008). Their initial objective was to force the Malian state to address the marginalisation of the north (Bencherif, 2019). After less than one year of fighting, the ADC and the Malian government of Amadou Toumani Touré signed a peace agreement in Algiers. Ag Bahanga, who was not satisfied by this agreement, then created the Alliance des Touaregs du Nord-Mali pour le changement (ATNMC) and continued to conduct sporadic attacks against the state between 2007 and 2009 (Lecocq and Klute, 2013). The Imghad militia of El Hadj Ag Gamou, an ex-Tuareg rebel who was integrated into the Malian army as an officer, eventually defeated Ag Bahanga. This episode contributed to increasing the tensions between the Ifoghas and the Imghad, which would resurface during the rebellion of 2012.

In Niger, the Tuareg rebellion was triggered by the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) in Iférouane in February 2007. The rebellion led by Aghali Alambo was caused by multiple factors. Tuareg leaders who were marginalised in Niamey, and even imprisoned in the case of Rhissa Ag Boula, played a key role in the mobilisation of their Tuareg communities in the Aïr region (Deycard, 2012; Guichaoua et Pellerin, 2017). Younger Tuareg joined the rebellion as a way to gain better administrative jobs and improve their economic situations. Some narco-smugglers also tried to position themselves in the local and national political arena (Deycard, 2007). The MNJ experienced became increasingly fragmented over time and never allied with other ethno-nationalist movements in Mali (Guichaoua, 2009). The end of the conflict was facilitated by Muhammar Gaddafi, who informally agreed to play the role of mediator (Lecocq and Klute, 2019) and paid off the rebels to renounce the armed conflict against the Nigerien state (Deycard, 2013). The Tuareg rebellion stopped in 2009 without any peace agreement between the Tuareg armed groups.

Source: Adib Bencherif.

The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) was the most prominent rebel group of the conflict. The group was formed in 2011 as an alliance between two existing groups — the National Alliance of Tuareg in Mali (ATNM) and the Movement of Azawad (MNA). They demanded that the government end the socioeconomic marginalisation of the northern region and were largely secular and sociopolitical in their motivations and objectives. Following the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya (2011) and President Amadou Toumani Touré in Mali (2012) a provisional alliance between the MNLA rebels and Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups launched a wide-ranging military offensive against the Malian army.

Over a matter of weeks, all major cities of Northern Mali were seized, including Tessalit and Kidal, where the offensive started, as well as Ménaka, Timbuktu and Gao. New groups such as Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Dine started to clash with their former Tuareg allies over the cities of the north of the country and main lines of communication. The jihadist groups exploited Tuareg grievances and ultimately usurped the insurgency for their own fundamentalist religious purposes. Many jihadist members of these groups had previous insurgency experience across the many jihadist wars in Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. The most ambiguous actor amongst these armed groups was the Jihadist organisation Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith). Led by Iyad Ag Ghaly, one of the main leaders of the Tuareg rebellion of the 1990s and of 2006, Ansar Dine is linked to the previous Tuareg rebellions and close to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and MUJAO (Lecocq et. al., 2013).

In January 2013, a new offensive by the religious extremists towards Mopti convinced the interim Malian government to request the intervention of the French army, which launched Operation Serval. At the end of an operation on a scale not witnessed since the Algerian war, the French army, backed by Malian and Chadian troops, rapidly retook northern Mali and destroyed bases belonging to AQIM, MUJAO and Ansar Dine in Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and in the Adrar des Ifoghas. By restoring Mali's territorial integrity, the French army paved the way for the deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali).

After the French intervention, the MNLA became a key player in collaborating with other forces to fight against terrorist groups. Members of Ansar Dine, notably Alghabass Ag Intalla, left the group to reimagine the group's identity and purpose. They created the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA) and are part of the Co-ordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA), one of the three signatory parties of the Algiers Peace Agreement of 2015 (Boutellis and Zahar, 2017). The members staying in Ansar Dine led by Iyad Ag Ghaly became more and more radical and violent during the Malian conflict and during their confrontation with military forces (Bencherif and Campana, 2017). They joined forces in Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), a jihadist coalition regrouping of Ansar Dine, Al Mourabitoun, AQIM's Saharan branch and the Macina Liberation Front, in March 2015 (Joscelyn, 2017).

In mid-2014, the French military forces reconvened under Operation Barkhane to combat terrorist groups (Griffin, 2016) while a political solution to the conflict in Mali failed to materialise. Six years after northern Mali was retaken, the insecurity fostered by rivalries between former rebels, religious extremists and factions of the international peacekeeping force remains a concern. Despite the initial success of the Serval military operation, the Malian, African and international forces present in Mali are regularly the target of attacks by violent extremist groups affiliated with the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) or Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).

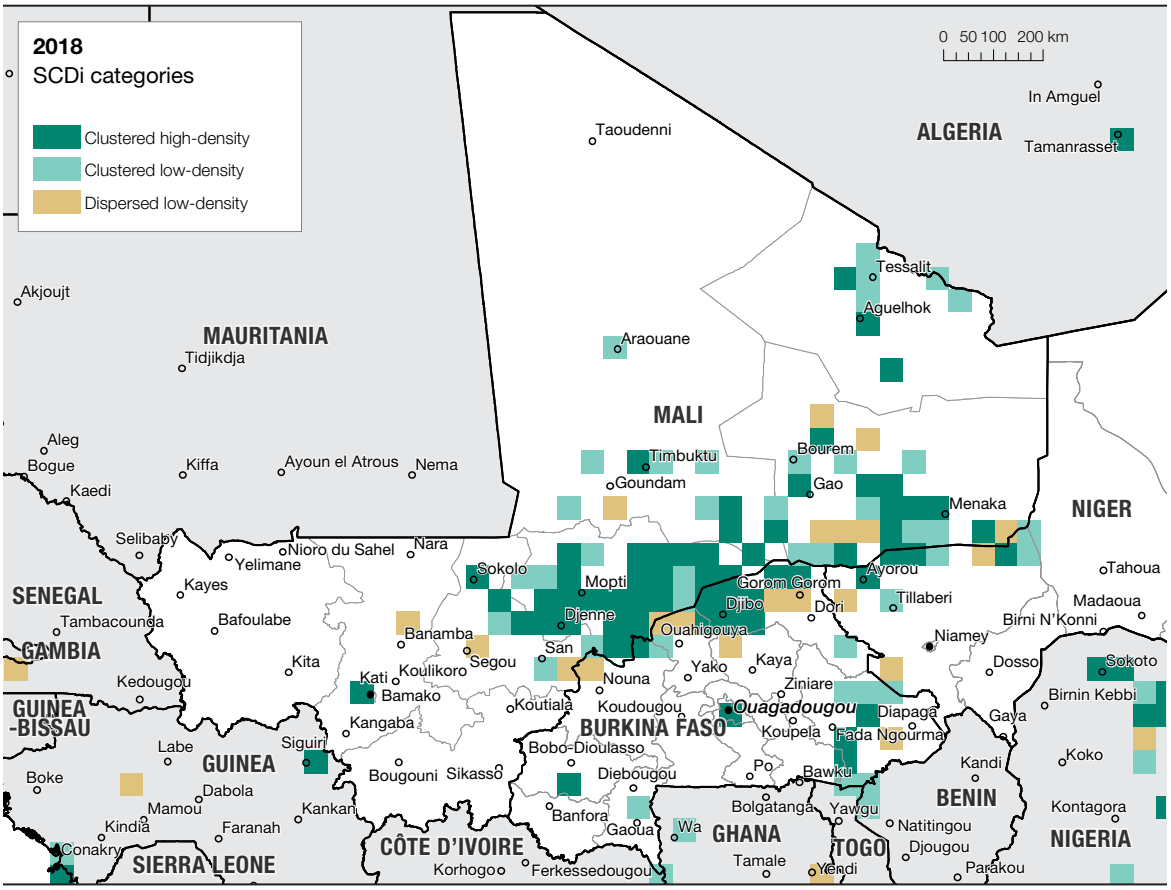
During the conflict, the political elites in Bamako have used different strategies to manage the insurgents, oscillating between the stick and the carrot with the armed groups. A popular strategy was to use militias from other communities as counter-insurgency actors. The Ganda Izo and Ganda Koy militias, mainly composed of Songhay, Fulani and Bella, were mobilised to play this role. As the French before them, state elites also instrumentalised Tuareg militias, like the Imghad Tuareg Self-Defense Group and Allies (GATIA) of General El Hadj Ag Gamou, to defeat rebel groups (Grémont, 2010). However, these groups tend to be autonomous and defend their own interests instead of those of the Malian state. Their role as paramilitary forces increases the use of violence and has led to internal rivalries within the Tuareg, for example, between the Imghad militia of Ag Gamou and the Ifoghas tribe represented in the HCUA.

In recent years, the conflict of northern Mali has also spread to regions that had remained largely unaffected by political violence. Several terrorist attacks have been perpetrated in the south of the country while the authority of the government of Mali remains notional in many jurisdictions in the north. The Inner Delta of the Niger River, the Dogon Country and the Liptako-Gourma region bordering Niger are also experiencing a growing number of attacks. A violent insurgency has also developed in the northern regions of Burkina Faso as local states and their international partners struggle to put in place a joint military force capable of addressing multiple insurgencies (Chapter 5).

As in the north, the Malian political elite relies on local militias (such as the Dozos) to fight against the Fulani-dominated armed groups that have emerged in the centre and east of the country. This strategy has increased the violence between ethnic communities, as recent massacres between Dogon and Fulani around the Bandiagara Cliff have shown. In the Ménaka region, armed groups like the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA) of Moussa Ag Acharatoumane and the GATIA militia led by General Ag Gamou are helping the French Opération Barkhane fight terrorist groups (Bencherif, 2018). At the same time, some marginalised Fulani communities are increasingly tempted to join

Map 4.17

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) in Mali and Central Sahel, 2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

the ISGC, led by Adnan Abu Walid al Sahrawi (Grémont, 2019). The violence seems more and more privileged by the different communities. These new developments contribute to spreading violence across the region.

The SCDi clearly identifies these new clusters of conflict in 2018 (Map 4.17). The central part of Mali, from Djenné to the Gourma, appears now as a large conflict region in which political violence is both very localised and very intense (dark green). The region extends far into neighbouring Burkina Faso, both in the Nord region west of Ouahigouya, and in the Sahel region around Djibo. A belt of other regions in which political violence is localised but not yet as intense (light green) surrounds the major conflict areas. These regions, such as the north of the Seno plain between Mali and Burkina Faso, or the west of the Inner Delta, are those most likely to experience war in the near future. The Central Sahel also counts numerous regions in which violence is dispersed and not intense (in light brown), often localised between the major areas of conflict. These regions are potential fragile areas in which the security situation could deteriorate.

Nigeria's insurgencies and communal violence

None of the states of the region has been more affected by political violence than Nigeria since 1997. The most populous country in Africa, Nigeria is also the country that has, by far, the largest number of violent events (9 017) and fatalities (67 512) (Figure 4.10). Nigeria is home to three major sources of continuous violence that explain the unusual intensity and geographical extent of conflicts in the country: the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, communal

Map 4.18

The Northeast, Middle Belt and Delta of Nigeria



Note: Major conflict areas are indicated with polka dots.

Source: Authors.

violence in the Middle Belt, and the Niger Delta insurgency in the south (Map 4.18). Taken together, these conflicts account for 30% of the violent events and half of the victims recorded in North and West Africa since 1997.

Boko Haram's insurgency

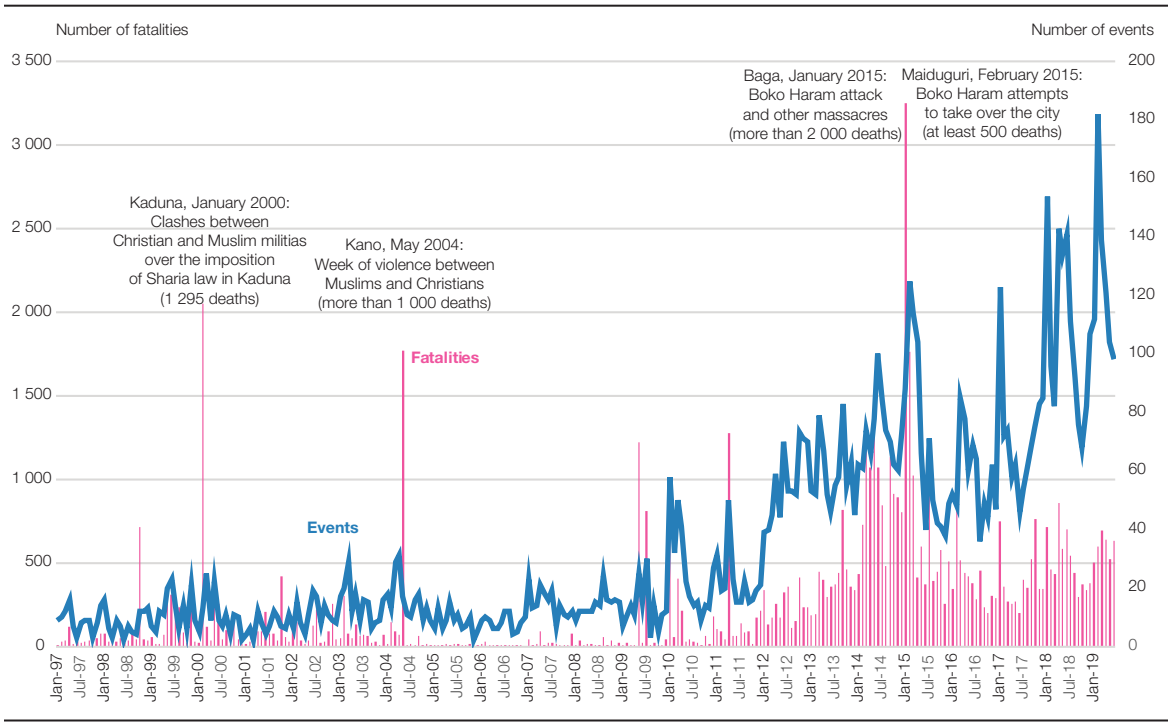
For the last 10 years, Lake Chad has been the centre of a major insurgency launched by the Jihadist organisation commonly known as Boko Haram (Kendhammer and McCain, 2018). Boko Haram emerged in Borno State as a social and non-violent movement in the early 2000s (Onuhoa, 2014). The movement was initially referred to as Yusufiyyah, after the charismatic Salafi preacher Mohamed Yusuf, who attracted a growing number of followers from Yobe and Borno states in Nigeria as well as from neighbouring Niger and Chad (Anugwom, 2018; Thurston, 2018). The name Boko Haram, which means "Western education is a sin" in Hausa, was given by outsiders and is not accepted by Boko Haram leaders who called the movement Jama'at Alhul Sunnah Lidda'wati wal Jihad (Jihad Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad).

The organisation, which declared its own caliphate and swore allegiance to the IS in the mid-2010s, claims for the radical rejection of secularism and a wide variety of religious practices considered as anti-Islamic (Thurston, 2016). Its goal is to overthrow secular governments, particularly in Nigeria, cut their ties with the West and destroy the social and political order of the region by using indiscriminate violence against government and civilian targets.

In 2009, after a series of incidents with Nigeria's government forces, Yusuf launched a major insurgency in Maiduguri in 2009. The

Figure 4.10

Fatalities due to violent events by type in Nigeria, 1997-2019 (June)



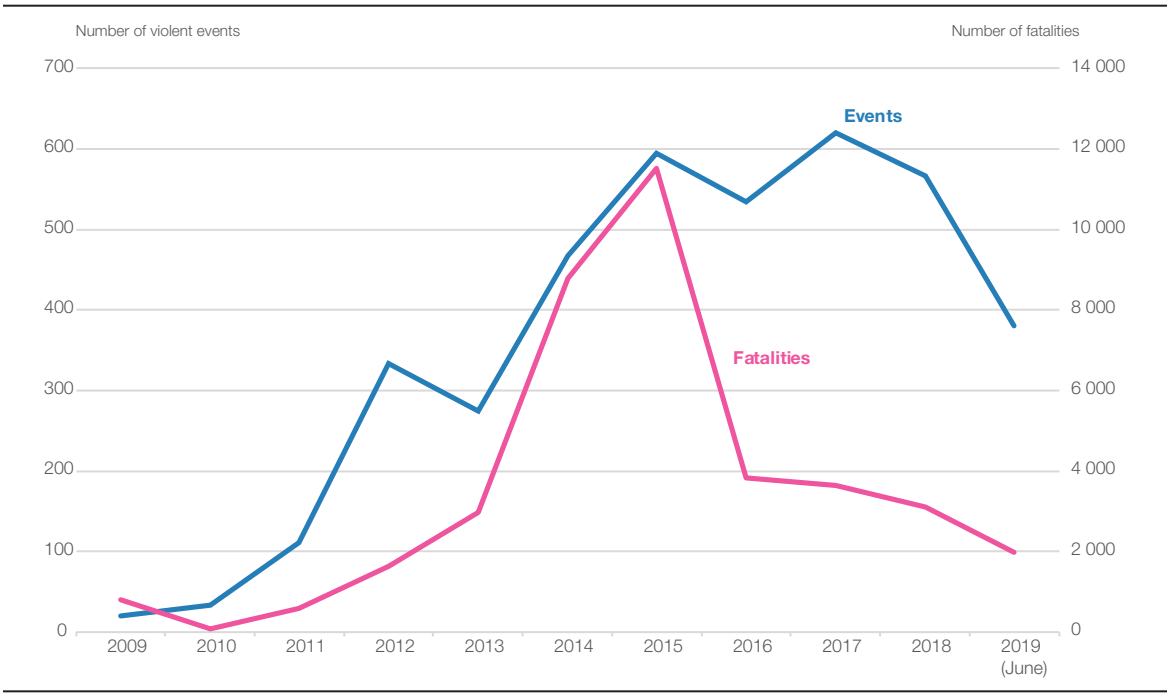
Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Nigerian forces repelled the offensive and killed Yusuf in custody (Adesoji, 2010). Since then the movement is led by Abubakar Shekau who, after a brief retreat of the group, launched a new series of attacks against Bauchi in 2010 and Abuja in 2011 (ICG, 2014). Shekau has radicalised the organisation and has engaged in bloody and merciless fighting against the Nigerian government and virtually everyone else in the region. In the mid-2010s, the Nigerian government declared a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States and encouraged the formation of vigilante actors such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). This has contributed to reducing the presence of Boko Haram in cities and increasing its activities in rural areas, where the organisation has become increasingly involved in ransoming and kidnapping. In April 2014, for example, Boko Haram captured 276 schoolgirls at a government secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, an incident that provoked an international outcry. From its rural military bases, Boko Haram has also engaged in a campaign of terror and mass killings.

The intensification of the military campaign against Boko Haram has contributed to the exacerbation of violence. The attacks launched by the Nigerian military and vigilante groups are followed by Boko Haram reprisals against military and civilian targets, increasing the number of weapons in circulation in the region. Contrary to popular opinion, most weapons used by Boko Haram militants are stolen from the Nigerian military and only a handful come from Libya (Tessières, 2017). In 2014, Boko Haram reached its largest geographical extension in the northern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa and proclaimed the establishment of a new caliphate. The announcement was followed in January 2015 by a series of major military operations by Nigeria and its regional allies united under the MNJTF. Boko Haram underwnt significant territorial losses, including the major cities of Malam Fatori and Damasak and its headquarters in Gwoza (Thurston, 2018).

Out of the 39 000 fatalities directly related to Boko Haram since 2009, one-third (11 500) die in the year 2015 according to ACLED data. Since

Figure 4.11
Violent events and fatalities related to Boko Haram, 2009-19 (June)



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

then, the number of deaths related to Boko Haram decreased continuously, reaching 3 100 in 2018 (Figure 4.11). While the insurgent organisation remains resilient, the number of violent events is also decreasing, from its maximum of 620 in 2017. Despite this military defeat, rural zones remain highly insecure and the impact of the insurgency on agriculture production, pastoralism and the civilian population is overwhelming (van den Hoek, 2017). At least 20 000 persons were killed both by insurgents and security forces and more than 2.5 million have been displaced (ICG, 2017; OCHA, 2019).

The movement has relocated to remote, mountainous or difficult to access areas along the Cameroon border and in the Lake Chad basin. Internal rivalries have also weakened the leadership of Boko Haram, now split into two major factions, one led by Shekau and the other, known as the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), under the leadership of Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi (Zenn, 2019). From the mid-2010s, factions of Boko Haram have operated in northern Cameroon (Mbowou, 2018) and then moved into Niger and Chad (Comolli, 2015; Magrin and Pérouse de Montclos, 2018). In Cameroon, Boko Haram established military bases along the foothills of the Mandara Mountains and the southern shores of Lake Chad in the Mayo-Tsanaga, Mayo-Sava, and Logone-et-Chari departments of the Far North region. Boko Haram often plans its incursions from Nigeria, driven by revenge or the need to loot supplies (Seignobos, 2015). In southeast Niger, Boko Haram conducted numerous attacks along the Nigerian border between 2015 and 2016, particularly in the Diffa region, which retains close socio-political and economic ties with Borno state.

While Boko Haram relocated to neighbouring countries (Dowd, 2018), Shekau pledged allegiance to the IS in March 2015 and Boko Haram changed its name to al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi Wilayat Gharb Ifriqiyyah or Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) (Zenn, 2019). The alliance is short-lived, however, and one year later IS recognises Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi (reportedly the son of Yusuf) as leader of the movement. In response, Shekau resurrects Jama'at Alhul Sunnah Lidda'wati wal Jihad, the original name of Boko Haram in August 2016.

The Boko Haram movement is now split between a faction led by Abubakar Shekau active in Borno and along the Cameroon-Nigeria border and another faction led by Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi active in the islands of Lake Chad and along the Niger border with a presence in Yobe State and parts of south-central Borno (Seignobos, 2018).

The relocation of Boko Haram to rural areas and remote safe havens is clearly visible in the northeastern corner of Map 4.19. Up until 2015, Boko Haram committed hundreds of attacks beyond the cities of Kano and Abuja, however, its current area of operation appears much more limited. The major cluster of localised and very violent conflicts can be found from the Nigerien region of Diffa in the north to the north of Mubi in Adamawa State, including much of the historical Lake Chad, N'Djamena region and northern Cameroon. A smaller cluster of localised and high intensity violence is located away from the main area of conflict in Adamawa State, north of Numan. In Borno and Yobe states, some rural regions are still experiencing localised violence of low intensity, for example, between Damaturu and Biu.

