



# The Many Faces of Political Violence

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, StratMon 2016-2017



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*Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation: HCSS StratMon Annual Report 2016/2017*

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies

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### The Many Faces of Political Violence

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# The Many Faces of Political Violence

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies

This report is from the HCSS theme SECURITY. Our other themes are GLOBAL TRENDS and GEO-ECONOMICS

## SECURITY

HCSS identifies and analyzes the developments that shape our security environment. We show the intricate and dynamic relations between political, military, economic, social, environmental, and technological drivers that shape policy space. Our strengths are a unique methodological base, deep domain knowledge and an extensive international network of partners.

HCSS assists in formulating and evaluating policy options on the basis of an integrated approach to security challenges and security solutions.



## Key Take-Aways

- » Across all three types of conflict – state-based conflict, non-state conflict and one-sided violence – the frequency of violent episodes increased in 2015, continuing its upward trend of recent years. Total conflict deaths are down from last year (from 137,333 to 116,907) but continue to be at historically high levels since 2004.
- » Europe began to experience more political violence due to continuing conflict in Eastern Europe and with instability in the MENA region spilling over across European borders (including terrorist attacks in Paris and Nice). The MENA region remains the hub of instability, with state-based conflicts ongoing in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya. Episodes of political violence also take place in Turkey, targeted by the ISIS and Kurdish insurgent attacks and Egypt.
- » In 2015, terrorism caused fewer deaths, but expanded geographically. There has been a trend towards a further transnationalization of terrorism, with ISIS and affiliated organizations expanding their operations from 13 to 28 countries.
- » A small majority of ongoing conflicts today remains confined within specific states (59%). Proportionally, the number of internationalized intrastate conflicts has quadrupled since the beginning of this century.
- » According to our long-term forecasting country risk of violent conflict model, the 5 countries with the highest risk in 2017-2018 are Chad, Bangladesh, Angola, Guinea and Cameroon. More generally, the highest political violence risk is concentrated in the Sub-Saharan region. Our short-term forecasting country risk of violent conflict model, additionally drawing on real-time event datasets, identifies Bangladesh, Cameroon, Iran, Lebanon and Angola as five countries with the highest risk of conflict.
- » Important for Dutch national security interests due to proximity to the overseas territories and countries that are part of our Kingdom in the Caribbean, Venezuela has featured repeatedly as a highest risk country for the eruption of large scale political violence. Food crisis, corruption and violent abuse of power by security and police forces are among the key issues.
- » Preventing new conflicts and addressing conflict spillover through effective containment of ongoing conflicts, alongside conflict resolution and subsequent stabilization efforts, is instrumental in preventing the further proliferation and regionalization of political violence in at-risk countries throughout the world.

## 4.1 Introduction: The Many Faces of Political Violence

The modern era's Great Power Peace has come under severe strain in recent years. In Asia, China is increasingly flexing its military muscle in the Pacific region— much to the dismay of many of its smaller neighboring states. Close encounters on sea and in the air between the armed forces of regional states are by no means an exception. Japan's leadership has called for a revision of its pacifist constitution and has begun strengthening its military forces. Meanwhile, the US is bolstering its military presence in the region to contain China and to deter it from regional expansion. Closer to home, in Europe, a series of confrontations between Russia and the West has heralded the resurgence of an old rivalry that increasingly looks like the beginning of the Second Cold War. In this polarized environment, many states are engaging in the (re-)buildup and modernization of their armed forces. Fortunately, the increase in international crises has not yet been accompanied by an uptick in interstate wars. Yet the hybrid character of contemporary conflict certainly obfuscates the assortment of hostile, but non-lethal actions that aggressively intrude on the sovereignty of nations.

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While the number of fatalities of traditional state-on-state conflict remains low, the same cannot be said for other forms of political violence.<sup>1</sup> Intrastate conflict has metastasized in the Middle East and North Africa, disrupting the lives of tens of millions of people in the region. The lawless vacuum that emerged after the Arab Spring continues to be a hotbed of violent atrocities often targeted at citizens, both in the region and beyond. Syria has not only become *the* theater of a wider regional conflagration (Sunni-Shiite, Saudi-Iranian), but has also seen aggressive meddling by Russia and Western states in pursuit of their own strategic objectives. Other forms of state and non-state violence in other places of the world are rife too. Amorphous, decentralized terror networks strike at targets both within and beyond their regions of origin, turning the traditional distinction between core and periphery on its head. Low-level conflicts that feature sporadic violent outbursts continue to simmer on. Also relatively mature democracies are not free from the vagaries of violence, although here the violence does not always threaten the power of sitting governments.

