

Political violence in the ring around Europe

New and underappreciated trends and developments: threats

Causing stress: Environmental problems and resource mismanagement are prompting protests.

- Failing environmental policy and service delivery systems are leading to unprecedented levels of public backlash, even in the most repressive regimes. [Economist](#); [ACLED](#); [ECOWAS](#)
- Although shortages may trigger violence in urban areas, the opposite is true in rural areas, where resource abundance often invites conflict. [Africa Times](#); [UN ESCAP](#)
- *How can we improve resource management performance to prevent conflict?*

Building or burning bridges? Large-scale foreign infrastructure projects fuel societal tensions.

- The disastrous environmental and social consequences of foreign infrastructure investments increase the likelihood of political instability. [HRW](#); [ACLED](#); [NY Times](#)
- Projects worth up to a country's entire GDP can induce economic entrapment, currency depreciations, and economic hardship. [Dawn](#); [Bloomberg](#); [Aon](#)
- *Can we promote international codes of conduct for sustainable infrastructure investments?*

Not just a European problem: The uncoordinated return of former combatants into society increases the risk of instability throughout Africa.

- Former terrorists and militants are in practice simply reinserted, rather than reintegrated, into society, further perpetuating conflict. [CEPOB](#); [Just Security](#); [Carnegie](#)
- Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants is made even more difficult by the return of their victims to the same communities. [Brookings](#); [ICCT](#)
- *How do we develop policies and prioritize reintegration in DDR programs to prevent recurrent cycles of violence?*

State of neglect: Hidden forms of violence continue to fly under the radar.

- In areas with higher levels of conflict violence, intimate partner violence against women remains significantly higher long after the conflict is over. [World Bank \(1\)](#); [BMJ Global Health](#)
- The consequences of political violence on families and communities far outlive the conflicts, sowing the seeds for renewed political violence down the road. [Just Security](#); [Carnegie Endowment](#); [World Bank \(2\)](#)
- *How can we make our strategies more inclusive and sustainable, so as to also address hidden forms of violence?*

Long-term trends: political violence (20-year timespan)

Multi-factor assessment

Trends		Sahel region	North Africa	Middle East	Post-Soviet Sphere
Baseline	Political violence	▲	▲	▲	—
Political violence in the ring around Europe	State-based violence	▼	▲	▲	—
	Non-state violence	▲	▲	▲	—
	One-sided violence	—	▲	▲	—
	Protests	▲	▲	▲	▲

■ Decreasing threat

■ Increasing threat

▲ Upward

▼ Downward

— Net-zero / Stable

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New and underappreciated trends and developments: international order

Forging or forcing peace? The premature repatriation of refugees exacerbates tensions.

- Governments' toughened stance on migration, spurred by a polarized public discourse, puts significant pressure on the international norm of non-refoulement. [Clingendael](#); [Chatham House](#); [News Deeply \(1\)](#)
- As people return to conflict zones prematurely, the likelihood of political instability in the future will increase. [News Deeply \(2\)](#); [Carnegie Middle East Center](#); [ISS](#)
- *How can we address societal tensions in recipient societies, without fueling long-term regional instability in countries of return?*

A 21st century scramble for influence.

- Many African governments appease their constituents with policies of 'resource nationalism', amid calls for decolonization and a push-back against foreign influence. [Nikkei Asian Review](#); [Reuters](#)
- Meanwhile, the race for the Western Balkans allows other powers to jostle for influence in the region. [POLITICO](#); [Guardian](#); [NY Times](#)
- *How can the Netherlands and the EU provide an attractive proposition to emerging powers as partners?*

Exporting Big Brother: Developing countries as technological testing grounds.

- The export of modern technology (e.g., AI, surveillance tech, BioTech) allows China to extend its influence in receiving countries. [Foreign Policy \(1\)](#); [NY Times](#)
- Meanwhile, authoritarian governments are eager for surveillance technologies, expanding upon internet censorship, *inter alia*, under the guise of improving their country's security and social stability. [Foreign Policy \(2\)](#); [Tony Blair Institute](#); [Quartz](#)
- *How can we resist securitization and ensure that modern technology is being used responsibly?*

Power projection by proxy.

- As we are witnessing in the Ukrainian and Syrian conflicts, mercenaries are becoming instrumental to proxy warfare, calling into question the status of International Humanitarian Law. [Bellingcat](#); [Kyiv Post](#); [ICDS](#)
- Although instruments of hybrid conflict are attractive given their relatively low costs and the lack of accountability and attribution, the resulting conflicts often turn out messier than anticipated. [Carnegie](#); [Lawfare](#)
- *Are existing norms and rules sufficient to effectively deal with contemporary forms of hybrid warfare?*

Rounding the bases: The race for overseas military stations.

- The renewed interest in overseas military bases is inciting interstate military competition. [Brown Political Review](#); [Arab Weekly](#); [Bloomberg](#)
- The geostrategic importance of, *inter alia*, the Red Sea is threatening an already precarious naval balance among great, but also middle powers. [Low Institute](#); [LPI](#)
- *To what extent are we prepared to commit to gaining or consolidating military influence in the ring around Europe, especially in the naval realm?*

Long-term trends: international order (20-year timespan)

Rules 	Trend	Norms 	Trend
Adherence to international water regime	—	Support for policies that address the effects of climate change	—
Adherence to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	▼	Respect for human rights as governance objective	▼
Cooperation with International Criminal Court prosecutions, or active cooperation on suppression of terrorism	▼	Recognition that grave violations of International Humanitarian Law are unacceptable	▼
Non-intervention unless authorized by the UN Security Council	▼	Recognition of legitimacy of Westphalian state	—
Non-imposition of maritime blockades, or active intervention to prevent/suppress these	—	Recognition of need for unfettered sea lines of communication (SLOCs)	—

▲ More compliance ▼ Under pressure — Same/mild pressure



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