Communal violence in the Middle Belt

In the Middle Belt, the communal violence afflicting the states of Adamawa, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, and Plateau has been a serious and widespread security challenge since the 1980s (Campbell and Page, 2018). The proliferation of weapons along with the increased organisation of youth and criminals into gangs has spread into robbery, kidnapping, and cattle rustling. The Middle Belt is particularly vulnerable to communal violence because of its geographic position along ethnic and religious fault lines. Tensions are concentrated in the Jos area, particularly between indigenous peoples (who are mostly Christian) and perceived settler groups like ethnic Hausas (who are predominantly Muslim) who arrived recently to trade and work (Map 4.19).

Communal violence generally centres around three separate categories: land disputes, battle over resources such as land, oil, water, or markets, and political disagreements. Poor governance and corruption also fuel the Middle Belt conflict by antagonising existing grievances between groups. Violence against civilians and between herders and farmers has increased, with more than 1 300 people killed and 300 000 displaced since 2018 in Adamawa, Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, and Taraba states (ICG, 2018). The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has struggled to address the vigilantism pervasive in the Middle Belt.

Outcomes of communal violence include persistent insecurity and displacements. There have been several responses to the crises over the last 15 years in addition to police and military action. None of them has been able to respond to the magnitude of the security challenge faced by the Middle Belt. Grassroots efforts have been developed to promote dialogue and Judicial Commissions of Inquiry have been established to investigate the causes and perpetrators of violence. In the 2010s, the federal government started Operation Rainbow in Plateau State and Operation Yaki in Kaduna State to enhance security measures in the region using early warning systems (ICG, 2012). More recently, the federal government has planned grazing reserves and cattle routes that are supposed to enable pastoralists to maintain their livelihood without impinging on farming lands. These initiatives have met with strong resistance from agricultural communities and local governments in Plateau and Kaduna States (Vinson, 2018).

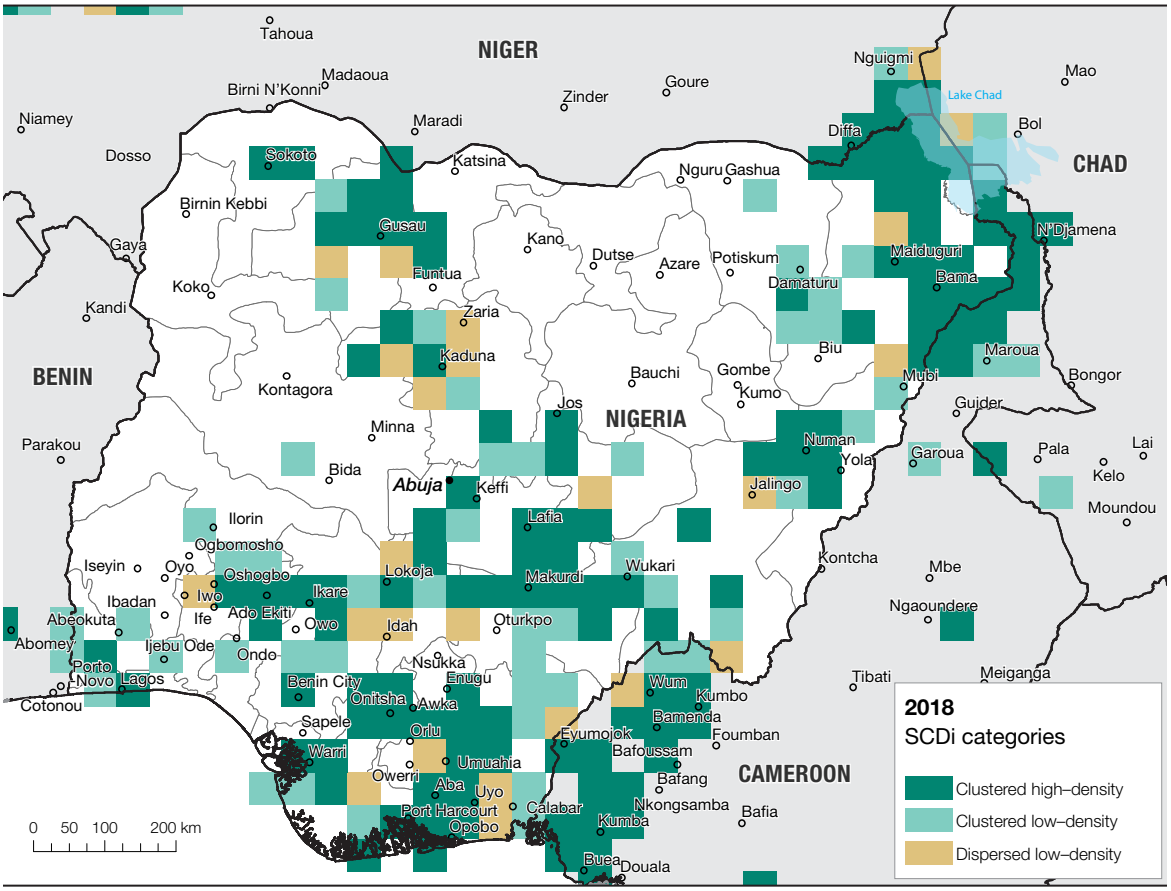
The Niger Delta insurgency

In the south of the country, the Niger Delta, comprising nine southern Nigerian states, has over 30 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, as well as natural gas, and produces over 80% of Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP). These significant deposits have provoked unrest in the region related to both historical inter-ethnic disputes and contemporary grievances against the government and foreign oil corporations since the 1990s (Adunbi, 2018). There is persistent violence in the region, making it highly insecure and facilitating numerous militias, ransoming, and trafficking groups.

The Niger Delta insurgency began in 2003 as movements by various groups agitating for greater rights related to land, control over resources and oil earnings, and social

Map 4.19

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, 2018



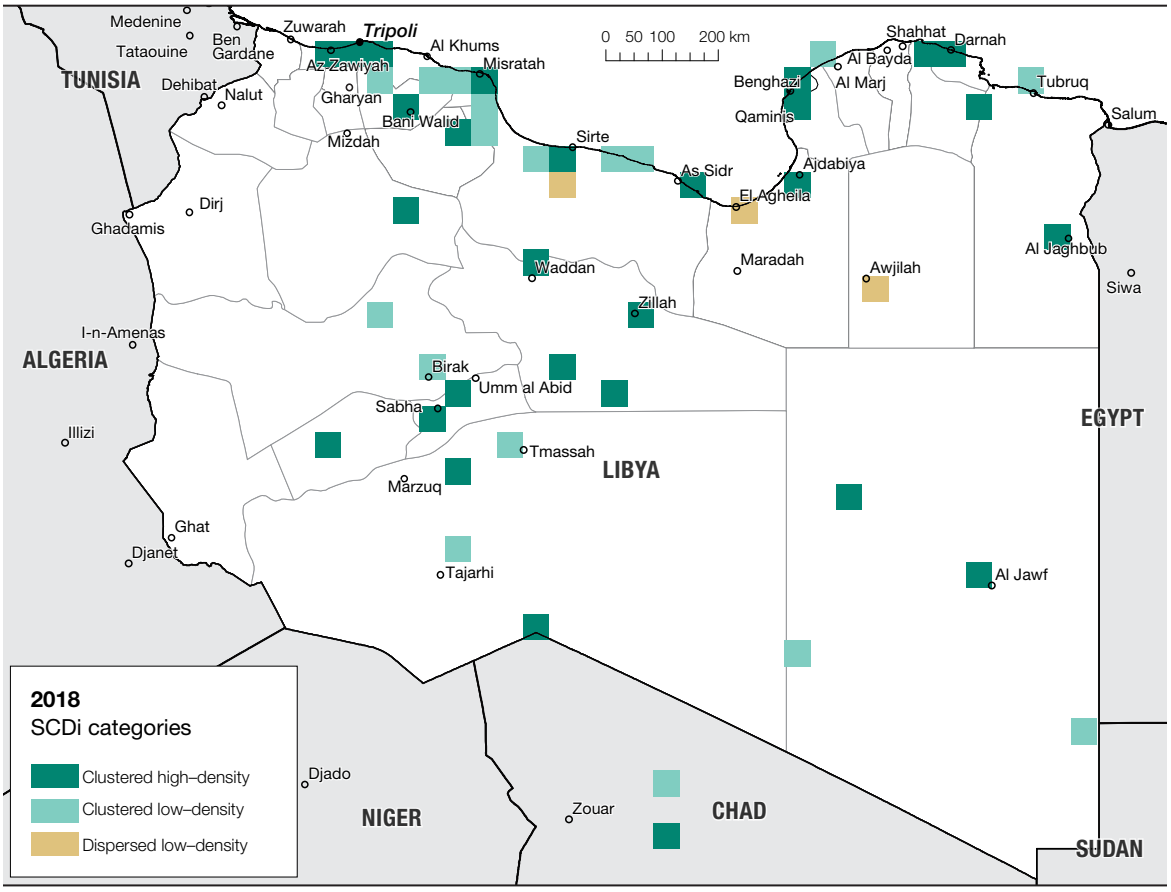
Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019. Calculations and cartography by the authors.

development in the region (Watts, 2016). Contentions over oil provoked unrest in the region related to both historical inter-ethnic disputes and contemporary grievances against the government and foreign oil corporations (Obi, 2009), beginning with the Ogoni uprising of the 1990s. Three groups of actors contribute to the insecurity: a mix of clashing ethnic groups (particularly Ijaw, Urhobo, and Itsekiri), bands of criminal cult gangs, and locals concerned with the social and economic development of the Niger Delta region.

The three main insurgent groups include the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Nigeria Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF). Formed in 2006, MEND has its foundation in advocating for the Ijaw ethnic minority and resistance campaigns, but more recently expressed dissatisfaction at oil companies and their workers, with the goal of expelling foreign oil companies and non-indigenous Nigerians to increase their local control of oil industry profits. Other groups are also concerned with the degradative impacts of the oil industry, and the struggle for development and advancement of the region. One point of contention is the disparity between the region's high GDP and its widespread poverty. Outcomes include greater insecurity and violence in the region, and an expansion of criminal networks. Violence has concentrated around oil installation attacks, kidnapping and ransoming of foreign workers, and disruption of oil exports.

Map 4.20

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) in Libya, 2018



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Libya's civil wars

The First Libyan Civil War began in February 2011 with popular protests against the regime of Colonel Muhammar Gaddafi. After nine months of conflict, the Gaddafi government fell to rebels supported by various external forces and was replaced with the National Transitional Council (NTC) of Libya, an anti-Gaddafi group forming to consolidate opposition nationally. A Second Libyan War began in 2014 between militia groups over political and resource control. This conflict remains ongoing.

The protests that began in Libya in 2011 coincided with the Arab Spring protests across the Middle East and North Africa. The violent reaction by security forces caused an estimated 80 deaths and a wave of protests throughout the country followed (Mundy, 2018). The UN passed Security Council Resolution 1970 on February 26, 2011, following condemnation by the Arab league, African Union, and EU against Gaddafi's regime using deadly force against peaceful protestors. The resolution called for an immediate ceasefire, imposed sanctions on Gaddafi, and referred attacks on civilians to the International Criminal Court (ICC) (UNSC, 2011). The next day, the NTC announced a parallel opposition government. Operation Odyssey Dawn, consisting of British, French, and American troops, began attacking Libyan government forces on 19 March, with Gaddafi as the principal target, and supporting rebel militias. Rebel groups captured several cities and evicted government forces in attempts to overthrow the central government.

During the conflict, Tripoli's security landscape fragmented, with multiple militia

groups controlling different territory and competing for political influence and resources. Many of these Tripolitania militias were criminal networks seeking to gain control of administration and economic resources. Struggles over Tripoli and other territory became the norm after the fall of Gaddafi as various armed groups competed for political control and resources. Four principal armed militia groups that controlled different parts of Tripoli and the rest of Libya dominated the post-Gaddafi Libyan state (Lacher and Al-Idrissi, 2018).

In 2014, the state institutions split into rival governments. Power struggles escalated into open conflict, with over 30 large armed groups controlling different parts of Libya and daily clashes between groups without a single authority able to govern or control power. In 2016, the Presidential Council, with pressure from external governments and institutions, relocated to Tripoli. The UN then supported the Government of National Accord (GNA), a transitional government established to maintain order and authority. Militia groups expanded control through central, southern, and western Libya and sought to convert territorial control into political influence. Successive transitional governments were forced to include representatives from numerous factions as none wielded authority.

In 2017, armed groups formed a militia cartel and tightened control over economic assets and state institutions (Lacher, 2019). By 2018, there was a small number of armed groups controlling the Libyan state and Tripoli, with the Presidential Council lacking the authority or force to control the militias. Most recently, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, leader of the Libyan National Army, tried to capture the state capital, provoking the largest mobilisation of fighters in Libya since 2011 (Lacher, 2019).

The spatial dynamics of the Libyan civil war differ greatly from those of Central Sahel and of Nigeria. The indicator shows that violence is clustered in the vast majority of the conflict regions of the country (Map 4.20). This is primarily due to differences in human settlement: while insurgencies can develop in rural areas in the Sahel by feeding on local populations, violence is heavily concentrated in urban areas in Libya, a country where the most populated cities of Tripoli, Benghazi, Misrata, Zlitan and Sabha accounted for 72% of the urban population in 2015 (Africapolis, 2019). A second and more diffuse area of conflict can be observed in the Fezzan, 700 kilometres south of Tripoli, around the cities of Sabha, Ubari and Murzuk. Local rivalries between militias over the control of Trans-Saharan smuggling routes and oilfields as well as tension around issues of citizenship explain much of the fighting observed between and within Tuareg and Tubu communities in the region (Lacher, 2014).

Political perspectives

Political violence has both relocated and expanded over time in North and West Africa. The spatial indicator developed in this study confirms that the overall geography of violence is less isolated than before. Multiple clusters of high-intensity regions have formed. These clusters are more likely to be surrounded by a periphery of lower intensity regions than in the past, particularly in the Sahel.

Not only is the number of conflict regions growing, conflicts are also becoming more violent. In 2018, the number of violent events and fatalities were higher than the 20-year average in more than half of the conflictual regions. In other words, where a conflict was present, it was likely to be worse than expected historically.

The long-term study of the region also shows that neither North nor West Africa is engulfed by global conflicts. Contrary to popular belief that global extremist ideas fuelled by transnational groups spread like wildfire across the region, conflict is largely localised and violent events are more likely to occur near one another. Less than one-third of the regions with violence exhibit signs of diffusion. In general, conflicts are motivated by the unresolved grievances of local communities. Violence is predominantly entrenched in certain spaces, with profoundly negative consequences for civilians, and for border areas, where a disproportionate number of violent events and deaths tend to concentrate (Walther et al., 2019).

However, since 2016 more regions have demonstrated a dispersed pattern, which can

indicate a transition from either more violence to less violence or vice versa. Dispersed pattern regions are occurring now at the highest frequency in the more than 20 years examined by the study. However, this trend is largely associated only with the major conflict zones in the Sahel and Nigeria; conflict in Libya remains highly clustered.

The rise in the number of dispersed conflicts is likely a consequence of a rising number of attacks against civilians, whose control or killing has become the main objective of many Jihadist insurgencies. Dispersed attacks are particularly numerous in border regions, where insurgents can avoid government forces. The recent increase of violence in border regions is of particular concern in the Sahel, where local insurgencies have a tendency to relocate from one conflict region to another since the early 2010s.

These results emphasise the importance of integrating the spatial dimension into analysis and strategy design. They also point to the ongoing difficulties state and multinational forces have encountered in containing the fighting and the need to better understand the military interventions taking place on the major theatres of operation of the region.

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Chapter 5

Military interventions in North and West Africa

Chapter 5 examines whether military interventions have succeeded in limiting the intensity and geographical spread of conflicts in North and West Africa. Building on the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi), the chapter shows that neither France's intervention in Mali in 2013 nor NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011 led to long-term stability in the region. During both interventions, the number of regions that experienced violence surged as part of the intervention but then rapidly decreased as the intervention progressed. In the Lake Chad region, the offensive launched by Nigeria and its neighbours in 2015 was a turning point in the war against Boko Haram, initially reducing the intensity of violence and limiting it to remote areas. However, the locations of violence have been more persistent, while not diminishing in intensity and more dispersed where violence continues to occur. Overall, this speaks to Boko Haram's resiliency even in the face of multinational intervention.

KEY MESSAGES

- **In Mali, the French Operation Serval reduced the number of events and fatalities from pre-intervention levels, limited and reduced the locations of violent events, and reduced the localised concentration of violent events when they did occur.**
- **In Libya, NATO's bombing campaign led to a rapid regime change by targeting sites along the Mediterranean coast repeatedly.**
- **Around Lake Chad, the multinational intervention led by Nigeria and its neighbours produced a rapid shift in the geography of violence by pushing Boko Haram to remote and/or mountainous areas.**
- **None of the military interventions brought stability to the region. In both Mali and Libya, a brief and highly mechanised military intervention was followed by a surge in insurgency activities. In the Lake Chad region, localised violence persists despite repeated military operations.**
- **Regional policies should pay more attention to the spatial dynamics of conflicts and the possibly unpredictable ways in which political violence spreads across the region after military interventions.**

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a period of exceptional political instability in sub-Saharan Africa. Immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a wave of rebellions driven by oportunisticwarlords engulfed the Gulf of Guinea, from Sierra Leone, to Liberia and Guinea Bissau, while Hutu extremists massacred more than a million Tutsi and moderate Hutu in Rwanda. The high number of victims and refugees of these conflicts led the international community to intervene when states were no longer able to protect their own citizens. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle adopted by the United Nations (UN) formalises this global commitment to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In recent years, the United States and its allies have also used the principle popularised as the War on Terror (WOT) to use all necessary means against those countries, organisations or individuals who planned, committed or facilitated the 11 September 2001 attacks.

Both the R2P and the WOT principles have been used to justify military interventions in sub-Saharan Africa over the last 30 years. In the Great Lakes region and in the Gulf of Guinea, where conflict developed from the very start of the 1990s, external military interventions have primarily built on the need to improve regional stability and to protect civilians. In Somalia, Sudan, the Maghreb and the Sahel, where violent extremist organisations have developed, military interventions have been conceived both as a response to instability and as way to combat international terrorism (Schmidt, 2018).

The objective of this chapter is to examine how military interventions have affected the geography of conflict in North and West Africa. Building on the case of France's intervention in Mali in 2013, NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011, and the ongoing multinational intervention in the Lake Chad region against Boko Haram, the chapter examines whether military interventions have succeeded in limiting the intensity and geographical spread of conflicts. This issue remains largely unknown despite being crucial for understanding the regional patterns of violence and assessing the potential for peace in the region. The analysis relies on the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) (Chapter 3 and Chapter 4), which measures the density and spatial concentration of violent events in each conflict region.

THE IMPACT OF MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

Military intervention refers to the use of discretionary power by a government in one country or, increasingly by a regional or international organisation, to address perceived problems in another country. In attempting to address these problems, military interventions aim to construct an altered and preferable state of affairs within the targeted country. From the standpoint of local populations, however, interventions often fail to bring about this preferred state of affairs (Coyne, 2013).

Military interventions are part of a broader set of foreign policy tools governments can wield. Nye's (2004) "soft power" and "hard power" distinction helps to illustrate the point. While soft power refers to the use of persuasion to achieve a desired end, hard power refers to the use of force or coercion. Soft power interventions can include humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, developmental assistance, or food or monetary aid. Hard power interventions include military invasion or occupation, bombing campaigns, regime change wars, or peacekeeping operations. If these are endpoints on a conceptual continuum of types of interventions, in between lie a host of other actions, including negotiations, asset seizures, embargos, and sanctions. In this sense, interventions are exceedingly common elements of the international system and a regular part of foreign policy practice.

Military interventions, the focus of this study, can take many forms. Biased interventions that aim at supporting the government or the opposition differ significantly from balanced interventions that aim at restoring peace between belligerents (Balch-Lindsay et al., 2008). The French intervention in northern Mali 2013 is a classic example of a biased intervention, during which an African government authorised the use of military forces to contain an insurgency. During Operation Serval, the French and their allies explicitly targeted the jihadists and rebels that threatened the Malian government. Biased interventions can be quite diverse (Jones, 2017) as foreign powers can try to influence the course of a conflict by delivering arms, training troops or providing logistical support to one side, or they can choose to intervene directly by attacking the enemy, and by holding or denying territory.

Unbiased interventions are rarer because most countries are motivated by self-interest rather than international principles when they decide to intervene internationally. As such, most unbiased interventions occur through multinational or international organisations, such as the UN. An example of unbiased intervention that mediated between warring parties is the UN missions in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), whose first objective was to "observe and monitor the implementation of the comprehensive ceasefire

Box 5.1
The Ivorian Civil Wars (2002-07, 2010-11)

In 1994, President Bedié of Côte d'Ivoire disrupted decades of social inclusion by passing a discriminatory law ("Ivoirité") that restricted voter's rights and required both parents of a Presidential candidate to have been born in the country (El-Khawas and Anyu, 2014). During the 2000 election, Bedié excluded former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara due to the new Ivoirité policies. Northern rebels supporting Ouattara from three different rebel groups aligned into a unified coalition called the Forces Nouvelles de Côte d'Ivoire (FN). The rebels seized and held 60% of the country, particularly in the north, and left 2 000 dead and 1 million displaced.

Opposing the rebels were the official government forces backed by the National Army (FANCI), and a nationalist militia group called the Young Patriots. Laurent Gbagbo, the declared President, was also supported by a diverse group of mercenaries including Belarusian pilots and former combatants under Charles Taylor of Liberia that included child soldiers. Other forces that conducted peacekeeping included soldiers from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Liberian government forces, and French military troops of Operation Licorne operating in support of the UN. UN mandates included the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI, 2004) that authorised French forces and those of ECOWAS and UN Security Council Resolution 1572 (also 2004), which created an arms embargo. The government and the FN signed a peace agreement in 2007 that ended the fighting and appointed FN leader Guillaume Soro as Prime Minister.