Not all news is bad, however, even if it often goes underreported. According to the Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), 81 countries have improved their levels of peace from 2014 to 2015.<sup>2</sup> Shifting the focus from causes of conflict to the pillars of peace highlights that the presence of peace amounts to more than merely the absence of war. This is the subject of our 2016 study *Si Vis Pacem Utique Para Pacem* and is further examined in our StratMon 2016-2017 chapter *The Other Side of the Security Coin*.<sup>3</sup>

The current study, however, squarely looks at the *conflict* side of the security coin. It provides a brief overview of trends in the dominant forms of political violence over the past quarter century, which include state-based and non-state conflict as well as one-sided violence. It does so by leveraging the information offered by three authoritative datasets: the *State Failure Problem Set* of the *Project*

1. Political violence refers to acts of violence committed by both state and non-state actors for political purposes. See the textbox on the following page for more information.

2. The Institute for Economics and Peace, *Positive Peace Report 2016: A Compilation of the Leading Research on Positive Peace and Resilience*, 2016, 6, <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Positive%20Peace%20Report%202016.pdf>. The IEP's Global Peace Index is composed of 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators along three different themes: the level of safety and security in society, the extent of domestic and international conflict and the degree of militarization.

3. See Willem Theo Oosterveld et al., *Si Vis Pacem, Para Utique Pacem: Individual Empowerment, Societal Resilience and the Armed Forces* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), [http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_StratMon\\_TINA\\_%5BFINAL\\_VERSION%5D.pdf](http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_StratMon_TINA_%5BFINAL_VERSION%5D.pdf).

*Instability Task Force (PITF)*, the *Georeferenced Event Dataset* of the *Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)* and the *Global Terrorism Database* by the *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (GTD)*. More information about the different ways in which the PITF and the UCDP measure violence can be consulted in Textbox 4.1. Following this overview, the study offers a global political violence risk outlook based on a number of political forecasting models that we have developed for this purpose. It concludes with an assessment of the state of political violence worldwide.

#### Textbox 4.1 Different Ways to Measure Political Violence: PITF and UCDP

The differences between the PITF's State Failure Problem Set and UCDP's Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) lie in their different conceptualizations of political violence. The UCDP's classification is broader, whereas the PITF uses more stringent criteria for instances of political violence to be included. Furthermore the UCDP changes the status of countries more regularly, whereas the PITF's designations are typically not changed until a given conflict between parties has been resolved. Both sources offer data for global political violence for the entire period of 1989-2015.<sup>1</sup> The PITF dataset distinguishes between **ethnic wars** ("episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which challengers seek major changes in their status"); **revolutionary wars** ("episodes of violent conflict between governments and politically organized groups that seek to overthrow the central government, to replace its leaders, or to seize power in one region"); and **genocides and politicides** ("events which involve the promotion, execution and/or implied consent of sustained policies by governing elites or their agents that result in the deaths of substantial portion of communal group or politicized non-communal group").<sup>2</sup> The PITF dataset includes conflicts if the number of conflict-related deaths over the course of conflict exceeds 1000, while in at least one of the years the death toll must exceed 100, while each conflict actor has to mobilize more than 1000 people. The UCDP dataset distinguishes between **state-based conflict** ("a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory involving the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state"); **non-state conflict** ("the use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state"); and **one-sided violence** ("the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians"). We adapted the UCDP GED data by imposing an annual fatality threshold requirement: dyadic conflicts in a given year had to result in a minimum of 25 total battle-related fatalities.<sup>3</sup> We use UCDP data to analyze past and present trends in conflict and fatalities and PITF data for forecasting purposes. Please refer to our methodological annex for more information on our models' usage of PITF data.

1. The UCDP as of yet excludes Syrian Civil War from their dataset due to many conflicting reports about fatality figures. We complement our trend analyses with conflict fatality figures from the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights.

2. All definitions are from the PITF Problem Set codebook. Ethnic wars and revolutionary wars are considered to be mutually exclusive in the dataset while genocides and politicides can occur simultaneously alongside civil wars. This dataset also included information about adverse regime changes, which is currently not included in the analysis.

3. The Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) is the most disaggregated dataset that the UCDP publishes online. All separate instances are recorded by their start and end dates and are georeferenced. It also hosts annual data that has been aggregated to country level. For original definitions, see The Uppsala Conflict Data Program, "Definitions," *Uppsala Universitet*, 2016, <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/>.

## 4.2 Trends in Political Violence: the Metastasis of Violence

Across all three of the types of conflict we discern – i.e. state-based conflict, non-state conflict and one-sided violence – the overall frequency of violent episodes climbed further in 2015, continuing its upward trend of recent years. The UCDP Dataset identifies 76 instances of political violence in 45 countries in 1989, 91 instances in 36 countries in 2005 and 110 instances in 38 countries in 2015 (as countries can suffer from different types of political violence simultaneously). There has also been a major increase in the lethality of conflicts in the past decade. Since its lowest point in 2005, the total number of deaths due to political violence has surged from 18,490 in 2005, to 61,688 last year according to the UCDP and if we include Syrian death data from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the total reaches a staggering 116,907.<sup>4</sup> This is a decrease from 2014, when total deaths due to political violence including Syrian death data from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights was 137,133. In 2015 there were 45 instances of state-based conflict causing 48,955 deaths, 21 instances of one-sided violence causing 7,811 deaths and 44 instances of non-state conflict causing 4,922 deaths (see Figure 4.1). The fatality data from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is not aggregated by conflict type and is spread across all three types of violence.

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Throughout this time period, state-based conflict largely remained the most frequent type of violence and certainly the deadliest.<sup>5</sup> It also persisted as the most prominent type of political violence compared to acts of violence committed by militant groups against a civilian population or to violent clashes between non-state actors.

In contrast to years prior, Europe has begun to experience a larger share of political violence as conflict continued in Eastern Europe and the instability of the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region spilled over across European borders. Both Ukraine and France suffered from political violence in 2015. While total human deaths as a result of the civil war in Ukraine declined from 4,392 in 2014 to 1,303 in 2015, attempts to negotiate a ceasefire between Ukrainian and Russian forces have thus far failed to stem armed hostilities. France fell victim to a series of terrorist attacks including those in Paris of November 2015 and in Nice of July 2016, featuring spillover effects from the conflagration in the MENA region. The radicalization of isolated individuals and the return of radical foreign fighters from conflict zones fuel the formation of dormant terror networks and greatly increases the risk of one-sided violence on the European continent.

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Within the MENA region, state-based conflicts are currently ongoing in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, are responsible for a high number of battle-related fatalities. The extensive internationalization of the intrastate conflict in Yemen, pulling in many regional actors, has led to increased conflict lethality – with violent conflict causing over 7,000 total fatalities in 2015. It has also provided

4. These death toll figures are best estimates of battle-related fatalities and are provided within the UCDP dataset.

5. With the exception of 1994, when the Rwandan Genocide led to a drastic spike of deaths due to the one-sided violence committed against the Tutsi population in Rwanda. The UCDP records 516,710 deaths coming as a result of one-sided violence in Rwanda in 1994.

terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS with ample opportunity to exploit the political turmoil and escalate terrorist violence in the country. In Syria, the fighting is particularly intense, with a UN humanitarian chief likening Aleppo to “one giant graveyard”.<sup>6</sup> The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) records 55,219 confirmed deaths in 2015, decreasing from the 2014 value of 76,021, but notes the challenge of accounting for large proportions of missing peoples and other undocumented deaths.<sup>7</sup> Our StratMon 2016-2017 spotlight *The Rise and Fall of ISIS* takes a closer look at the dynamics of the Syrian conflict in an analysis of the rise and fall of ISIS. Other high-magnitude episodes of political violence take place in Turkey, which has been targeted by ISIS and Kurdish insurgent attacks; in Egypt, as a result of post-coup domestic unrest and the Egyptian military’s ongoing campaign in the Sinai Peninsula; in Palestine, due to their continued armed conflict with Israel (which didn’t meet the fatality threshold in 2015); and in Algeria, largely as a result of ongoing efforts to combat Islamic extremist insurgency groups in the country.

The conflicts in the MENA region have uprooted millions of people. The UNCHR registered a total of 13,933,650 people as internally displaced persons who remain within the borders of their home countries, while 2,739,554 refugees have fled the violence but remain within the region.<sup>8</sup> Others have fled the region entirely. The European Union estimates that 1,080,841 illegal migrants have been smuggled into Europe from the MENA region in 2015 alone.<sup>9</sup> The large-scale movement of people fleeing the horrors of war is placing a high burden on receiving countries and has undermined support for the core principle at the heart of the Schengen Agreement stipulating the free flow of capital, goods, services and people.