The Second Ivorian Civil War began during the 2010 elections in which Gbagbo, whom Ouattara had defeated in a run-off election, refused to cede power. The destabilisation of the country ensued as the Ivoirité policies led to factionalism, regionalism and conflict. Gbagbo forced an election investigation that claimed voter fraud, and then tightened control over the country by closing borders and imposing a curfew. Gbagbo loyalists began attacking pro-Ouattara staff and supporters. Gbagbo, dubious of army loyalty, hired mercenaries to work for the Forces de défense et de sécurité (FDS) (Banegas, 2011). A militia group called the Groupements des Patriotes pour la Paix (GPP) supported Gbagbo, while the anti-Gbagbo militias included the FN, Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP), Jeunes Patriotes Mouvement and the Student Federation of Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI).

Gbagbo declared himself President and accused foreign forces and the UN of interfering in domestic affairs. Ouattara, meanwhile, declared himself President in Abidjan with Soro as his Prime Minister, and was recognised as the legitimate leader by the UN, the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, the European Union (EU), and the United States (US). Violence, including human rights abuses, kidnapping, and torture, erupted after numerous African nations were unable to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement. After UN troops proved unable to restore order, Ouattara requested the help of the FN, who seized several towns, killed hundreds, and ultimately controlled most of the country. Fighting eventually reached Gbagbo in Abidjan, where French and UN helicopters bombed military compounds until Ouattara's forces stormed the palace and many pro-Gbagbo supporters fled to neighbouring countries.

The two civil wars resulted in about 3 000 deaths, the displacement of 500 000 and violence and crimes against civilians. The conflicts and policies created instability and ethnoreligious tension that persist today. Ivoirité policies and ethnic nationalism continue to impose volatility and division in the country.

Source: Matthew Pflaum.

agreement of 3 May 2003, and investigate violations of the ceasefire" (UN, 2004: 29) (Box 5.1).

Geography certainly impacts the intervention process. Some authors have argued that third parties intervene in wars on the side of the opposition where exploitable resources occur in the hope that resource revenues would offer greater chances of success to rebels (Findley and

Box 5.2

The impact of military intervention on co-operation and rivalry in Syria

The war in Syria is a complicated and interconnected system of social and political relationships with dozens of organised participants from within and beyond their immediate geopolitical neighbourhoods. An aspect of this complexity is found in the response to the American intervention in Syria in 2012, which introduced a new element into an already complex political system of state forces, militias, and rebel groups. The United States' entry led to an increase in the number of collaborations between belligerents, as many groups decided to work together in their opposition to the Syrian state by aligning with the United States against the Islamic State (IS). Anti-Assad groups received extra 'cover' to pursue their real goals (overthrowing the regime) just by taking on nominal opposition to IS. This also worked on the other side as Iran activated and mobilised several pro-Assad militias, all of which co-operated with one another.

The net effect was a steady increase in groups working with each other without clearly tipping the balance of power against the Syrian regime. This served to perpetuate the overall conflict rather than to end it. The second effect was to draw in other military interventions, primarily Russian. This propped up the Assad regime in a way the Iranians could not and made it harder for groups to change their position. Until either IS or Assad happened to be defeated, the ensuing patterns of both co-operation and conflict would prove difficult to disrupt.

The penultimate expression of this complexity was the sudden exit of American forces in October 2019. This served to again scramble the political relationships of the belligerents and ultimately led to the dissolution of relations between the United States and its longtime ally, the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The SDF was the primary partner of the United States in its fight against IS within Syria and also opposed to the Assad regime during the war. The sudden exit of the United States left the SDF in a precarious position in the face of yet another Turkish offensive in northern Syria. In late October, the SDF quickly reached an agreement with the Assad government to reintegrate SDF-held regions within the Syrian government and Syrian and Russian forces began joint patrols with SDF forces shortly thereafter. That the political relationships were so rapidly reversed points to the counter-intuitive impacts that interventions often have on such complex political systems.

Source: Steven Radil and David Russell.

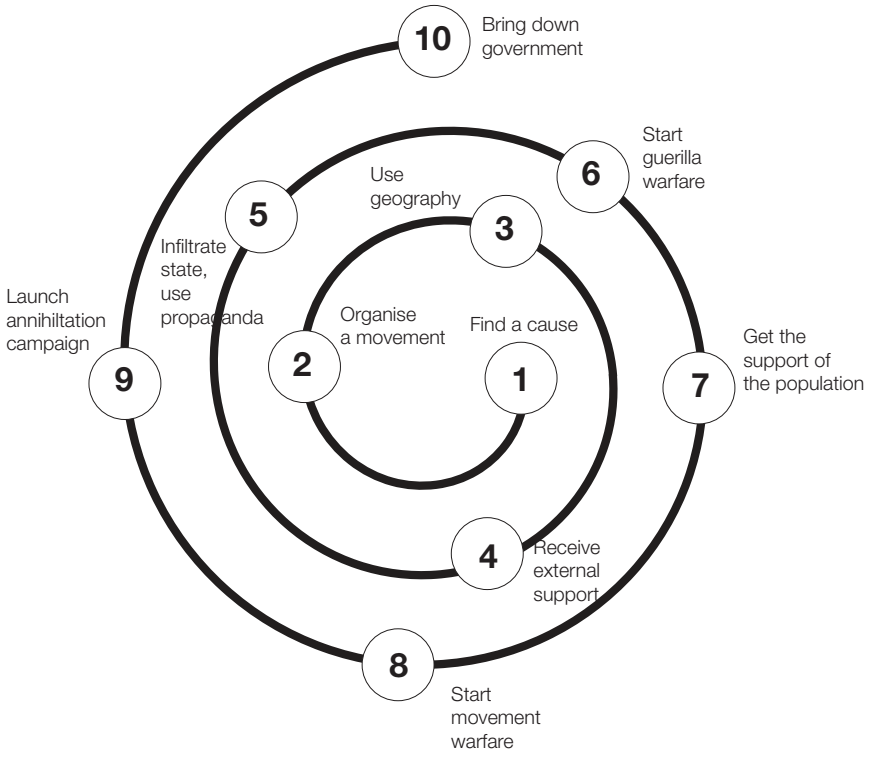
Marineau, 2015). While this may be accurate for certain conflicts, natural resources seem to play a far less important role for Western governments in North and West Africa. There is little evidence to suggest that existing or untapped mineral resources have motivated French military interventions in the region, for example (Pérouse de Montclos and Hommel, 2019). Other factors, such as the need to promote regional stability, prevent illegal migration to Europe, and counter international terrorism are much more effective in explaining military interventions in the region than the desire to monopolise gold, uranium, oil or diamonds.

The impact of military interventions on civil wars

The question of whether military interventions have done more harm than good is made difficult by the fact that it is impossible to predict how a conflict would have evolved with and without military intervention. Military interventions in civil wars are often intended to create the conditions for peace and most studies focus on their impact on the outcome and duration of the conflict, primarily by conceiving of the civil war as a simplistic, two-actor model involving a state against a single rebel opponent. However, the result of these interventions is all too frequently prolonged violence and political chaos. In Africa, for example, military intervention have tended to lead to a militarisation of politics that bolsters authoritarian regimes which present themselves as the guarantors of international security (Schmidt, 2018).

Military interventions can profoundly alter the relationships between actors and thus radically influence the trajectory of conflicts, as the war in Syria shows (Box 5.2). Generally, studies argue that biased interventions help to

Figure 5.1
Ten steps to bring down a government



Source: Olivier Walther based on Galula 2006.

shorten wars by tipping the domestic balance of power significantly to one side, while unbiased interventions tend to stagnate conflict by stabilising the balance of power (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline, 2000; Regan, 2002). From 1816-1997, third-party intervention on behalf of the government or the opposition tended to increase the likelihood of a negotiated settlement, while interventions that bolster both the government and opposition lead to longer conflict (Balch-Lindsay et al., 2008: 360).

Military interventions and insurgencies

Military interventions often respond to the threats posed by insurgencies to an elected government. Insurgencies generally follow a number of stages before they are eventually able to overthrow political regimes (Galula, 2006; Figure 5.1). Their first objective is to find a political cause, preferably one that has long been neglected by the central government, such as perceived political or economic marginalisation. The second step is to organise a movement capable of mobilising a reasonable number of fighters and political supporters. Once these conditions have been met, insurgencies can expand by using their local knowledge of the terrain to conceal their first attacks against government forces. External support from other states or armed groups greatly enhances their ability to develop their activities outside of their homeland, while infiltration within the state apparatus and propaganda help them spread their ideas nationally. If they have the support of the local population, insurrections are then capable of conducting a larger war of movement and a military campaign that will eventually bring down the central government.

These principles initially developed to explain the success of Maoist guerrilla warfare in the 1960s apply well to the case of Jihadist insurgencies that have developed in West Africa since the mid-2000s. In Mali, for example, the rebels and religious extremists that initiated the Northern Mali conflict in 2012 each had a

cause that they considered legitimate: independence from the Malian state for the former, and religious law for the latter. They were quite successful in organising a political and military movement in the first stage of the conflict and used their intimate knowledge of the desert to attack Malian forces without being detected. Both received external support: the rebels were greatly boosted by the return of Tuareg soldiers from Libya, while the Jihadists benefited from their links with northern Algeria, where the leadership of AQIM was situated, and from the ransoms paid for the release of European hostages. Both used propaganda tools and guerrilla warfare in a very effective way against government forces. However, neither the rebels nor the religious extremists were able to count on the full support of the local population. Their joint military offensive on the city of Konna was stopped by the French in 2013 and they failed in their ultimate objective of overthrowing the central government.

The Boko Haram insurgency followed a similar evolution. The movement developed in northern Nigeria in the early 2000s, before a series of incidents with security forces led to a violent uprising in the city of Maiduguri in 2009. The insurgents were brutally repressed and moved to rural areas from which they conducted an increasing number of attacks against government targets. They failed to receive the support of the local population, which they often massacred, ransomed or forced to flee to neighbouring countries. The joint counter-offensive led by Nigeria and its regional allies since 2015 led to significant human and territorial losses for Boko Haram, who has regrouped in the islands of Lake Chad or the Mandara mountains in Cameroon.

THE REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

Continental and regional security strategies

West African countries have developed a wide range of security agreements over the last decades (SWAC/OECD, 2007). The oldest ones are the Protocol on Non-Aggression signed in Lagos in 1978 and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance Defense signed in Freetown in 1981 by ECOWAS countries. In the 1990s, ECOWAS was the first African regional community to abandon the principle of non-intervention that has hitherto governed conflict management in the region. The revised ECOWAS treaty signed in 1993 explicitly supported these innovations through conciliation missions, peacekeeping forces and assistance to states in elections (Article 58). It served as inspiration for the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) set up by the African Union in the early 2000s.

ECOWAS has intervened in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau through ECOMOG, a force initially tasked with maintaining cease-fires, which has rapidly become an interposition force in regional conflicts. The record of ECOWAS military interventions is mixed, however (Magyar and Conteh-Morgan, 1998). In Liberia and Sierra Leone, ECOMOG put an end to civil wars and restored an elected government, yet in both countries the regional force has also been criticised for its support for rebel groups and its flaws in humanitarian law (Adebajo, 2002). In Liberia, for example, ECOMOG soldiers contributed to the looting of the country, while in Sierra Leone some elements of the multinational force participated in the illegal diamond mining before the arrival of the UN mission (Schmidt, 2018).

In 1999, while the ECOMOG brigade obtained permanent status, ECOWAS created a mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts aimed at preventing and settling internal as well as international conflicts. Known as the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, the regional initiative mentions the possibility of intervening in member states without their consent through political and military missions (Art. 10). Two years later, ECOWAS signed an additional protocol on democracy and good governance that defined the rules of conduct to be adopted during elections in order to promote democratic institutions. These initiatives took place in a context marked

by a rise in democratic institutions, considered by ECOWAS as indispensable conditions for the promotion of peace, economic development and co-operation.

The development of violent religious extremism in West Africa since the early 2000s has led countries and regional institutions to develop new conflict resolution mechanisms for the region, often known as "Sahel Strategies" (Helly et al., 2015). In 2010, Algeria created the Joint Operational Staff Committee (CEMOC) with Mali, Mauritania and Niger, while the African Union (AU) initiated the Joint Fusion and Liaison Unit to co-ordinate counter-terrorism activities and combat drug trafficking and arms smuggling in eight countries. Three years later, the AU launched the Nouakchott Process with the aim of strengthening security co-operation in the region. Its Strategy for the Sahel Region was adopted in 2014 (AU, 2014).

Similar efforts are being undertaken by regional organisations. In 2008, ECOWAS adopted an Early Warning and Response Network in order to better monitor the emergence and evolution of conflict in the region (ECOWAS, 2008). In light of the recent degradation of the security situation, ECOWAS is currently working on a new strategy for the years 2020-25 that should take into account both security challenges and other sources of instability such as food insecurity and climate change (ECOWAS, 2019). In 2018, ECOWAS also signed a Memorandum of Understanding that should support the recent mechanism of conflict prevention of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).

An additional step towards regional co-operation was taken after the Extraordinary ECOWAS Summit in Ouagadougou in September 2019, during which member countries decided to spend one billion dollars over four years on the fight against terrorism and organised crime. The action plan provides for the establishment of a regionally-shared biometric database, a key factor in border control strategies. It should also strengthen the operational capabilities of national and joint forces set up by ECOWAS countries, Mauritania and Chad, such as the Multinational Joint Lake Chad Basin Force (MNJTF) and the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FCG5S).

- The MNJTF is a military formation initiated by Nigeria in 1994 with a mandate to address cross-border security issues in the Lake Chad region under a joint command structure (Luntumbue, 2014). The multinational force now includes Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Reactivated in 2012 by the African Union, the MNJTF has been increasingly involved in the Lake Chad insurgency since Boko Haram destroyed its headquarters in Baga in January 2015. After the attack, the MNJTF was relocated to N'Djamena and placed under the supervision of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). In 2019, the Field Commander of the MNJTF, Chikezie Ude reported that current MNJTF troops comprises 10 250 personnel (Premium Times, 2019a). The force operates within four national sectors: Mora, Cameroon (sector 1); Baga-Sola, Chad (sector 2); Baga, Nigeria (sector 3); and Diffa, Niger (sector 4). Each state positions its contingent with the objective to prevent insurgents from fleeing to bordering countries (ISS, 2016).
- The FCG5S is the military component of the G5 Sahel, an institutional framework that brings together Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger since 2014. Announced in November 2015 and July 2017, the G5 force will ultimately have 5 000 men tasked with fighting armed groups, drug and arms trafficking and illegal migration. The G5 Sahel force is headquartered in Bamako and relies on three military bases in Nema (Mauritania), Niamey (Niger) and N'Djamena (Chad). The governments of the region plan to focus their military efforts within 50 kilometres of their borders. Without a UN mandate, these objectives are nonetheless conditioned by the search for internal or external funding. So far, the financial commitments made at two international conferences in December 2017 and February 2018 come from the European Union, the United States, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (France Diplomatie, 2019). According to United Nations Resolution 2391 of 8 December 2017, the Joint Force receives operational and logistical support from MINUSMA.

Sahel strategies of the international community

The recent expansion of violent extremist organisations in the Sahara-Sahel has led Western countries to adopt security strategies that take into account the transnational nature of threats in the region (Walther and Retaillé, 2020). After the September 11 attacks, the United States identified the Sahel and the Sahara as a region potentially at risk for global stability. In 2002, the US State Department launched the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) to strengthen border surveillance, control illegal trafficking and improve regional security co-ordination between Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. The worsening of the security situation led the United States to replace the PSI with a more ambitious program, the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI) since 2005. The TSCTI includes military exercises called Flintlock between national armed forces and extends to the Maghreb states as well as to Burkina Faso, Senegal and Nigeria. It was incorporated in the United States Command for Africa (AFRICOM) inaugurated in 2007. The US investment in the region also involves the construction of drone bases in Agadez and Dirkou that can monitor southern Libya and the wider region (Penney et al., 2018).

The transnational dimension of conflicts is also at the heart of France's military initiatives after Operation Serval led to reconquering northern Mali in 2013. Operation Barkhane, which replaced Serval in August 2014, focuses explicitly on transnational terrorist activities. According to the Ministry of the Armed Forces (2019: 3), the transboundary nature of the terrorist threat requires the implementation of "a regional approach to deal with the ramifications of terrorist organisations and counter trans-border movements in the Sahel-Saharan strip". General Jean-Pierre Palasset, the commander of the French operation until 2015, notes in this regard that Barkhane differs from the previous military commitments of France in Africa by the fact that the operation no longer targets "one country, one crisis, and one theatre of operations" (Ministry of the Armed Forces, 2014).

The French contingent of 4 500 soldiers is headquartered in Chad, where France has maintained a military presence for decades. It relies on three permanent bases in Gao (Mali), Niamey (Niger) and N'Djamena and several advanced bases in the Adrar des Ifoghas (Tessalit and Kidal), the Liptako Gourma (Gossi, Menaka) and Timbuktu in Mali, the Aïr mountains in Niger (Aguélal) and the Chadian borders (Faya, Abéché). The military material used by the Operation arrives from France via Dakar (Senegal), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) and Douala (Cameroon). Although regional in its approach, Barkhane encounters major logistical obstacles, which are explained by the geographical extent of the region (nine times larger than metropolitan France) as well as harsh weather conditions, which put soldiers and machines to the test. As a result, the operation incurs substantial costs: in 2017, the Sahelian operations budget was EUR 690 million (Senate, 2019), which is about half of the EUR 1 330 million earmarked by France for external operations.

The deteriorating security situation has led many intergovernmental organisations to recognise that Sahel security issues can only be addressed through a regional approach (World Bank, 2014; UN, 2018). The EU (2011: 1), for example, states that "many of the challenges impact on neighbouring countries, including Algeria, Libya, Morocco and even Nigeria, whose commitment is necessary to help resolve issues". Similarly, one of the UN's (2013: 18) goals in the region is to build and support national and regional security mechanisms that are capable of addressing cross-border threats. The AU (2014: 13) observes for its part that the development of trafficking and terrorism has "worsened the climate of insecurity and now constitutes the major threat in the region" and that these threats have a "regional and international dimension".

The EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel (2011) illustrates initiatives that combine governance, security and development at the regional level. The EU Regional Action Plan (RAP) adopted by foreign ministers in 2015 and revised in 2016 is based on several principles aimed at preventing and reducing radicalisation, creating favorable economic conditions for young people who could be tempted to join armed groups, and limiting illegal migration. It also includes measures to strengthen border

management and to combat illicit trafficking and organised crime. The EU builds on its civilian missions (European Union Capacity Building Mission – EUCAP Sahel) located in Niger and Mali to support the efforts of West African governments in their fight against terrorism and organised crime. EUCAP Sahel Niger, for example, advises and trains Nigerien security forces so that they can respond to the growing challenges posed by armed groups in Liptako and Lake Chad Basin. In Mali, the EU Training Mission (EUTM Mali) supports national military forces, in line with UN Resolution 2085 of 2012.

In recent years, a concerted effort between regional and continental organisations seems to be on the agenda. The desire to integrate regional initiatives is already expressed in the AU Sahel Strategy (2014), which notes that co-ordination with regional communities such as ECOWAS and more specialised institutions such as CILSS is crucial for the success of its projects. The creation of the Sahel Alliance in 2017 by France, Germany and the European Union marks a decisive step in the co-ordination between the G5 Sahel countries and their international partners. The Alliance now has twelve members, including the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Luxembourg, Denmark, the Netherlands, the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Like many of the previous Sahel strategies, its program for the region combines military actions and development investments. As the largest donor in the region, the EU plays a leading role in the financing of Sahelian programs, notably through its Emergency Trust Fund, which amounts to EUR 8 billion for the period 2014-20 including EUR 147 million for G5 Sahel (EC, 2019). In addition to poverty, food crises and illegal migration, political violence is one of the many concerns of the EU, which mentions that it can potentially have consequences outside the region (EU, 2019).

TWENTY MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN TWO DECADES

Since the late 1990s, the countries of North and West Africa have experienced 20 major military interventions in 12 countries (Map 5.1). On a continent where state conflicts are rare, multinational organisations, military alliances and regional economic communities have launched the vast majority of the military interventions observed over the last 20 years (Table 5.1). The UN have intervened seven times since 1997 if one counts their Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), established as part of the cease fire between Morocco and the Polisario Front in 1991. With 204 fatalities as of November 2019, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) established on 25 April 2013 is one of the most dangerous missions ever conducted by the organisation (UN, 2019a).

In Libya, NATO's Operation Unified Protector (2011) took the form of an enforced no-fly zone and naval blockade and was primarily split between four different national operations: Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Spain, Greece and the United Arab Emirates committed forces under United States command while Bulgaria, Jordan, Romania, Sweden, and Turkey participated independent from US command.

In West Africa, ECOWAS intervened in three civil wars that tore apart the Gulf of Guinea in the 1990s using its military brigade, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The ECOWAS intervention into Liberia comprised mostly of forces from Nigeria. However, forces from Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and Sierra Leone also participated at different times (the United States also provided limited logistical support). In Sierra Leone, the ECOWAS intervention was initially only a Nigerian operation. It was later given the authority of an ECOMOG operation after smaller force contingents from Ghana and Guinea agreed to join Nigerian forces. In Guinea-Bissau, too, the ECOWAS intervention was initially only comprised of Nigerian forces. These were later supplemented by forces from Benin, Gambia, Niger, and Togo.

Map 5.1

Major military interventions in North and West Africa, 1997-2019



Mauritania
- France's Operation Barkhane (Since 2014)

Burkina Faso
- France's Operation Barkhane (Since 2014)

- United Nations' MINURSO (Since 1991)

Sierra Leone
- United Nations' UNOMSIL (1998-1999) and UNAMSIL (1999-2005)
- ECOWAS' ECOMOG (1997-1999)

Guinea-Bissau
- Guinea and Senegal's support to Vieira government (1998-1999)
- ECOWAS' ECOMOG (1999)

Liberia
- United Nations' UNOMIL (1993-1997) and UNMIL (2003-2018)
- ECOWAS' ECOMOG (1990-1999)
- France's Operation Providence (2003)

Libya
- NATO's Operation Unified Protector (2011), code names Operation Harmattan (France), Operation Odyssey Dawn (United States), Operation Mobile (Canada), Operation Ellamy (United Kingdom)

Nigeria
- Multinational Join Task Force MNJTF) (Since 1994, 2015)

Niger
- France's Operation Barkhane (Since 2014)

Mali
- France's Operation Serval (2013-2014)
- France's Operation Barkhane (Since 2014)
- United Nations' MINUSMA (Since 2013)

Chad
- France's Operation Epervier (1986-2014)
- France's Operation Dorca (2004)
- France's Operation Barkhane (Since 2014)

Côte d'Ivoire
- France's Operation Licorne (2002-2015)
- United Nations' ONUCI (2004-2017)

Notes: Political missions such as the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) are excluded from the map. Only the countries and organisations that initiated or contributed to the bulk of the military interventions are listed.

Sources: UN 2019b, Adebajo 2002, Mundy 2018, Schmidt 2018, Thurston 2018, Griffin 2016, Boeke and Schuurman 2015, Magrin 2008, Magrin 2013, Smith 2003, Banégas 2011, République française 2019.

No individual country has intervened more than France in the region (Table 5.1). France has launched six individual operations in five countries from 1986-2014 in addition to its participation in NATO's intervention in Libya. France also has the longest record of intervention in the region. From 1997 to 2019, the country has maintained a continuous active military presence in the region and has always been directly involved in a conflict. The end of Operation Epervier and

Table 5.1

Major military interventions, 1997-2019

Actors	Countries affected	Name of the intervention	Start and end date
Multinational organisations			
ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)	Liberia	ECOMOG	July 1990 – March 1999
	Sierra Leone	ECOMOG	1997 – July 1999
	Guinea-Bissau	ECOMOG	February – May 1999
Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)	Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger	Operations Gama Aiki, Chikin Gudu, Rawan Kada, Amni Fakat	Since 23 January 2015
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)	Libya	Operation Unified Protector (France: Operation Harmattan, United States: Operation Odyssey Dawn, Canada: Operation Mobile, United Kingdom: Operation Ellamy).	23 March – 31 October 2011
United Nations	Côte d'Ivoire	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)	February 2004 – June 2017
	Mali	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)	Since 25 April 2013
	Liberia	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL)	September 1993 – September 1997
	Sierra Leone	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL)	July 1998 – October 1999
	Sierra Leone	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)	October 1999 – December 2005
	Liberia	United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)	September 2003 – March 2018
		United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)	Since 24 April 1991
Countries			
France	Chad	Operation Dorca	31 July – 11 September 2004
	Chad	Operation Epervier	13 February 1986 – 1 August 2014
	Côte d'Ivoire	Operation Licorne	September 2002 – 21 January 2015
	Liberia	Operation Providence	9 June 2003
	Mali	Operation Serval	11 January 2013 – 15 July 2014
	Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Burkina Faso	Operation Barkhane	Since 1 August 2014
Guinea	Guinea-Bissau	Intervention to support the Vieira government	10 June 1998 – 16 March 1999
Senegal	Guinea-Bissau	Intervention to support the Vieira government	10 June 1998 – 16 March 1999
United States	Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal	Operation Juniper Shield (formerly known as Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara)	Since 6 February 2007

Sources and Notes: see Map 5.1. Operation Juniper Shield is the military component of the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI).

Table 5.2

Events and fatalities directly related to military interventions

	Battles		Violence against civilians		Explosions and remote violence		Total	
	Events	Fatalities	Events	Fatalities	Events	Fatalities	Events	Fatalities
Mali (11 Jan 2013-15 Jul 2014)	65	350	6	6	52	131	123	487
Lake Chad (23 Jan-24 Dec 2015)	256	4 466	11	269	39	328	306	5 063
Libya (23 Mar-31 Oct 2011)	7	138	4	28	208	1 636	219	1 802

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Licorne in the early 2010s in Chad and Côte d'Ivoire coincides with the launch of Operation Serval in 2013 and Operation Barkhane in 2014 in the Sahel. Both operations received support from numerous states apart from France. For example, Operation Serval received logistical support from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Chad committed combat forces under French command. Operation Barkhane received logistical support from Germany and the United Kingdom while Estonia committed combat forces under French command.

MAPPING MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

The impact of military interventions on regional conflicts is studied using the Spatial Conflict Dynamic indicator (SCDi) developed to understand the long-term evolution of political violence in North and West Africa (Chapter 3). The indicator combines two metrics that summarise the geography of political violence in the region: the relative intensity of violence (conflict intensity) and the distribution of violent events relative to each other (conflict concentration).

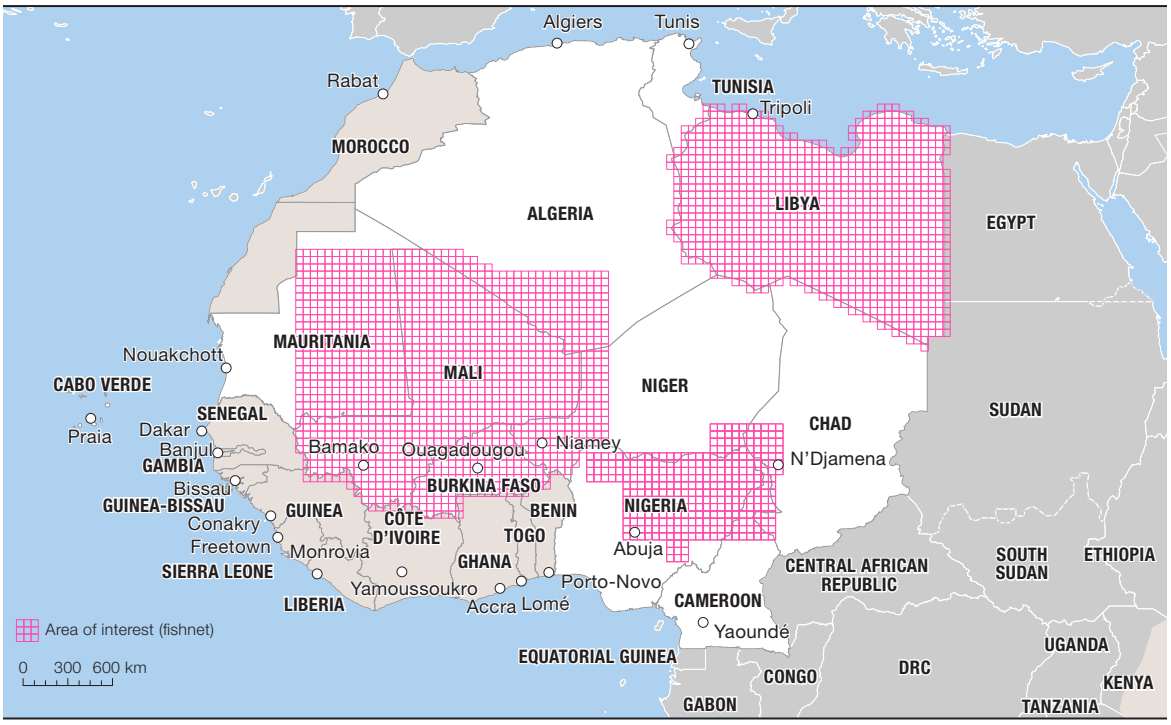
North and West Africa are divided into a 50 by 50 kilometres grid that contains 6 540 "cells" or "regions". In each of the regions, the indicator calculates whether violent political events are occurring at higher or lower levels, and whether they tend to be spatially clustered or dispersed. Because military interventions tend to be limited in time, the unit of analysis of the indicator is the month rather than the year as in the regional analysis of Chapter 4. This allows identification of monthly shifts in the local geography of conflict.

The study focusses on three military interventions that have shaped the conflict in the region: the French Operation Serval in Mali, the counter-offensive launched by Nigeria and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad region, and NATO's Operation Unified Protector against the regime of Colonel Gaddafi in Libya. The study of these interventions allows to map how, month after month, the spatial dynamics of a conflict have been altered by external military forces. The spatial indicator is well adapted to track changes in the intensity and spatial distribution of violence from the beginning of the military intervention to its end. This focus on the geography of conflict complements existing studies that stress the political, religious and strategic nature of conflicts in the region without necessarily take into account its geographical spread.

The duration of each intervention varies considerably. Operation Serval lasted from 11 January 2013 to 15 July 2014 (19 months). The ongoing multinational offensive against Boko Haram started in early 2015. This study focused on the period from 23 January to 24 December 2015 (11 months), during which some of the most decisive operations against

Map 5.2

Areas of interest in Mali and Central Sahel, the Lake Chad region and Libya



Source: Authors.

Boko Haram were conducted. Operation Unified Protector was launched on 23 March 2011 and ended on 31 October of the same year (7 months).

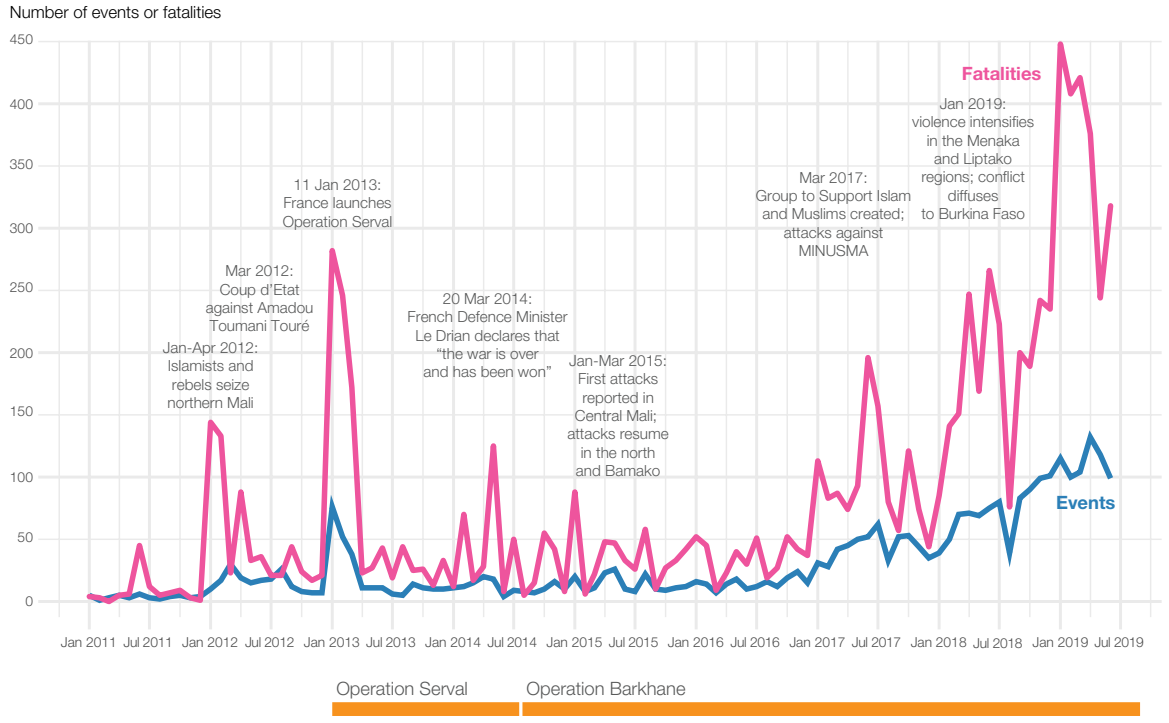
The intensity and geographical extent of these interventions vary greatly. The intervention around Lake Chad by the Nigerian armed forces and the MNJTF is by far the deadliest of the three case studies, with more than 300 events and 5 000 fatalities (Table 5.2). The intervention against Boko Haram has caused 10 times more victims than the French intervention in Mali and three times more than the NATO intervention in Libya.

In Mali, battles and explosions or remote violence each represent half of the events in which military forces were involved. However, the proportion of victims who died as a result of battles is much higher (72%) than of explosions and remote violence (27%). In the Lake Chad region, battles represent the vast majority of the events and deaths (88%) involving the Nigerian and MNJTF forces.

The analysis covers the entire region for which violent events related to one of the three military interventions described above have been recorded in the ACLED database (Map 5.2). In Mali and Central Sahel, the area of conflict (or the "fishnet", see Chapter 3) includes the whole of Mali and Burkina Faso as well as eastern Mauritania, western Niger, and southern Algeria (1 379 regions covering an area of 3 447 500 square kilometres). Around Lake Chad, the study covers the regions where most Boko Haram attacks have been observed since 2009. This includes much of north and eastern Nigeria, the southern part of the Diffa region in Niger, northern Cameroon, Lake Chad, and the N'Djamena region (324 regions, 810 000 square kilometres). In Libya, the entire country is covered in the study (942 regions, 2 355 000 square kilometres).

Conflict intensity (CI) and conflict concentration (CC) measures were calculated in each of the three conflict areas as defined by Map 5.2 (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion of these metrics). The calculation of the CI score for these cases warrants some discussion as it is sensitive to the definition of the underlying conflict areas. The average CI score across a study area

Figure 5.2
Events and fatalities in Mali and Central Sahel, 2011-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

is used to establish the threshold between the high- and low-intensity SCDi categories. This means that for the discussions of the different interventions that follow, the average CI scores are calibrated to the specific conflict areas of the three cases themselves. This was done by using all the examples of conflict events within the areas shown above across the entire time period of the study (1997-2019) to calculate the average number of events per region or 'cell'. For Libya, the average CI score was 8 events per conflict region, for Mali and Central Sahel it was 3.5 events, and for the Lake Chad case it was 4.8 events. These scores served as the thresholds to categorise the regions as either high-intensity (those above the average score) or low-intensity (those below the average score). The calculation of the CC metric is not sensitive to the definition of the overall study area for each case.

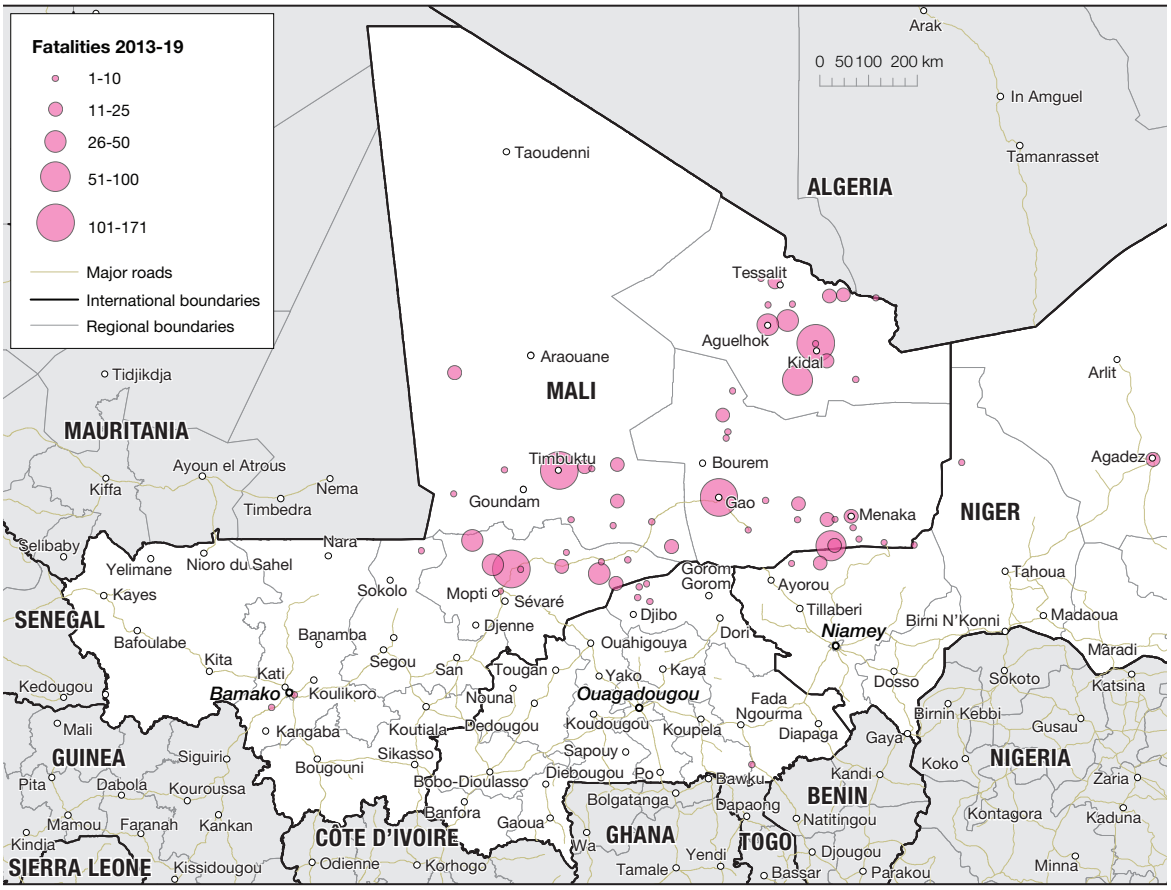
THE FRENCH INTERVENTION IN MALI

Operation Serval

Since the mid-2000s, members of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) established military camps and developed a lucrative kidnapping industry in northern Mali, where state authority had largely withdrawn. These extremists were tolerated by the government of Mali and began to build political and familial alliances with local tribes. Renamed Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in 2007, the GSPC was joined by several other extremist groups, such as the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), and Ansar Dine, who drew members from Malian Tuareg as well as Arabs.

Map 5.3

Fatalities involving France and the United Nations in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, 2013-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

The fall of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011 and of Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) in Mali in 2012 enabled these groups to lead an offensive against the disorganised and under-resourced Malian army. In the first months of the conflict, between February and April 2012, a provisional alliance between the religious extremists and MNLA rebels permitted their rapid advance and the capture of Kidal, Timbuktu, and Gao (Figure 5.2). However, it was not long until AQIM, Ansar al-Dine, and MUJAO militants forced out the MNLA, even chasing them from their own cities. Survivors of this onslaught surrendered, disappeared, or changed sides (Walther and Christopoulos, 2015).

The response of the international community took several months to formalise. Following international negotiations and the adoption of the UNSC resolution 2071 that enabled the creation of an African-led intervention force in October 2012, France developed two contingency plans. The first one would provide military support to Mali while the second one would lead to an intervention if the militants continued to advance towards the south of the country before the deployment of an international force. The French military conducted multiple reconnaissance flights preparing the deployment of Special Forces targeting jihadist camps, command nodes, fuel depots and logistical centres (Boeke and Schuurman, 2015).

In January 2013, the Malian interim government requested military assistance from France as a militants took the city of Konna, less than 400 miles northeast of Bamako. The French launched Operation Serval on 11 January 2013 with the objective of restoring Mali's territorial integrity and establishing conditions for a

UN intervention (Assemblée Nationale, 2013; Charbonneau, 2017).

Despite important logistics challenges, Operation Serval was a military success. It illustrated that the military resources of the rebels and religious extremists could not match those of a modern army. France was able to launch a quick and decisive offensive against the insurgents due to its Special Forces prepositioned in neighbouring Burkina Faso, overwhelming air power, and support of ground troops, notably those of Chad, who were well experienced in desert warfare. The insurgents also made several strategic and tactical errors, as when they assembled a large number of their pickup trucks with a view to attacking Sévaré and Mopti and were hit by French air force. MNLA rebels offered little resistance and preferred to flee rather than fight the French forces. Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal were retaken with very little fighting, despite being the historical cradle of Tuareg rebellions. The main area where the Malian conflict took the form of a direct confrontation between French and Chadian forces on one side and AQIM insurgents on the other was in the valley of Ametetai, south-east of Tessalit (Map 5.3).

On 25 February, key AQIM commander Abu Zeid was killed in an air strike. All in all, it was estimated that 300-400 militants were killed in the course of Operation Serval in the Ifoghas mountains and 200-300 around Gao, which roughly represented a third of the jihadist forces (Chivvis 2016). Many fled to Niger and Libya or dissolved in the local Malian population. By the end of March 2013, the Malian collapse was prevented (see Chapter 4 for a detailed analysis of the Malian conflict).

Violence has peaked since Serval's intervention

The French intervention in Mali between 2013 and 2014 served to modify both the overall geography and type of violence. When the intervention began in January 2013, violence was at its maximum extent as seen in Map 5.4 and included regions (here meaning cells) incorporating the cities of Bamako, Mopti, Timbuktu, and Gao. However, one of the clear effects of the intervention was to quickly reshape the overall geography of violence. Between January and March 2013, the number of violent regions had been reduced by 75%. As the intervention progressed, the overall location of the violence also changed, becoming largely restricted to the Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao regions (Map 5.5). For the duration of 2013, violence was only sporadic, never occurring in more than three regions and never returning to the overall extent at the beginning of the intervention.

The intervention also altered the type of violence. This can be showed using an "alluvial chart" which represents monthly shifts in the SCDi in the region. The graph shows how many "cells" or "regions" have experienced different types of conflict in 2013. Regions where violence is intense and clustered (in dark green) are those where conflicts are relatively contained. Those where there are fewer violent events and most of them take place near each other (in light green) indicate that the conflict is probably decreasing. Shifts between different conflict categories are indicated with colour flows from one month to another. For example, between January and February, a large number of regions where violence was both intense and clustered (in dark green) have experienced no conflict (in white).

Early in the intervention, violence was highly intense and concentrated (Figure 5.3). As the intervention progressed, violence was short lived, rarely persisting in the same cell month-to-month. When violence did emerge, it was less concentrated than in the early stages of the intervention. Rather than engage in open confrontation with a superior military force, militants resorted to hit-and-run or guerilla-style engagements, which meant the specific locations of violence were less concentrated. This condition persisted at very low levels throughout the duration of the intervention. By the official end of the intervention in mid-2014, only two cells in the Kidal region had more than two events in a single month (bottom figure of Map 5.5).

Overall, Operation Serval reduced the number of events and fatalities from pre-intervention levels, limited and reduced the locations of violent events within Mali, and reduced the localised concentration of violence events when they did occur. These are all indications that Serval had a significant

Box 5.3

Comparing Operation Serval with past French interventions

Today's military interventions share many similarities with past attempts to restore order in the region. Operation Serval in Mali, for example, is strikingly similar to the first intervention conducted by the French forces in Chad in the 1960s.

The origins of the interventions are nearly identical. In both cases, African heads of state entrusted the fight against an insurgency to a foreign army. In 1969, President Tombalbaye called the French when he realised that the rebels of the National Liberation Front of Chad (FROLINAT) were threatening the capital, citing treaties the two countries had signed in 1960. The French intervention in Chad and Mali also had roughly the same objective of militarily quashing a rebellion and both have been quite successful. While the French defeated FROLINAT rebels after a series of bloody battles between 1969 and 1972 in Chad, they regained control of much of northern Mali of the country after a quick but intensive military campaign in 2013 (Surkin 2014).