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The number of conflicts in Africa and Asia across the different types either increased, or remained largely similar in number. In Africa, however, the total number of all conflict cases increased from a total of 44 to 61 from 2014 to 2015. The surge of state-based violence as a result of mounting governmental efforts to combat efforts of ISIS and its affiliated groups in Libya, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Sudan and Nigeria is especially prominent here, with number of state-based conflicts increasing considerably from 11 recognized instances in 2014 to 19 in 2015. Other instances of state-based conflict in Africa include the conflict in Mali between the Malinese government and the Ansar Dine, the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) and various other Islamic extremist insurgency groups within the country;<sup>10</sup> armed confrontations in Niger where anti-Boko Haram operations led by their neighbors have spilled over its borders; Sudan, where government forces continue to clash with Sudan Revolutionary Front militants; and in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where efforts to combat the Allied Democratic Forces faction and the Lord’s Resistance Army are still ongoing.

6. Julian Borger, “Eastern Aleppo Becoming ‘One Giant Graveyard’ Says UN Humanitarian Chief,” *The Guardian*, November 30, 2016, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/30/syria-aleppo-death-toll-united-nations-statistics>.

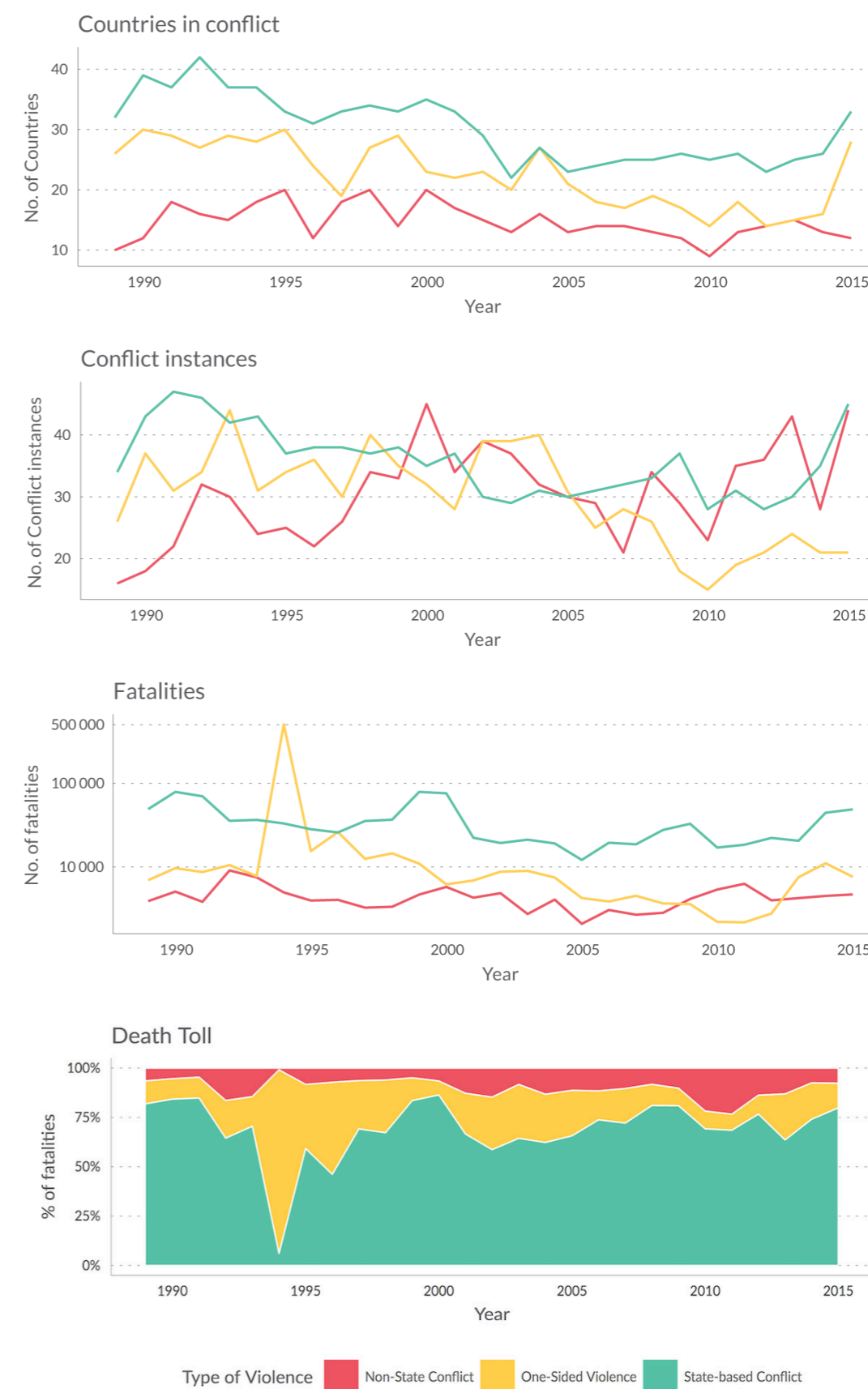
7. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, “76021 People Killed in Syria in 2014,” *Syrian Observatory For Human Rights*, January 1, 2015, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=8636>. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, “Syria Is Still Bleeding ... 55219 Persons Were Killed during the Year of 2015,” *Syrian Observatory For Human Rights*, December 31, 2015, <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=41779>. See also Mihai Croicu and Ralph Sundberg, “UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset Codebook Version 5.0” (Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 2016), 9, <http://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/ged/ucdp-ged-50-codebook.pdf>.

8. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015,” June 20, 2016, 60, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unhcrsharedmedia/2016/2016-06-20-global-trends/2016-06-14-Global-Trends-2015.pdf>

9. The Migration Policy Centre, “Migrant Crisis,” 2015, <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/migrant-crisis/>.

10. Dutch armed forces support the Malinese government as part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Figure 4.1 Trends in conflict type frequencies and death tolls as a result of political violence, 1989-2015



In terms of overall frequency, state-based conflict (19) and non-state violence (28) are the two most prominent types of conflict found on the African continent in 2015. Many countries experiencing state-based conflict were also suffering from one-sided violence in 2015, signifying an ongoing effort by African countries to suppress non-state actors. Ongoing civil wars in Africa, including those in Libya, Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia, are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, insurgency activities are rarely confined within formal state borders, with groups such as the Boko Haram often operating outside Nigeria's borders in neighboring countries such as Niger and Cameroon. This makes it especially challenging for state actors dealing with terrorist groups.

The majority of the 28 instances of non-state violence in Africa are fought between various factions that often coalesce around ethnic and religious lines.<sup>11</sup> The Central African Republic is experiencing instances of conflict fought along religious lines, with groups such as the Christian Anti-Balaka targeting Islamic insurgent groups assembled in the Séléka armed coalition. In Kenya, conflicts between the Pokot, Turkana and Samburu peoples feature ethnic dimensions too. Fighting between the Ansar Dine and the CMA in Mali, clashes between cultist groups such as the Black Axe Confraternity and various other ethnic groups in Nigeria, confrontations in South Sudan between the Dinka and Nuer peoples and infighting amongst various tribes within Sudan are other cases in point.

There are currently 14 instances of one-sided violence ongoing in Africa, increasing from the 12 recognized instances in 2014. As stated before, the Islamic State and the Boko Haram are key terrorist actors whose operations in Africa have frustrated peace efforts. Other examples of armed groups targeting non-combatants can be found in Burundi, where state-led violence targeting Burundi civilians has continued after President Pierre Nkurunziza announced his intention to run for a contested third term; in Libya, Tunisia, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad, as a result of terrorist attacks by ISIS or Boko Haram; and in Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic, due to violence committed by anti-governmental organizations such as the Democratic Front of the Central African People or the Lord's Resistance Army. The latter remains also active in South Sudan, whose government has recurrently targeted militants and citizens alike in its attempts to purge the country of conflict in recent months. The Sudanese government has also targeted civilians in the Darfur region. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab remains active in Somalia and Kenya and has targeted civilians in these countries. For further analysis of global trends in violent terrorism see Textbox on page 12.

In Asia, overall instances of political violence across the three types increased from 21 in 2014, to 27 in 2015. Here too, there was an upward trend in state-based violence climbing from 12 to 16 recorded cases in 2014 and 2015, respectively. Examples of state-based conflict are the ongoing violence between government and terrorist forces in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, terrorist and state-led violence in the Philippines and domestic clashes between the state and ethnic minority groups in Myanmar. Between 2014 and 2015 non-state violence cases increased from