While successful, both campaigns were not followed by development initiatives that could have provided long-lasting solutions to the conflict. In 1972, General Edouard Cortadellas, commander of the Franco-Chadian forces, told Agence France Presse that "the military intervention has fulfilled its contract in Chad and the current problem is no longer military but administrative, economic and social" (Buijtenhuijs 1995: 216). French forces were in a similar situation in Mali after Operation Barkhane replaced Operation Serval in July 2014: while they were successful in killing violent insurgents or expelling them to Libya and Algeria, they did not have the mandate to address civilian development challenges.

Both the first French intervention in Chad and later operations in the Sahel were justified by a local variant of the domino theory, according to which the fall of one country would cause similar events in its neighbours. In the late 1960s, French leaders argued that if they did not intervene in Chad to save the government of President Tombalbaye, France would lose credibility among the newly independent countries of the region. West African governments have used similar arguments since the mid-2010s and often argued that if they did not receive additional assistance from Western donors, they would fall one after the other to Jihadist insurgencies.

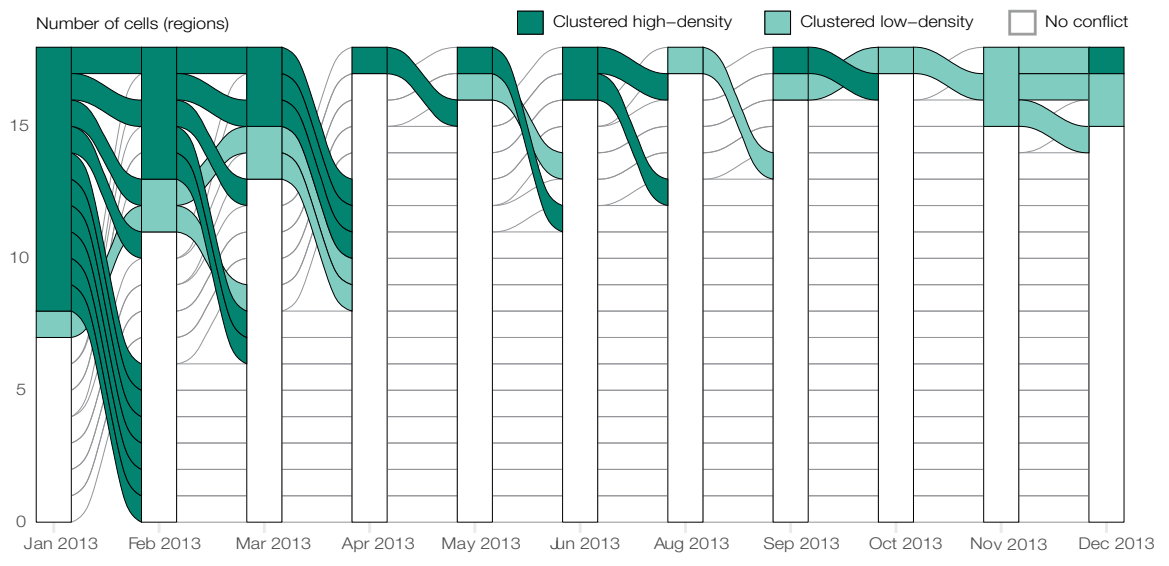
In both Chad yesterday and Mali today, political elites were unable or unwilling to address the roots of the conflict. In the early 1970s, President Tombalbaye failed to realise that at least part of the rebellion was motivated by an unequal distribution of resources and power between the south and the north of the country. Similarly, in Mali, the development of extremist organisations in the Inner Niger Delta, Dogon Country and Gourma feeds on social, economic and governance issues that the central government have never addressed seriously.

In both countries, government forces were unable to restore order on a long-term basis and have sovereignty over the entire territory. In Chad, both the government and the FROLINAT rebels were too weak to strike against each other, until Colonel Muhammar Gaddafi occupied the Aouzou strip and allied with local rebels against the central government. President Tombalbaye was eventually killed in 1975, three years before the French militarily intervened for the second time. Chad then experienced 30 years of civil wars, coups d'état and political violence which have left the country on the brink of collapse.

A similar scenario is not unlikely in Mali, where neither the rebels, nor the violent extremist organisations or the central government are strong enough to seriously threaten each other and lead to a comprehensive peace agreement. These conditions have left much of the civilian population unprotected and contributed to spread insecurity in neighbouring countries.

Source: Olivier Walther.

Figure 5.3
Shifts in the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) in Mali and Central Sahel, 2013



Note: The graph shows how many "cells" or "regions" have experienced different types of conflict in 2015. Shifts in different conflict categories are indicated with colour flows from one month to another. For example, more than half of the regions where violence was clustered and intense in January 2015 (in dark green) have experienced no conflict in February 2015 (in white) (Box 5.4).

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

impact on the geography of violence. However, as in past interventions (Box 5.3), the issues in the region are far from resolved. Under Serval's successor operation, Barkhane, violence in Mali and neighbouring Burkina Faso has reemerged since early 2017 and has now surpassed the levels that triggered Serval in 2013. Concerningly, the types of violence have also diversified. As seen in Figure 5.3, which shows the shifts in the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator, violence is now found across all four conflict categories. An implication of this diversification is that efforts to contain and reduce the violence face a far more complex geography than was present in 2013.

THE MULTINATIONAL INTERVENTION AROUND LAKE CHAD

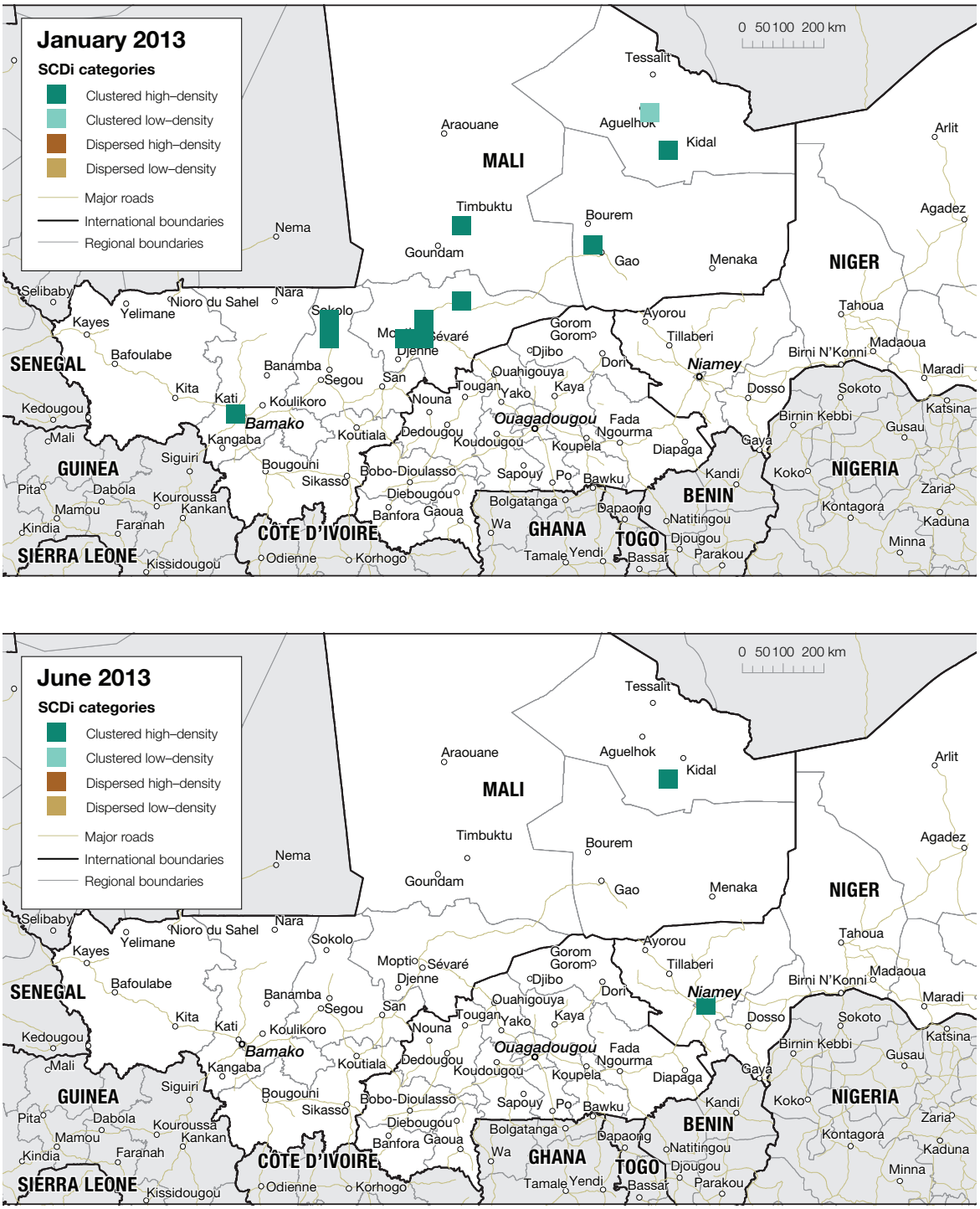
Fighting the Boko Haram insurgency

Nigerian forces have been fighting the Boko Haram insurgency for more than a decade (Map 5.6). Until the early 2010s, the vast majority of the violent incidents between Boko Haram and government forces took place within Nigeria (Dowd, 2018). After having repressed the Boko Haram insurgency of Maiduguri in 2009, the Nigerian government launched a series of military operations in the northeastern corner of the country under a Joint Task Force (JTF) that combined troops from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police and State Security Service. Between December 2011 and mid-2013, several operations coded Restore Order were conducted in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states (Delalande, 2018). None of these initiatives were successful in countering Boko Haram, who expanded its foothold in the country and was involved in a growing number of violent attacks.

The vast majority of the violent events (80%) and fatalities (81%) involving government forces and Boko Haram over the last decade in the Lake Chad region are related to battles (Map 5.7). Explosions, suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices, while spectacular, account for only 16% of the events and 14% of the deaths. As noted earlier in this study, attacks attributed to government forces and Boko Haram are heavily

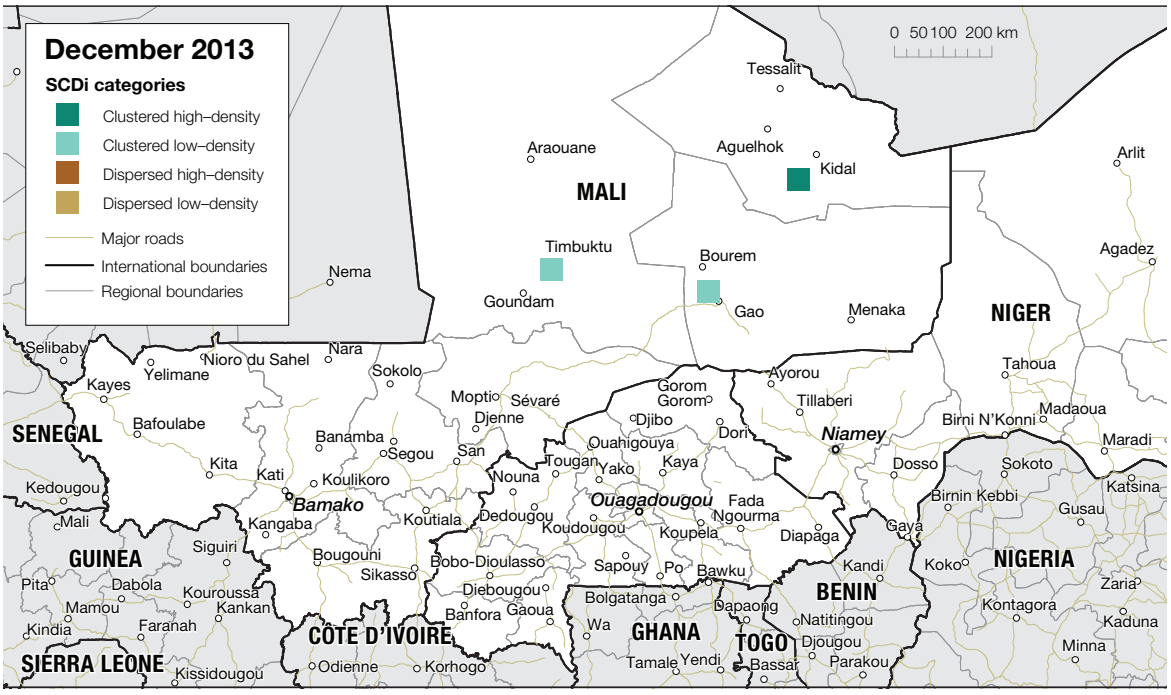
Map 5.4

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) categories in Mali and Central Sahel, January, June and December 2013



Note: Some categories of conflict may not be present during the reporting period (dispersed and high-density conflicts for example).

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.



Box 5.4

How to read an alluvial chart

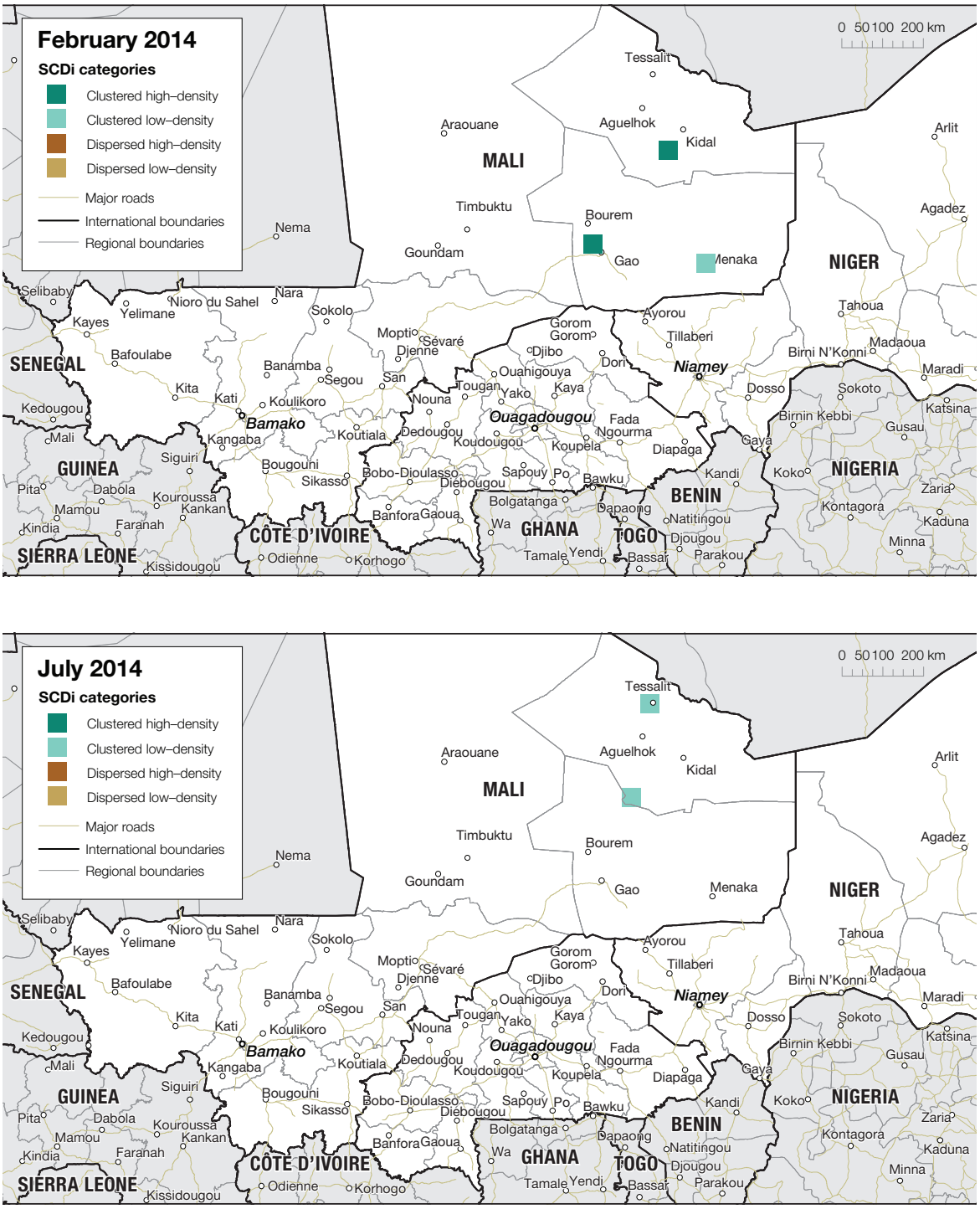
The alluvial diagrams in this report show how individual cells flow between the different Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) categories over time. Each time interval is visualised as a vertical bar, and these bars are placed along the x-axis in chronological order. Each of these bars is divided into vertically stacked blocks called strata: in this case, the strata correspond to the SCDi categories. The size of a stratum within each bar corresponds to how many cells were in that SCDi category at that time interval. If a stratum grows in height from one bar to a second bar, it means that more cells had that SCDi value at the second time interval than at the first.

What sets alluvial diagrams apart from simple bar plots is the inclusion of thick lines that flow between the bars of the diagram (known as alluvia). These lines represent groups of cells moving from one SCDi category to another between one time interval and the next. The thickness of the line corresponds to how many cells made that same shift. For example, one month there were 20 cells with Clustered-High Density SCDi values. Of these, 15 remain Clustered-High Density, while 5 shifted to Clustered-Low Density the next month. In the diagram, a thicker line will flow from the Clustered-High Density stratum of the first month to the Clustered-High Density stratum of the second month, while a thinner line will flow to the Clustered-Low Density stratum of the second month. The strata and alluvia are both colored according to their SCDi category. Flows are colored according to the SCDi category at the first time interval.

The alluvial diagrams do not depict all of the SCDi data. The vast majority of cells in all three of the case studies contained one or zero events, and are therefore categorised as No Conflict. If these cells were visualised in the alluvial diagrams, the No Conflict strata for every bar would be overwhelmingly large, rendering the diagram unreadable. So, cells with a No Conflict SCDi value for every time interval in the study window were removed.

Map 5.5

Spatial Conflict Dynamics Indicator (SCDi) categories in Mali and Central Sahel, February and July 2014

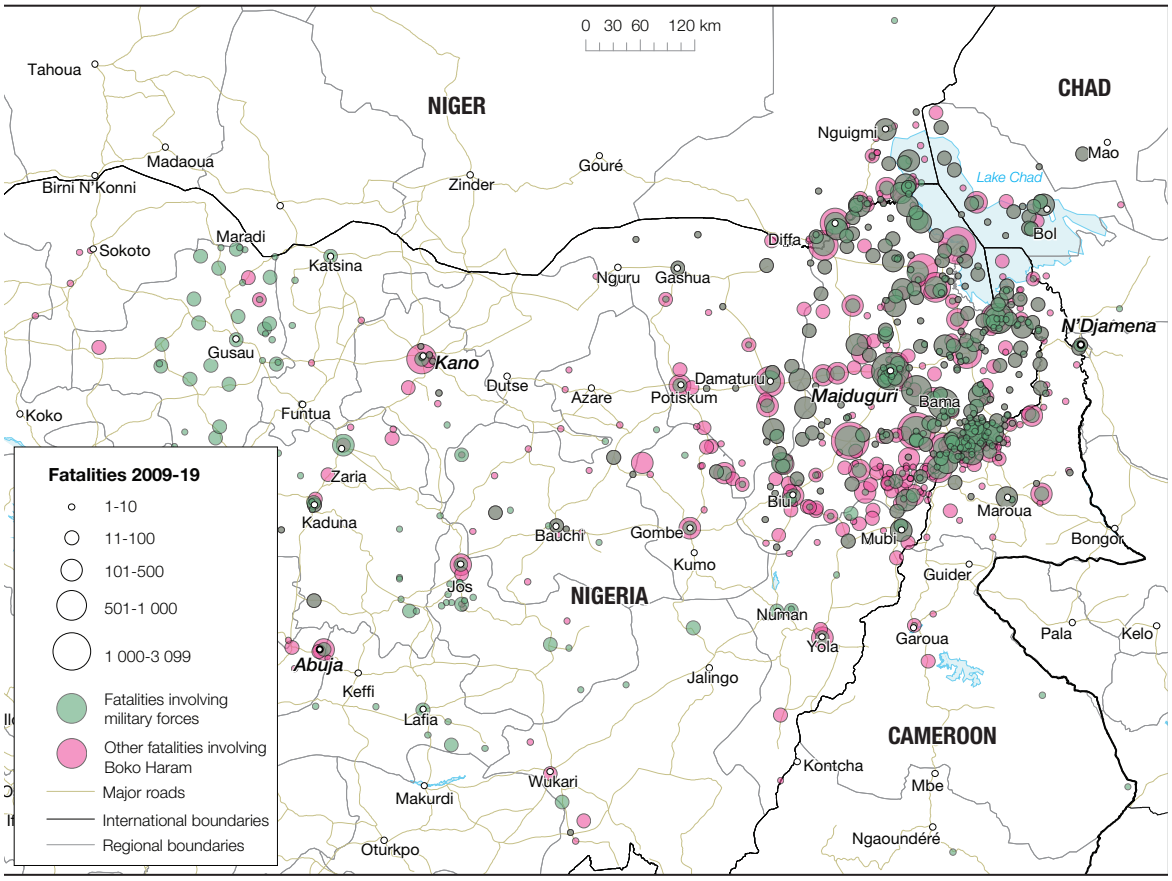


Note: Some categories of conflict may not be present during the reporting period (dispersed and high–density conflicts for example).

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Map 5.6

Fatalities involving military forces and Boko Haram around Lake Chad, 2009-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

clustered in the northeastern part of Nigeria, particularly in Borno State.