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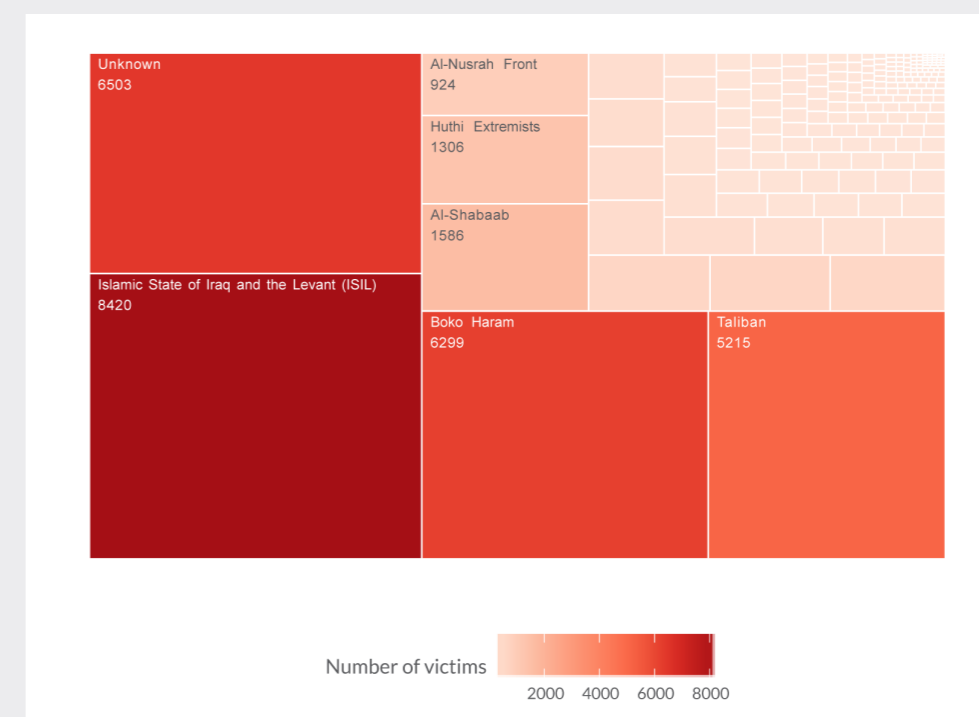
11. For the complexities of ethnic and religious violence, see Tim Sweijs, Jasper Ginn and Stephan De Spiegeleire, *Barbarism and Religion: The Resurgence of Holy Violence* (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015), [http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS\\_StratMon\\_web\\_Religious\\_Violence.pdf](http://www.hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/HCSS_StratMon_web_Religious_Violence.pdf).

1 to 4, with new instances of conflict breaking out between ISIS and various Taliban factions in Afghanistan, while instances of non-state violence declined from 8 to 7, due to the curtailing of radical Buddhist violence targeting Islamic civilians in Myanmar. A number of conflicts have been sustained over long periods of time but did not exceed the fatality threshold of 25 this year. In India for instance, violent activities from organizations such as the Maoist Communist Party of India and other insurgent groups in north-east such as the People's Liberation Army in Manipur continued, but they fall outside the scope of our study.

#### Textbox 4.2 Violent Terrorism in 2015

Terrorism caused fewer deaths in 2015 but expanded geographically. Fatalities as a direct consequence of violent acts of terror decreased by ten percent from 32,765 to 29,376. This downward trend is mirrored by the number of deaths caused by the Islamic State – which went down from 9,348 in 2014 to 8,420 in 2015.<sup>1</sup> The decrease can be partially explained by the intensification of military operations which have successfully targeted terrorist organizations. At the same time there has been a trend towards the further transnationalization of terrorism. ISIS and affiliated organizations expanded their area of operations from 13 to 28 countries. Next to ISIS, Boko Haram the Taliban and Al-Shabaab were each responsible for more than 1,000 fatalities. The four organizations together account for 74 percent of all deaths. The number of countries experiencing more than 25 deaths increased to 34. Five countries accounted for 72 percent of all terrorist fatalities: Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria. There was a 650% increase of terror fatalities in OECD countries – from 77 deaths to 577. Overall, the Global Terrorism Index shows 76 countries performing better and 53 countries worse. The Global Terrorism Index overall score slightly decreased because of the large number of countries being hit by acts of terror that previously were free or largely free from terror, combining into an overall nuanced picture.<sup>2</sup>