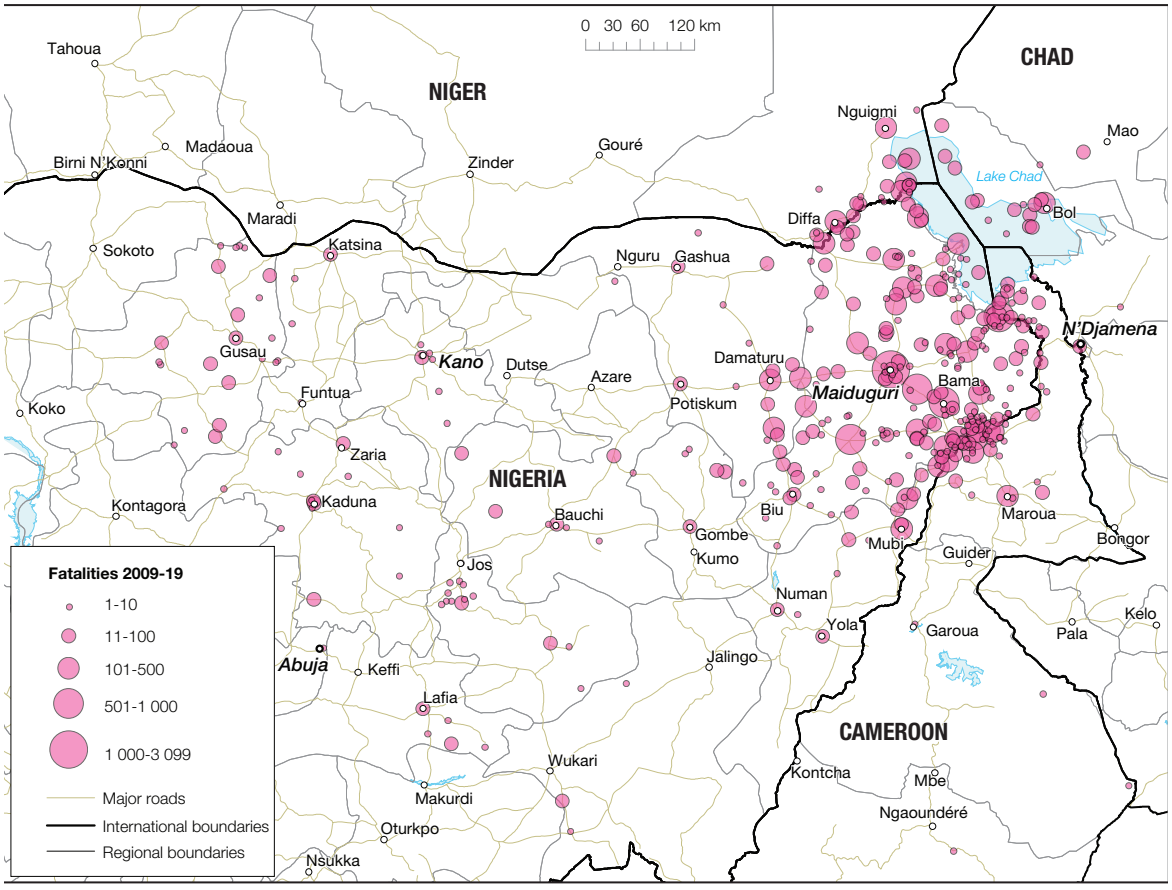
Some of the violent events recorded in Zamfara and Katsina States are not related to the Boko Haram insurgency (Map 5.8).

They were conducted between 2018 and 2019 by the Nigerian air forces against cattle raiders and local militias, notably the Zamfara Communal Militia allied with pastoralists. Less mediatised than other conflicts, these acts of communal violence between Fulani pastoralists and Hausa farmers have proved just as deadly as the Lake Chad insurgency (ICG, 2018). The bombing campaigns launched by the Nigerian air force against these "bandits" and ethnic militias and the poor human rights records of Nigerian troops explain why Western countries have long been reluctant to train and arm the Nigeria army (Iwuoha, 2019).

The Nigerian government declared a state of emergency on 14 May 2013 in the three most affected states of the northeast and launched Operation Boyona with the objective of degrading Boko Haram's military capabilities. In August 2013, Operation Zaman Lafiya (Live in Peace in Hausa) replaced Operation Boyona without contributing to significantly improve the security situation in the region. In 2014, Boko Haram conducted a number of spectacular attacks and gradually expanded in neighbouring Cameroon, where it was involved in 77 incidents totaling 1 316 deaths this year. In 2015, Boko Haram's territorial control and military forces peaked. In addition to controlling a growing part of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, Boko Haram was increasingly active in Cameroon, Niger and Chad, where it was involved in 165 violent incidents causing 2 682 fatalities

Map 5.7

Fatalities related to battles around Lake Chad, 2009-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

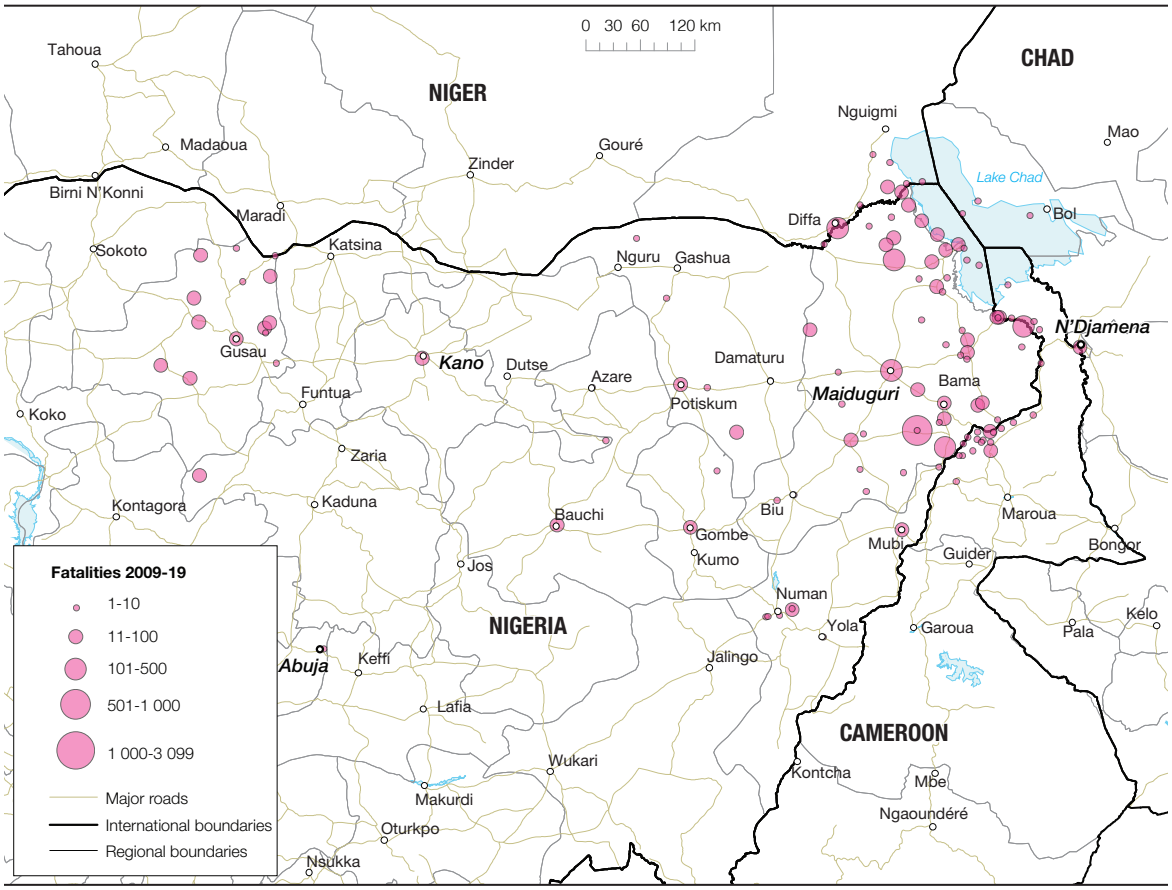
(Map 5.9). The degradation of the security situation led the Nigerian government to launch a major military counter-offensive under the code name Operation Lafiya Dolé (Peace by Force) in co-ordination with the MNJTF.

Multinational events during which government forces from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger have collaborated on an attack against Boko Haram represent 5% of the 1 671 events recorded in the ACLED database since 2015. Much of the joint military operations took place during the offensive launched by Nigeria and the MNJTF from 2015 to 2016. Taken together, these two years represent more than half of the events (52%) and 85% of the fatalities related to multinational operations in the region. Two main configurations can be observed: in the first case, Nigerian armed forces work conjointly with Chadian, Cameroonian and Nigerien troops against Boko Haram in Nigeria. In the second scenario, Chadian, Cameroonian or Nigerien troops conduct military operations within Nigeria without the support of Nigerian forces.

The offensive against Boko Haram is heavily concentrated in some regions: nearly three quarters of the events (72%) and half of the fatalities due to multinational operations have occurred in Borno State, often in close proximity to Nigerian borders. Only 10-15% of the events and a quarter of the fatalities recorded since 2015 took place in Cameroon and in Niger respectively. These findings suggest that the MNJTF is mainly conceived (at least by Nigeria) as an instrument to secure the borders of the region. Rights of pursuit have been negotiated on a bilateral basis with Cameron, Chad and Niger but the Nigerian military is primarily responsible for fighting Boko Haram within the country (Albert, 2017).

Map 5.8

Fatalities related to explosions and remote violence around Lake Chad, 2009-19

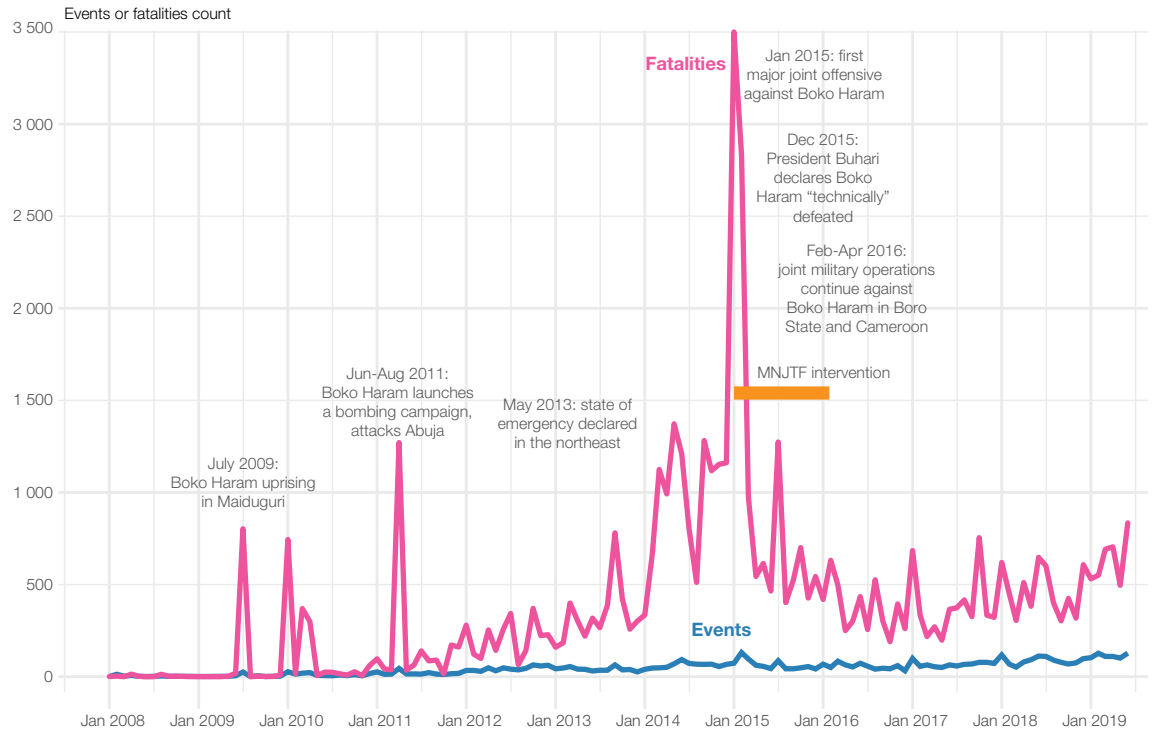


Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

On January 28, after several days of preparation, Nigerian and Chadian forces launched an aerial bombardment on Boko Haram controlled Malam Fatori in Borno State (Figure 5.4). Four day later, Chadian forces entered the Nigerian town of Gambaru after a bombing campaign. Boko Haram responded to these attacks by attacking the Cameroonian town of Fotokol located across the border from Gambaru, killing between around 20 Chadian and Cameroonian soldiers and leaving at least 300 militants dead. On February 18, Chadian troops launched an offensive to retake Dikwa, a Nigerian town located 50 kilometres from the Cameroonian border. The offensive was followed by a co-ordinated assault from Nigerian and Chadian ground forces on the Sambisa Forest, a wooded area that offers a sanctuary at a reasonable distance from both Maiduguri in the north and the Cameroonian border in the west. They also launched an air force strike against the neighbouring city of Gwoza, the headquarters of Boko Haram, which killed 117 militants. Subsequent operations in the region resulted in the death of hundreds of Boko Haram fighters.

A second joint offensive against Boko Haram forces began in early March 2015 after a series of air strikes. On March 6, Niger and Chad launched a major ground and air assault against Boko Haram positions opposite the cities of Diffa and Bosso. Ten Chadian soldiers and hundreds of Boko Haram fighters were killed. The two countries conducted another aerial campaign in Mobbar Local Government Area (LGA), situated along the Niger-Nigeria border. On March 9, Chadian forces attacked and overtook the Nigerian city of Damasak west of Diffa from Boko Haram. Three days later, Cameroonian

Figure 5.4
Events and fatalities in the Lake Chad region, 2008-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

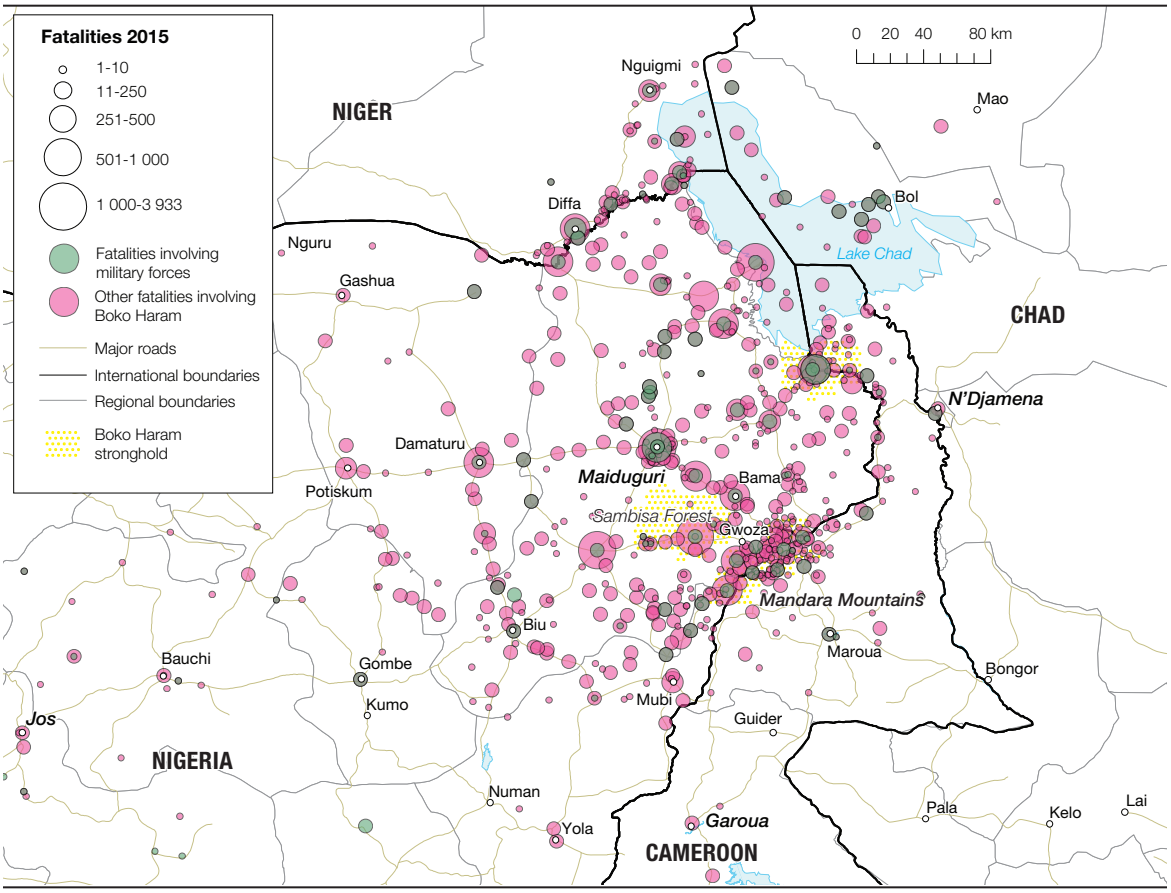
forces clashed with Boko Haram over two days in Ndaba, a Nigerian border town near Gwoza. The Nigerian army recaptured Bama on March 16 and Gwoza on March 27.

At the end of April 2015, the Nigerian armed forces launched a new offensive against Boko Haram in the Sambisa Forest. The offensive resulted in the destruction of dozens of Boko Haram camps and the release of around 700 women and children held hostages by the sect. Boko haram responded by launching suicide attacks and a counter-offensive against Giwa Barracks in Maiduguri where Boko Haram prisoners and their families are detained. While Boko Haram managed to recapture some cities such as Marte near Gambaru, it lost much of its former territory in Borno State and neighbouring regions. On 24 December 2015, newly elected President Muhammadu Buhari declared that Nigeria had "technically won the war" against Boko Haram (BBC, 2015). The conflict has not come to an end, though, and the MNJTF is still involved in military operations against Boko Haram (Box 5.5).

In addition to its joint activities within the MNJTF, Nigeria is conducting a number of other military operations against Boko Haram's strongholds in the region. From May 2016 on, the Nigerian armed forces launched Operation Crackdown and Operation Rescue Final in the Sambisa forest in the hope of destroying militants and rescuing the school girls captured in Chibok in 2014 (This Day, 2016). The operation was followed by Operation Karya Gwuia against Boko Haram camps in southern Borno State and Operation Hard Knock in Marte LGA. In the Spring 2017, the Nigerian Army also launched another major operation in the Sambisa forest name coded Operation Deep Punch I from July to December 2017. The Army also launched two counter-offensives in the Lake Chad basin, one coded Deep Punch II from December 2017,

Map 5.9

Fatalities involving government forces and Boko Haram around Lake Chad, 2015



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

and one coded Last Hold since May 2018 (ISS, 2018). The same year, a defector and rehabilitation program called Operation Safe Corridor was initiated in favor of male combatants and women married to Boko Haram fighters (Salih et al., 2018). More recently, the Nigerian government announced that residents of the northeast should produce identification documents on demand as part of Operation Positive Identification. The operation will be extended nationwide from November 2019 to "checkmate bandits, kidnappers, armed robbers, ethnic militia, cattle rustlers as well as other sundry crimes across the various regions of Nigeria", according to the military (Premium Times, 2019b).

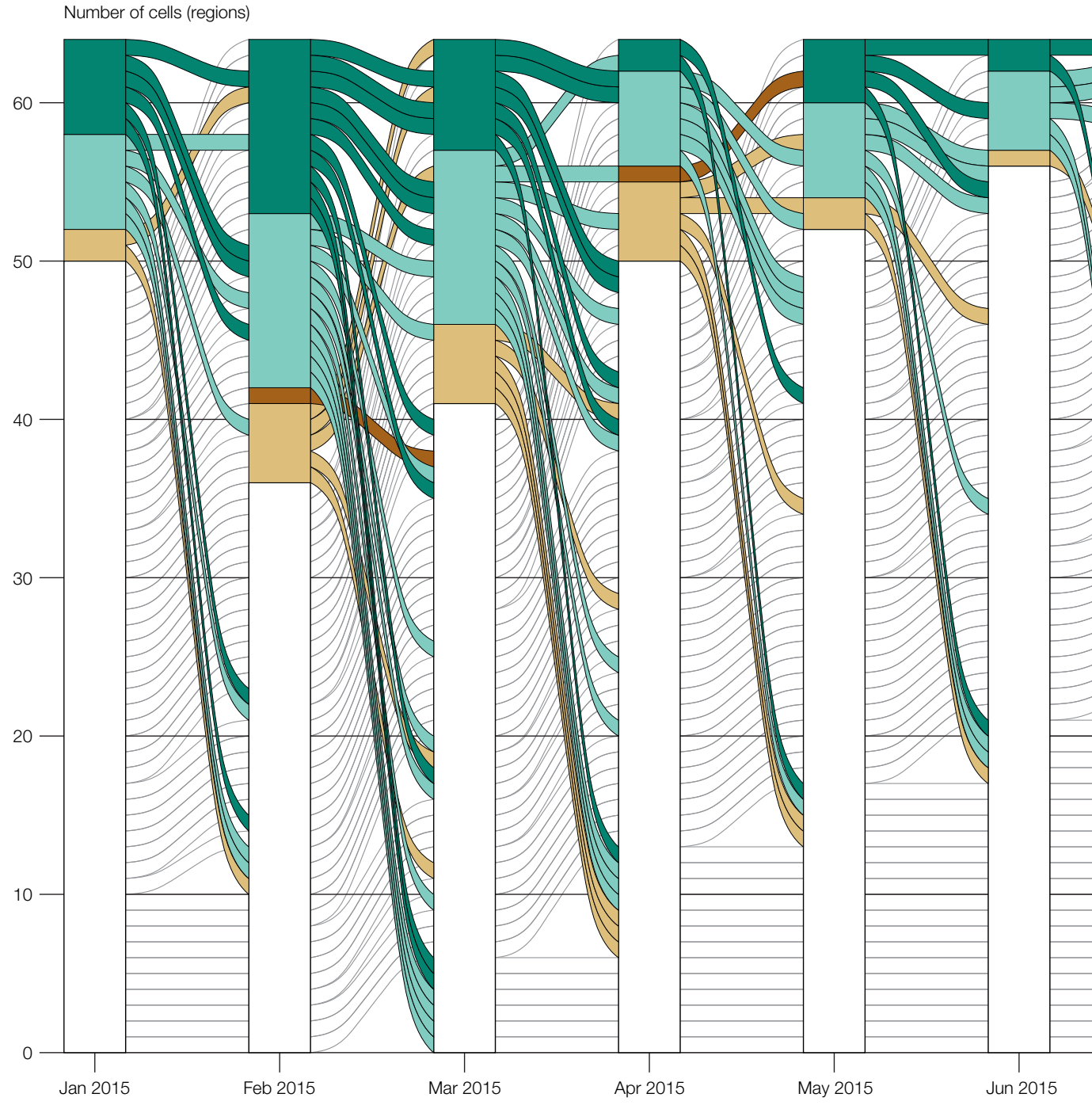
The MNJTF intervention neither eliminated nor relocated violence

The combined military intervention of Nigeria and the MNJTF against Boko Haram resulted in several major changes in the conflict. Primarily, the number of violent events and fatalities involving Boko Haram demonstrated a strong decline since its peak in 2015. As with the French intervention in Mali, the MNJTF intervention against Boko Haram during 2015 also served to modify the geography of violence in the Lake Chad region. Similar to the case of Serval, violence was quite high in the first two months of the intervention and then stabilised to pre-intervention levels.