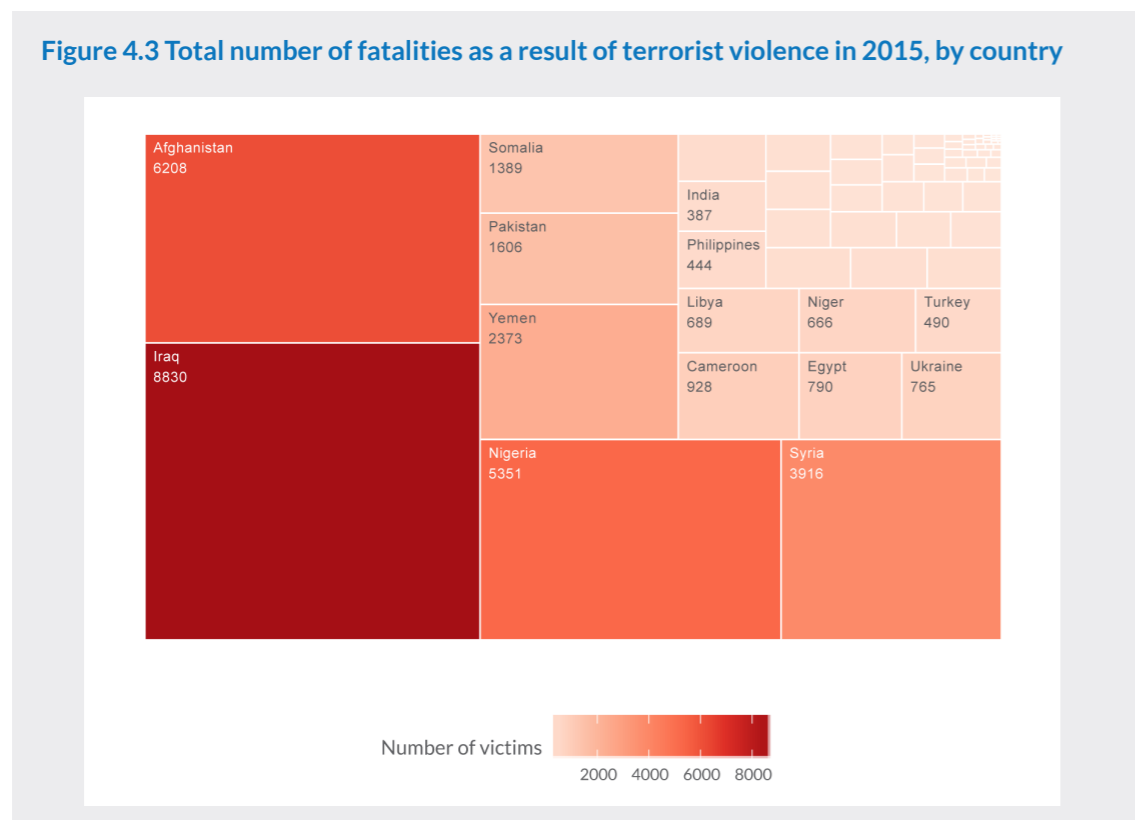
Figure 4.2 Total number of fatalities as a result of terrorist violence in 2015, by organization



1. GTD Data

2. The Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016 Global Terrorism Index Report.

**Figure 4.3 Total number of fatalities as a result of terrorist violence in 2015, by country**



The risk of inter-state violence is high in this region, given border disputes between India and Pakistan and Chinese maritime claims in the East and South China Sea, even if such inter-state tensions are not captured by the data. The India-Pakistan dispute, for instance, features intermittent episodes of lethal violence that again do not always meet the fatality threshold.<sup>12</sup>

The state of political violence in the Americas contrasts greatly to Asia and Africa as well as Europe. The risk of violent conflict spillover from Africa and Asia to the Americas is low because of its relative insulation. This risk is not non-existent however, as the 9/11 attacks vividly reminded us. Nevertheless, due to the bodies of water that separate the Americas from their continental peers, episodes of political violence there are more likely to be driven by particular dynamics native to the Americas, unlike in Europe where current episodes of political violence are catalyzed by civil wars occurring in the MENA region.