However, the task force struggled to produce a rapid shift in the overall geography. For instance, Figure 5.5 highlights that the regions

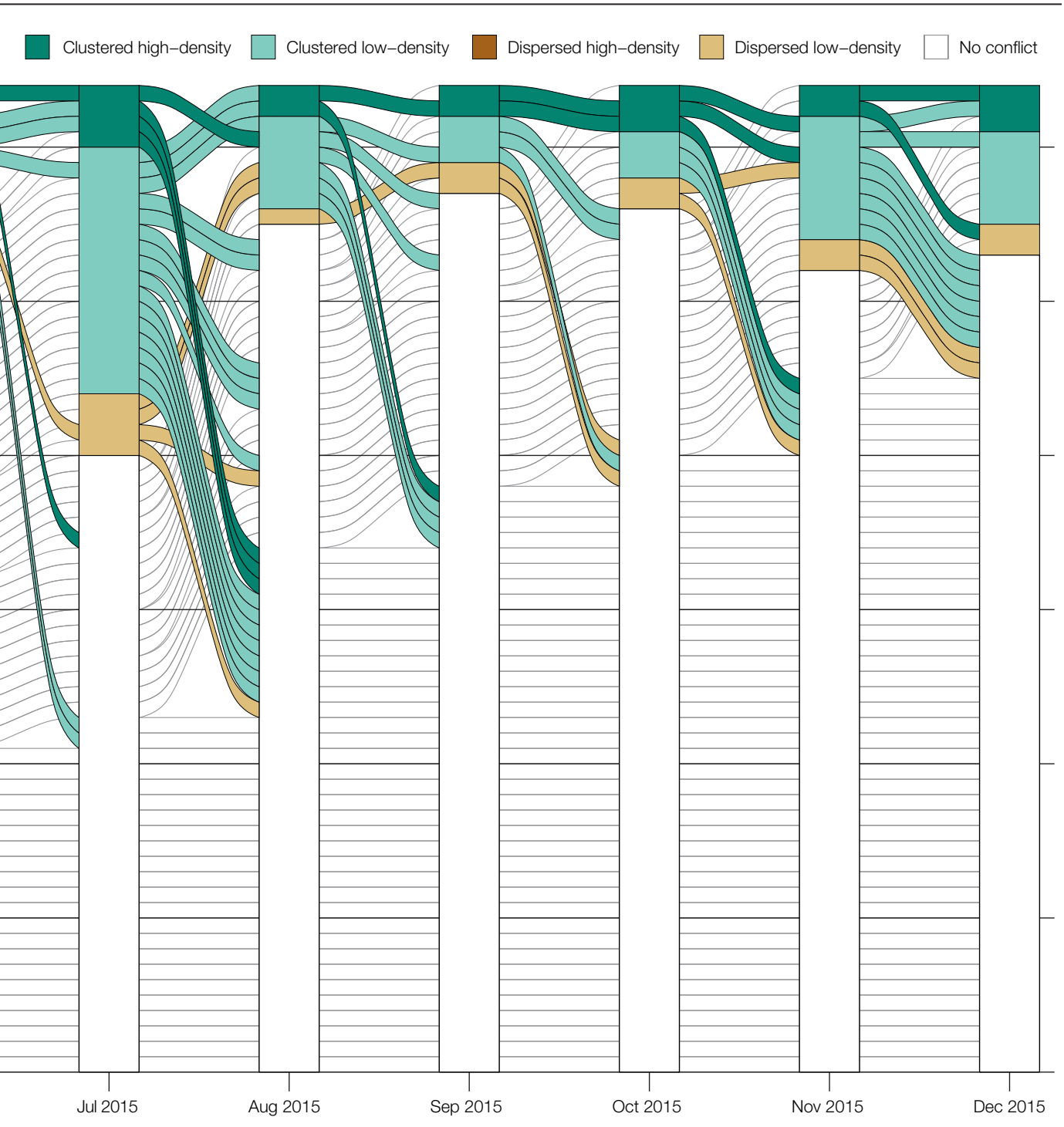
Figure 5.5

Shifts in the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator around Lake Chad, 2015



Note: The graph shows how many "cells" or "regions" have experienced different types of conflict in 2015. Shifts in different conflict categories are indicated with colour flows from one month to another. For example, numerous regions where violence was low and clustered in July 2015 (in light green) have experienced no conflict in August 2015 (in white).

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.


Clustered high–density
Clustered low–density
Dispersed high–density
Dispersed low–density
No conflict
Jul 2015
Aug 2015
Sep 2015
Oct 2015
Nov 2015
Dec 2015

Box 5.5
MNJTF operations since 2016

Joint military operations against Boko Haram are still ongoing (for a full account, see ISS, 2018). On 11 February, Cameroonian forces launched a cross-border assault against Ashigashiya, killing at least 27 Boko Haram fighters. Further west, Nigerian forces retook several villages in the Gwoza region and linked up with Cameroonian soldiers in Ngoshe. Joint operations continued in February along the Nigeria-Cameroon border. Allied forces gained control of much of the area, liberating 150 prisoners. On 12 April, Nigerian and Cameroonian forces carried out a series of joint operations in Bama LGA, as well as across the border into Cameroon, leaving 22 Boko Haram militants dead and rescuing 1 275 hostages. In June 2016, Operation Gama Aiki (Finish the Job) was initiated to capture Boko Haram militants who would escape from the Sambisa forest.

In December 2016, Operation Gama Aiki was followed by Operation Rawan Kada (Crocodile Dance), a joint offensive that lasted until July 2017. Cameroonian forces were particularly active during this period. They conducted a number of operations in the Bama and Gwoza regions, killing 60 Boko Haram militants and liberating 5 000 civilians, according to government sources. In September 2017, another operation codenamed Chikin Gudu (In the Running) was launched. One of the latest efforts of the MNJTF is Operation Amni Fakat (Peace at all Costs), which started in May 2018 as a way to oust Boko Haram fighters from the islands of Lake Chad (LCBC, 2018). Military operations were also launched in the Mandara mountains bordering Cameroon, which served as a refuge for Boko Haram both in 2009 after its failed insurrection in Maiduguri, and in 2013, when it was driven from Maiduguri by the Civilian Join Task Force (Thurston, 2017), a vigilante movement that contributed to reduce Boko Haram presence in cities. In September 2018, for example, Cameroonian and Nigerian forces attacked Boko Haram camps in Yabiri Kote and Bula Dadobe (Bama LGA), which had been used to launch cross-border attacks into Cameroon.

Source: Olivier Walther.

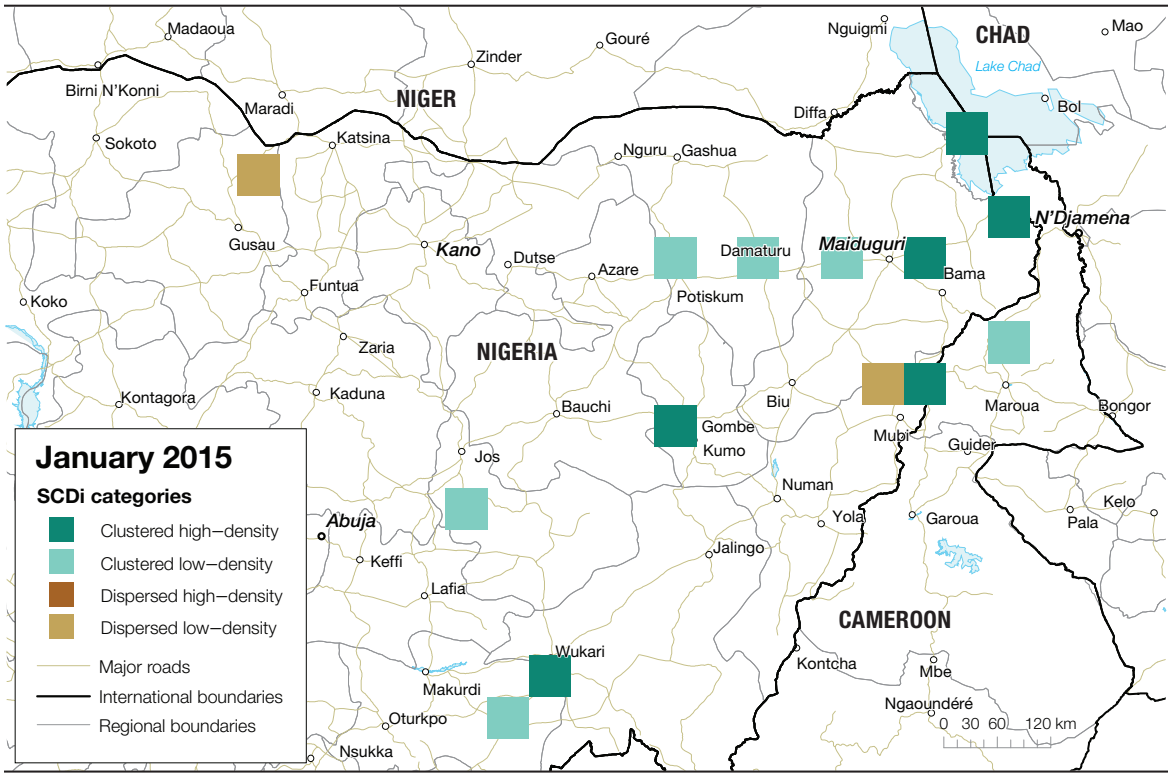
that experienced more than two conflict events in a single month often continued to experience conflict in subsequent months. This means that a region with conflict of any type often took several months to result in the elimination of violence while in the case of Mali most were pacified within a single month and were not a continuous site of conflict. As a result of this dynamic, regions in several states in Nigeria were the sites of repeated clashes between militants and the task force, specifically those in Adawama, Bauchi, Borno, and Yobe states (Map 5.10).

Unlike Serval, the geography of violence was also not just more persistent in specific locations, it was also more diverse in terms of SCDi categories. The most common category throughout the intervention was low-intensity/concentrated. This reinforces the challenge faced by the task force in eliminating violence in the region. Violence tended to persist at lower levels around specific places for longer durations. Also unlike Serval, every month of the intervention had multiple regions classified as both high-intensity/concentrated and high-intensity/dispersed in addition to the higher numbers of low-intensity/concentrated regions. Violence within these other categories again proved difficult to end as they tended to change to the low-intensity/concentrated category month-to-month rather than to be eliminated altogether.

Also unlike Serval, violence reemerged in the middle of the intervention after an initial wave of success in its reduction. In July 2015, the number of regions experiencing violence nearly tripled from the previous month, due to large-scale military operations. As a result, the locations of violence in July of 2015 was quite similar to that in February 2015, when violence had previously peaked (Map 5.10). By the end of 2015, this surge had again been reduced by more than 50%, while still persisting in Borno and Yobe states (Map 5.11).

Map 5.10

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator around Lake Chad, January 2015

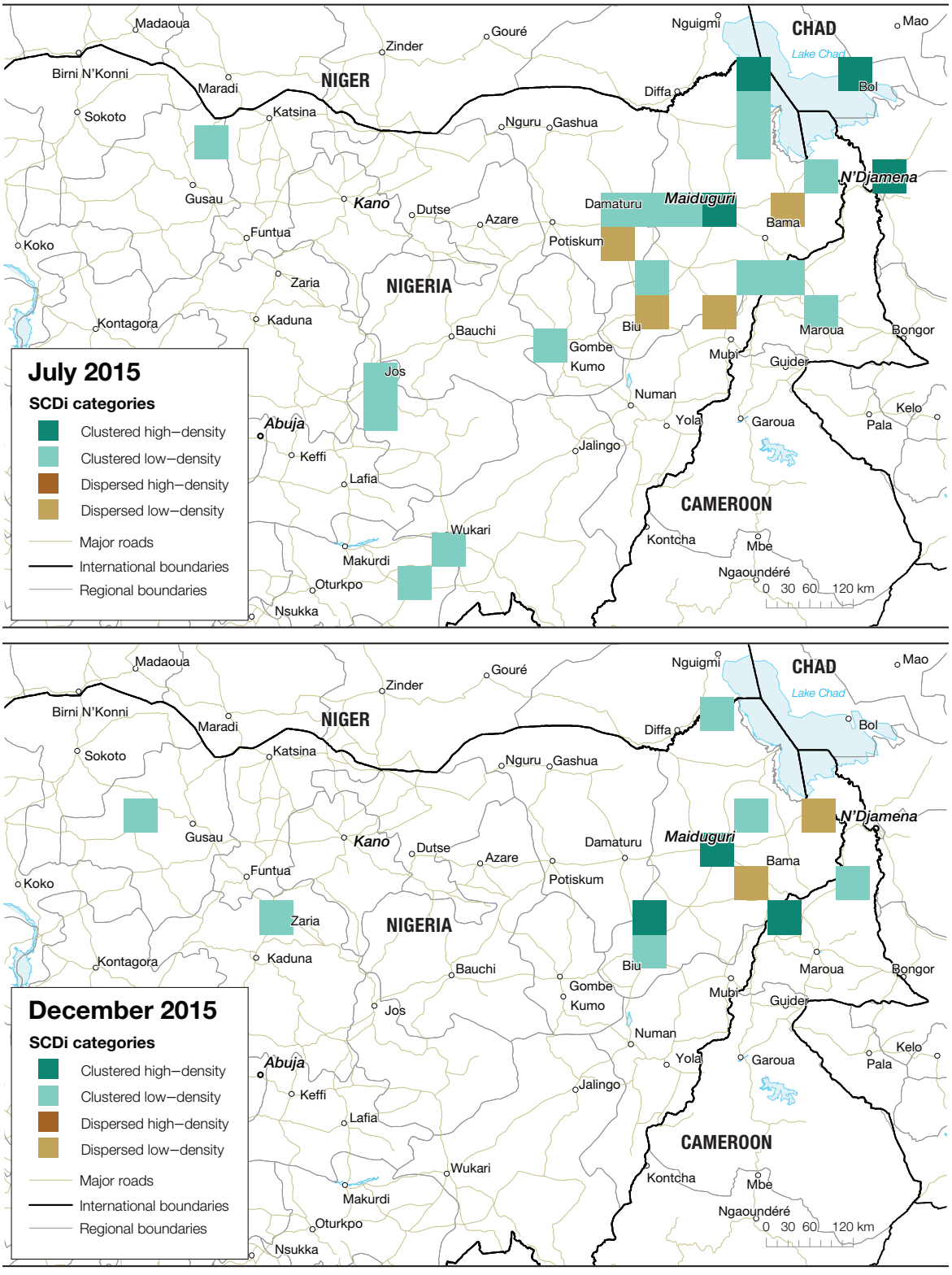


Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

Overall, the MNJTF's operations in 2015 reduced the number of events and fatalities to pre-intervention levels, which is to say that violence within the Lake Chad region remained quite high throughout. However, it neither eliminated nor relocated violence although it may have served to spatially confine violence to northeast during 2015. The primary geographic effect was to increase the number of locations with lower intensity violence as conflict was persistent in regions over time. Similar to Serval, violence has continued since the intervention of 2015. While fatalities have not yet reached per-intervention levels (Figure 5.5), the number of regions experiencing violence is now at levels not seen since the earliest months of 2015. Both numbers of high-intensity/concentrated and low-intensity/concentrated cells are at their peak relative to early 2015.

Map 5.11

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator categories around Lake Chad, July and December 2015



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

THE NATO INTERVENTION IN LIBYA

Bombing campaign and regime change

In early 2011, the "Arab Spring" uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt had led to the collapse of two repressive governments in North Africa. Inspired by these events, similar protests began in Libya in early February 2011 against the oppressive rule of Muammar Gaddafi (ICG, 2011). By mid-February, protests had spread to most of Libya's major cities. Between 15 and 18 February, protestors in cities across the country had attacked government and security sites and Libyan security forces responded with violence. In response to the use of force by the state, protestors began to collect weapons and organise into a rebel force called the National Transition Council (NTC).

While several accounts emerged of the Libyan military firing on civilians with hundreds of causalities, by 18 February, the military had been overwhelmed and withdrew to the outskirts of several cities (Pedde, 2017). By late February, Benghazi, Libya's second-most populous city, became the de facto capital of a newly proclaimed Libya Republic by the NTC, which sought to co-ordinate activities among the rebel-liberated cities and advocate for democratic elections to replace the Gaddafi regime. Gaddafi asserted that the NTC rebels were Islamists and terrorists, that Libyan protesters had been brain-washed by Al-Qaeda or drugged by Western companies, and promised to eliminate anyone opposed to his rule (Kirkpatrick and Fahim, 2011).

By early March 2011, rebels had gained control over half of the country. The Libyan military then began a campaign to retake rebel-held cities by force, indiscriminately attacking into residential areas and bombing civilians. Over the next two weeks, government forces pushed the NTC rebels back to its last stronghold, Benghazi. There, Gaddafi explicitly threatened to attack civilians, deployed his troops to the gates of the city, and prepared to engage in a "blood-bath" (Mundy, 2018).

In response to these events and the explicit threats to civilians made by Gaddafi, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorised a military intervention to prevent attacks on civilians in Libya. On 17 March 2011, the UNSC passed resolution 1973 to re-endorse the 1970 arms embargo and impose a no-fly zone over Libya. On March 23, NATO's Operation Unified Protector was launched as ships operating in the Mediterranean began cutting off the flow of weapons to Libya by sea. The next day, NATO air forces began a bombing campaign to destroy government forces and enforce the UN-mandated no-fly zone. On 31 March 2011, the Alliance took sole control of the international military intervention (NATO, 2015).

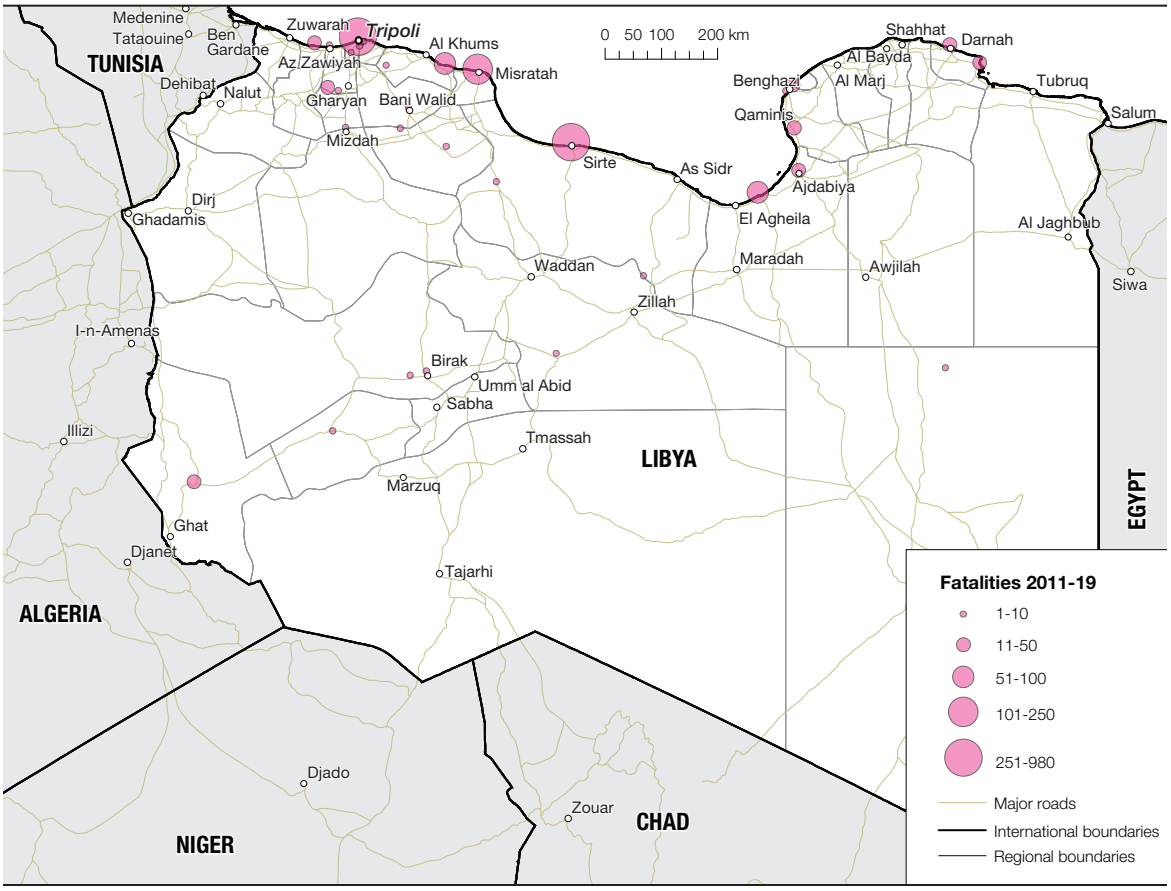
The stated aims of the intervention were seemingly unbiased against the rebels or the government through "enforcing an arms embargo, maintaining a no-fly zone and protecting civilians and civilian populated areas from attack or the threat of attack" (NATO, 2015). However, NATO controversially undertook repeated attacks on the Libyan military even in the absence of threats to civilians, which have led some to conclude the intervention quickly became a regime change mission despite its stated intentions (Nahlawi, 2018). The initial mission to protect civilians quickly morphed into a sustained air assault on Libya forces even where they did not actively pursue rebels.

A NATO report stated that the operation conducted over 26,000 sorties, including nearly 9,700 strike sorties that destroyed over 5 900 military targets between March and October 2011 (NATO, 2011). Most of these targets were located in urban areas along the Mediterranean coast, where the majority of the population and government forces were located (Map 5.12). Given the duration of the intervention, this meant NATO averaged 150 air strikes per day, which reinforces the attention the intervention placed on crippling the Libyan military. NATO also provided military arms, training, and intelligence to the rebels as well as close air support for rebel attacks on government forces (House of Commons, 2016).

From the point of view of regime change, the NATO intervention was an obvious military success. After months of fleeing the rebels and NATO airstrikes, Gaddafi himself was killed on 20 October 2011. When Unified Protector ended

Map 5.12

Fatalities involving NATO and external powers in Libya, 2011-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

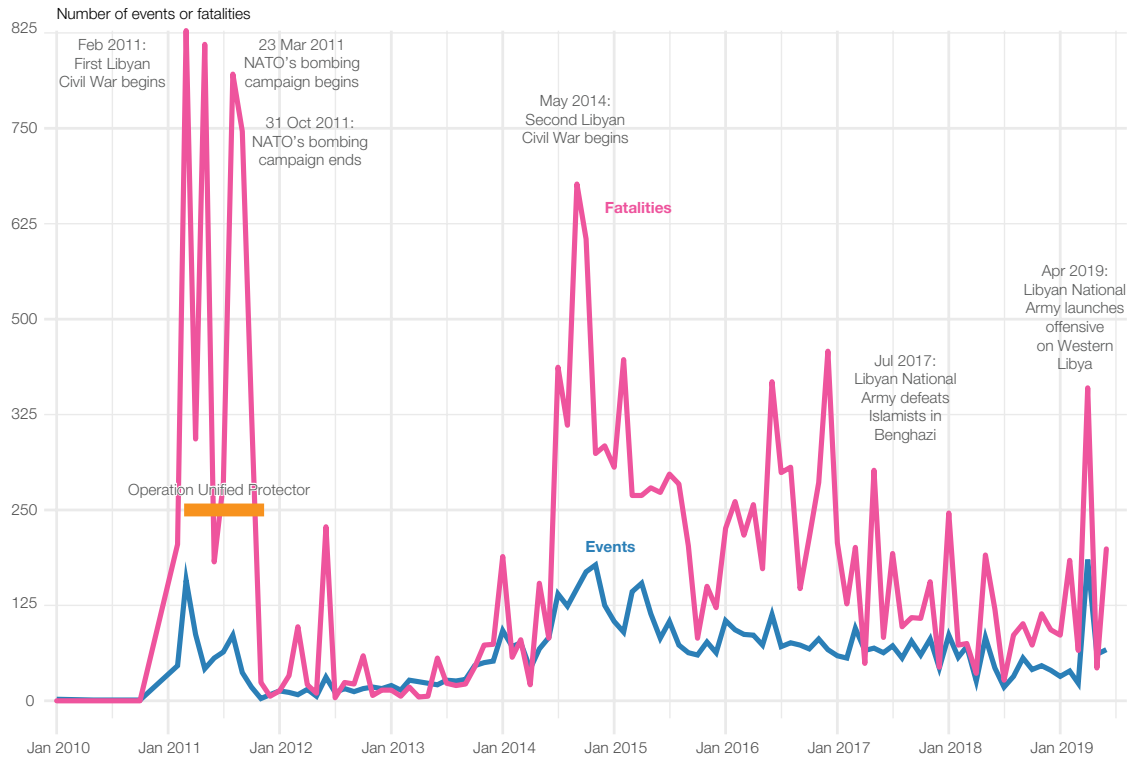
on 31 October 2011, the operation had led to the complete overthrow and collapse of Gaddafi's regime and the victory of rebel forces.

As in Mali, the NATO intervention did not put an end of the conflict. Fighting between different factions of the rebellion started shortly after the NTC declared Libya "liberated" in October 2011 (Figure 5.6). In May 2014, rivalries between the House of Representatives (HoR) government and the General National Congress (GNC) government led to the Second Libyan Civil War, a conflict that continues to devastate Libya to this day.

A decisive campaign that did not put an end to violence overall

NATO's intervention into Libya in 2011 is fundamentally different that the cases of Mali and Nigeria for several reasons. Most notably, this

Figure 5.6
Events and fatalities in Libya per month, 2011-19



Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

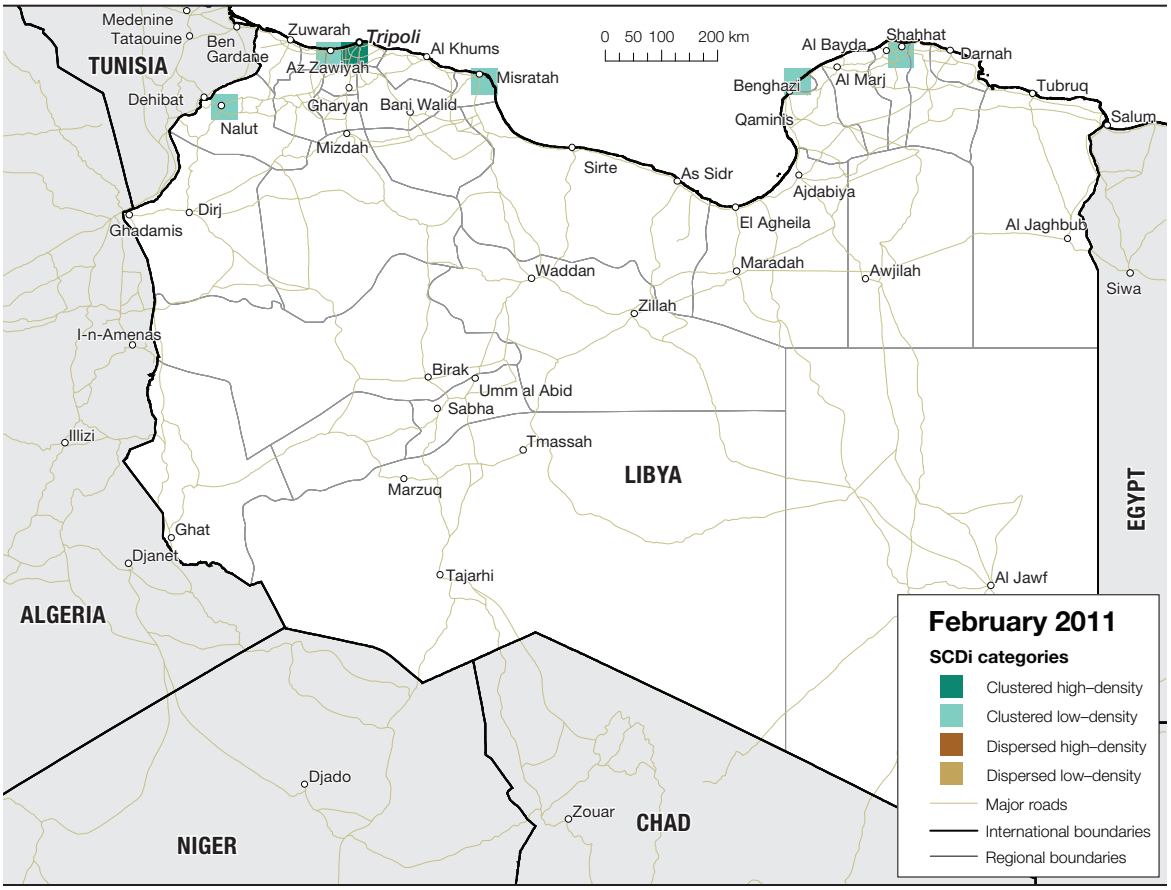
was an air-based campaign and naval blockade that did not involve the use of ground forces. It was also the shortest intervention, lasting less than one year. As such, the geography of violence was both limited geographically and yet persistent in certain locations during the intervention. The duration of the intervention also involved the most fatalities since 2010.

NATO's air campaign involved targeting military installations, air fields and similar defence sites, and transportation corridors. This meant repeated conflict events in similar locations over time. For instance, this is easy to see in the maps of SCDi categories over time (Map 5.13) where the cell including Tripoli experienced violence every month of the intervention. Predictably, this meant that the predominant SCDi category was low-intensity/concentrated but that the few high-intensity/concentrated regions that are present are repeated sites of violence month after month (likely representing repeated air strikes at nearby locations over time). This effect can be seen in Figure 5.7, as it often takes multiple months for regions to transition from low-density/concentrated to no conflict.

The NATO interventional exhibited some similarities with the other cases. Similar to the MNTJF case, the Libya case also had two separate peaks in violence: one following the start of operations (February and March 2011) and another during the mid-point of the intervention (June-August 2011). Similar to Operation Serval, the end of the intervention had only a few regions with more than two conflict events in a single month. Unfortunately, the similarities do not end there. Like both of the other cases, the NATO intervention reduced violence without producing a clear end to violence overall. Since 2013, violent events have occurred at levels higher than during the intervention and accordingly

Map 5.13

Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) categories in Libya, February 2011



Note: In Libya, none of the regions have experienced dispersed violent events during the reporting period. This is due to the fact that the military intervention was mainly a bombing campaign targeting military objectives in a limited number of locations.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

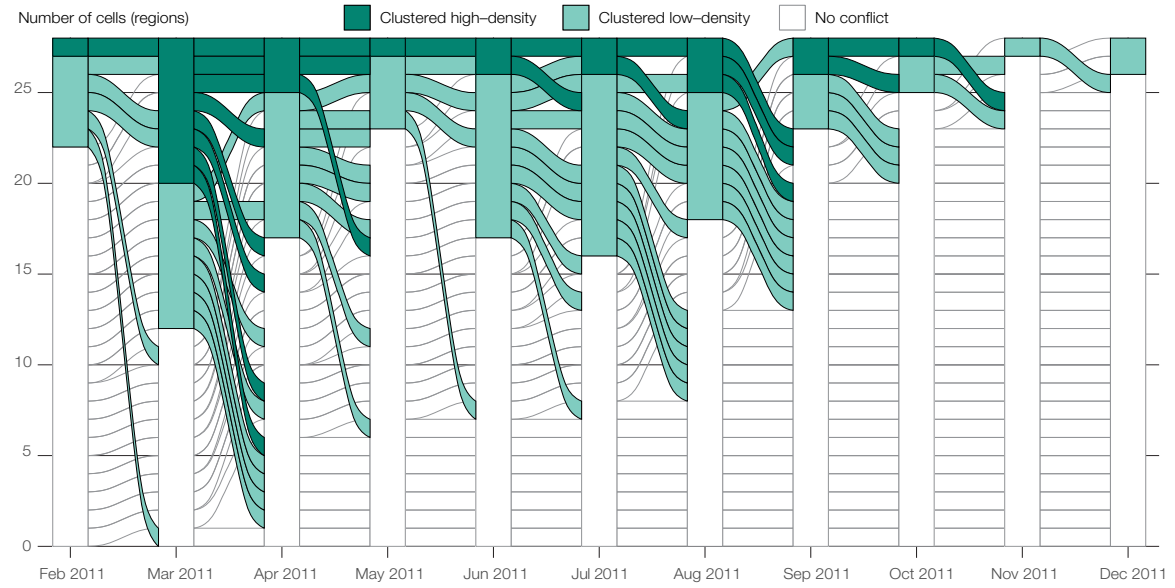
fatalities have remained consistently high. As with the other cases, a political solution to the underlying reasons for the intervention remains elusive.

LEARNING FROM THE SPATIAL INDICATOR

Understanding the long-term geography of political violence in North and West Africa was a complex undertaking and involved the mapping and analysis of over 30 000 discrete events through a 22-year time span and across a 21-state geographical area. Doing so also involved the development of a new flexible spatial tool, the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi), that can grasp the character of conflict at any geographical level and across any time interval that is important to analysts and policy makers.

This study applied the SCDi in a geographically uniform way by creating a gridded geography of cells to use for comparisons across an enormous and diverse multi-state region. However, the SCDi can be applied within a single state context using any size or configuration of underlying areas for analysis (such as provinces, counties, or administrative regions) and utilising any duration desired. This is a major contribution of this report and a first crucial step toward encourage policy makers to invest in and use spatial tools that can grasp and contextualise the dynamics of conflict within the space-time

Figure 5.7
Shifts in the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) in Libya, 2011



Note: The graph shows how many "cells" or "regions" have experienced different types of conflict in 2011. Shifts between different conflict categories are indicated with colour flows from one month to another. For example, less than half of the regions where violence was intense and clustered in March 2011 (in dark green) still experienced that type of violence in April 2011.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.

context most salient to them.

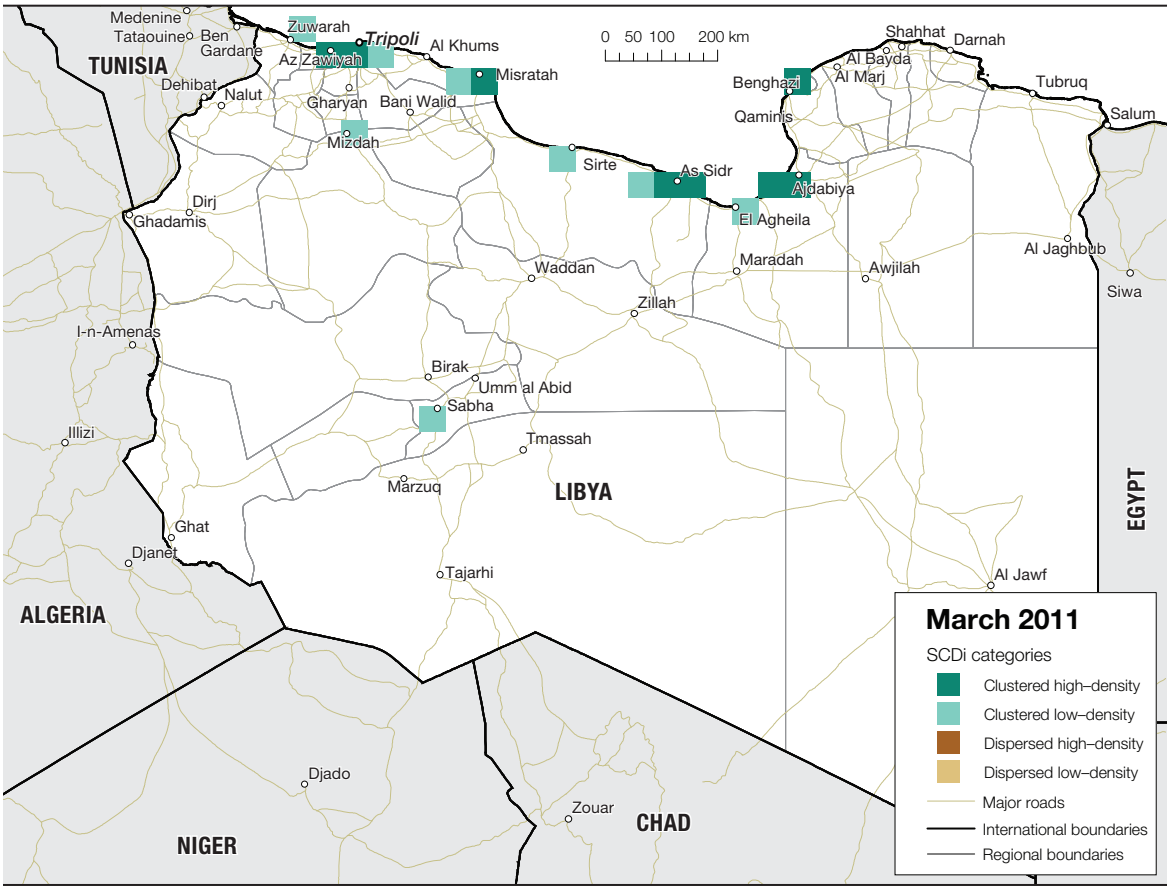
The SCDi also revealed several important elements about long-term political violence in the region that are presented below as three additional lessons for policy officials and other stakeholders interested in the advancement of peace.

First, using the SCDi to track the long-term evolution of the geography of violence at the level of states highlights that the location of violence is highly dynamic over time. Most of the major conflict areas of the 1990s are peaceful today and much of the current violence is observed in states that were considered stable 15 years ago. This shifting and relocating of political instability across international boundaries should encourage policy makers to continue to track the locations of violence at a regional and multi-state scale. A focus on an individual country or even on a smaller set of states would have missed this essential character of political violence and perhaps fail to detect the direction and implications of such shifts when they occur. The SCDi is an example of a tool that informs on the larger patterns of violence regionally.

Second, the SCDi illustrates how violence operates geographically over time. The recognition that violence can be concentrated differently while also varying by intensity provides policy makers with a more nuanced understanding that can shape both governance strategies to deal with the circumstances and have an impact on the relative efficacy of those efforts. For example, a highly clustered expression of violence will result in different impacts on people and places than a highly diffuse expression of violence. Accordingly, efforts to suppress violence will necessarily need to take on a different character to effectively address each. Similarly, understanding the relative intensity of violence over time in the same place or area is an important metric of human security that stakeholders can use to assess the effectiveness of their response to violence. That the SCDi addresses both aspects of the geography of violence speaks to the potential utility of it as a response tool when there is an outbreak of violence.

Map 5.14

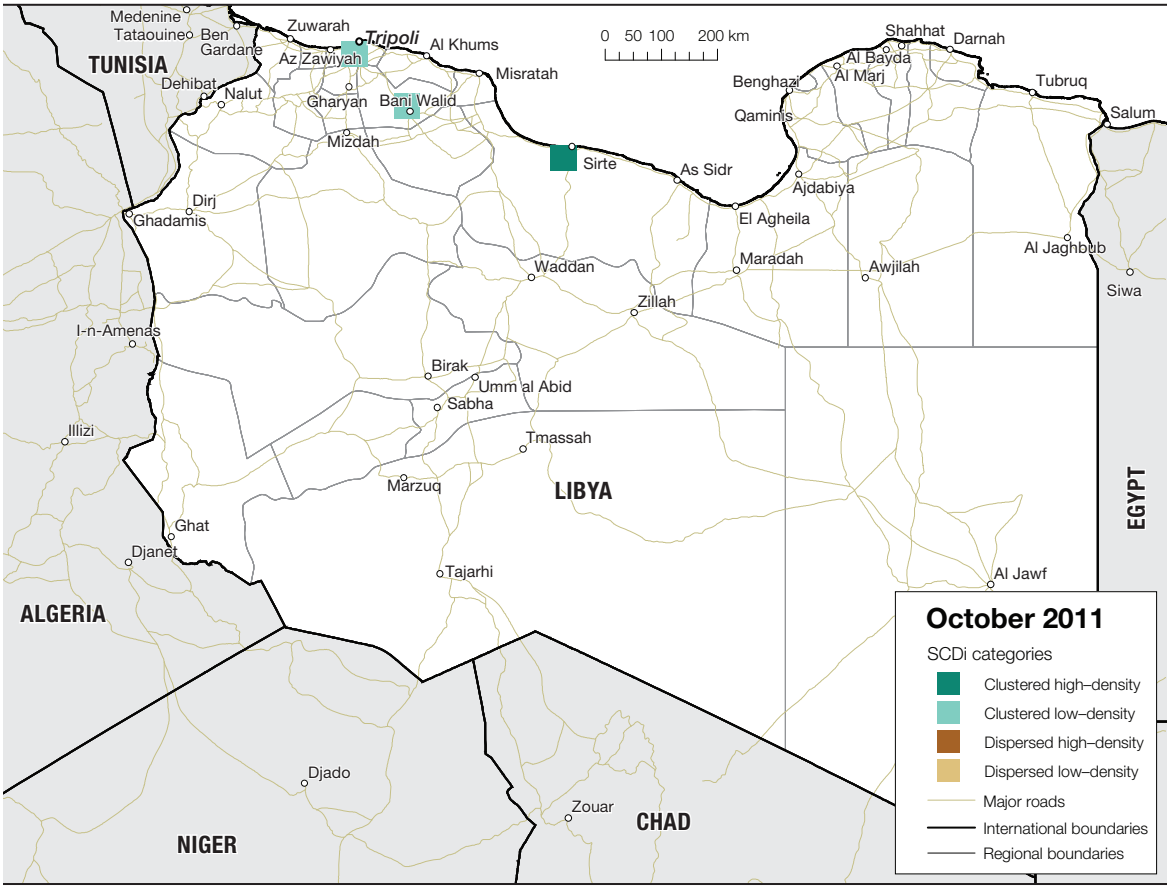
Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) categories in Libya, March and October 2011



Third, the SCDi showed how military interventions impact the dynamics of conflict differently. For example, in both Mali and Libya, a brief and highly mechanised military intervention led to a surge in the regions that experienced violence but then rapidly decreased as the intervention progressed. Though these interventions achieved their immediate military goals, neither led to long-term stability in the region and were followed by a resumption in insurgency activities. In the Lake Chad region, the impact of the MNJTF intervention against Boko Haram was more complex to assess although the offensive launched by Nigeria and its neighbours did reduce the intensity of violence and limit it to remote areas. However, the locations of violence have since spread and resumed in intensity, becoming more dispersed where violence continues to occur.

Overall, the SCDi shows how interventions typically decreased the intensity of violence and kept violence from becoming dispersed where it occurs but that this effect is often temporary. This suggests that external military forces should not be the only means for countering an insurgency. The return of violence to the same locations as prior to an intervention illustrates that insurgencies emerge because of national or local grievances, real or perceived. This means that insurgencies must also be addressed through civil means within the countries in which they develop. The use of the SCDi helps to show how external military forces can create both spaces and moments where violence is suppressed but not necessarily durable solutions to the political circumstances that gave rise to the violence in the first place.

Source: Authors based on ACLED data 2019.



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West African Studies

The Geography of Conflict in North and West Africa

African governments are increasingly confronted with new forms of political violence. The situation is particularly worrying in the Sahara-Sahel where violence is on the rise. This degrading security situation has prompted African countries and their partners to intervene militarily to stabilise the region and to prevent the spread of extremism and violence against civilians. However, these initiatives face many obstacles due to the transnational nature and geography of violence. Tensions regionalise across state borders when armed groups, defeated by counter-insurgency efforts, relocate to other countries. This study maps the evolution of violence across North and West Africa, with a particular focus on Mali, Lake Chad and Libya. In the regions experiencing the highest levels of political insecurity, it identifies whether and how conflicts tend to cluster or spread, potentially across national borders. The work is based on a new spatial indicator of political violence designed to assess the long-term evolution of conflicts and provide policy options.

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ISBN 978-92-64-51893-3

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