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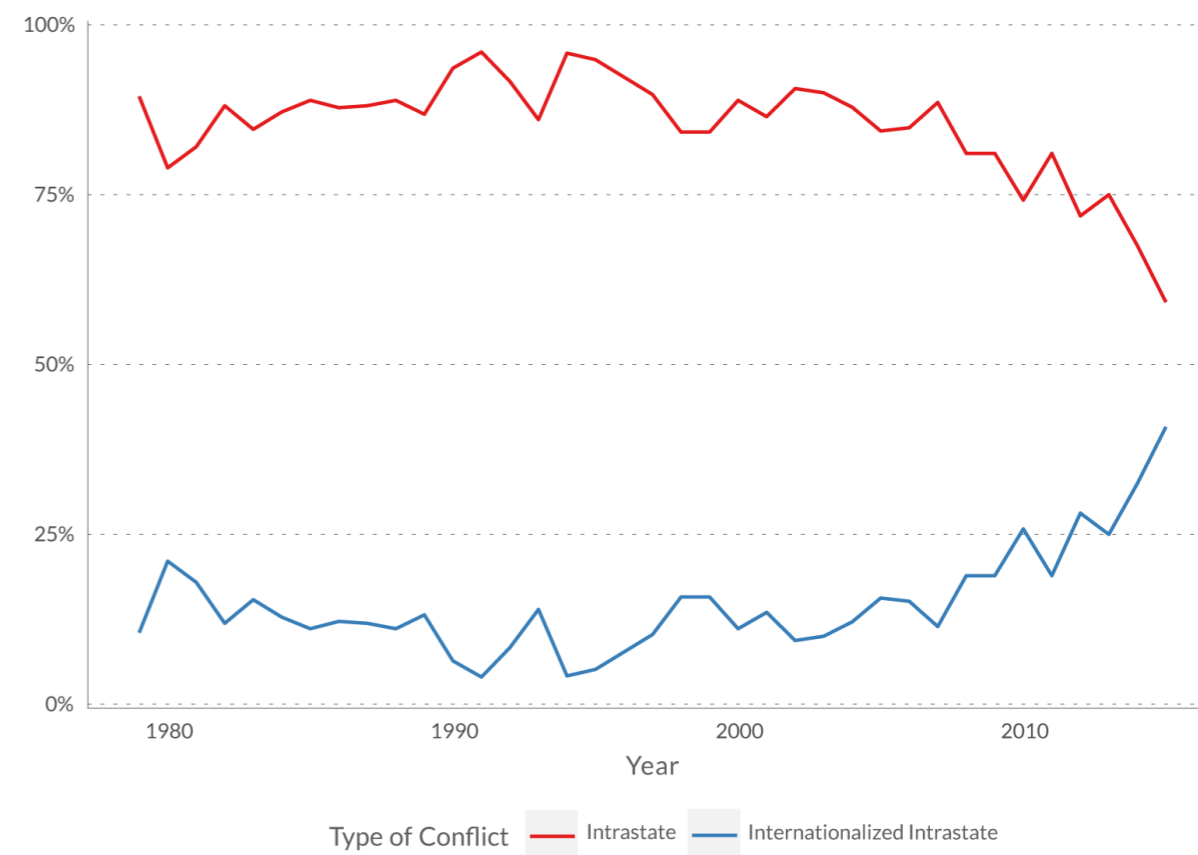
Drug-related violence in Mexico and the civil war in Colombia between the Colombian government and non-state militant groups are the principal episodes of political violence recorded in the Americas. In Mexico, ongoing clashes between competing drug cartels will likely continue to be a driver of non-state and one-sided violence against the civilian population, with the combination of the two causing 1,603 deaths in 2014 and 1,639 in 2015. The Colombian peace process culminated in a peace agreement with

12. Haider Mateen and Imran Sadiq, "At Least 11 Killed as Indo-Pak Border Troops Exchange Fire," *Dawn News*, August 28, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1203398>, Diane Nongrum, "LoC Shelling: Indian, Pakistani Field Commanders to Meet on Monday," *India Today*, September 20, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/loc-shelling-indian-pakistani-field-commanders-to-meet-on-monday/1/478400.html>.

the FARC organization which was rejected by the population in October 2016, upsetting expectations of an imminent peaceful resolution to the decades-old conflict. This has resulted in a revised peace agreement which was approved by Colombia's Congress and passed on November 30th.<sup>13</sup>

Other kinds of violence that are not considered by political violence datasets such as the UCDP and PITF include domestic violence and gang violence. As a result countries in the region suffer from extreme rates of homicidal violence. The 2015 violent death per capita rates of Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador and Honduras were 16, 28, 64 and 75 per 100,000 population respectively.<sup>14</sup> The 2012 homicidal death rate for Venezuela was 72.2 per 100,000 population.<sup>15</sup> To put this in perspective, the world average homicidal death per capita rate was 5 per 100,000 population in 2015.<sup>16</sup> While the scale of violence in the most active conflict theaters is still considerably higher, it is clear that this is a real societal problem for the affected countries.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 4.4 Total instances of intrastate and internationalized intrastate conflict instances per year, displayed as proportion of total**



13. Al Jazeera News and Agencies, "Colombia's Congress Approves Revised Deal with FARC," *Al Jazeera*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/colombia-congress-approves-revised-deal-farc-161201040038062.html>.

14. The World Bank, "Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People)," *The World Bank*, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5>. see also David Gagne, "InSight Crime's 2015 Latin America Homicide Round-Up," January 14, 2016, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/insight-crime-homicide-round-up-2015-latin-america-caribbean>.

15. The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, "Press Release: Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts," May 8, 2015, [http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/GBAV3/GBAV-III-Press-Release-English\\_01.pdf](http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/GBAV3/GBAV-III-Press-Release-English_01.pdf).

16. The World Bank, "Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 People)."

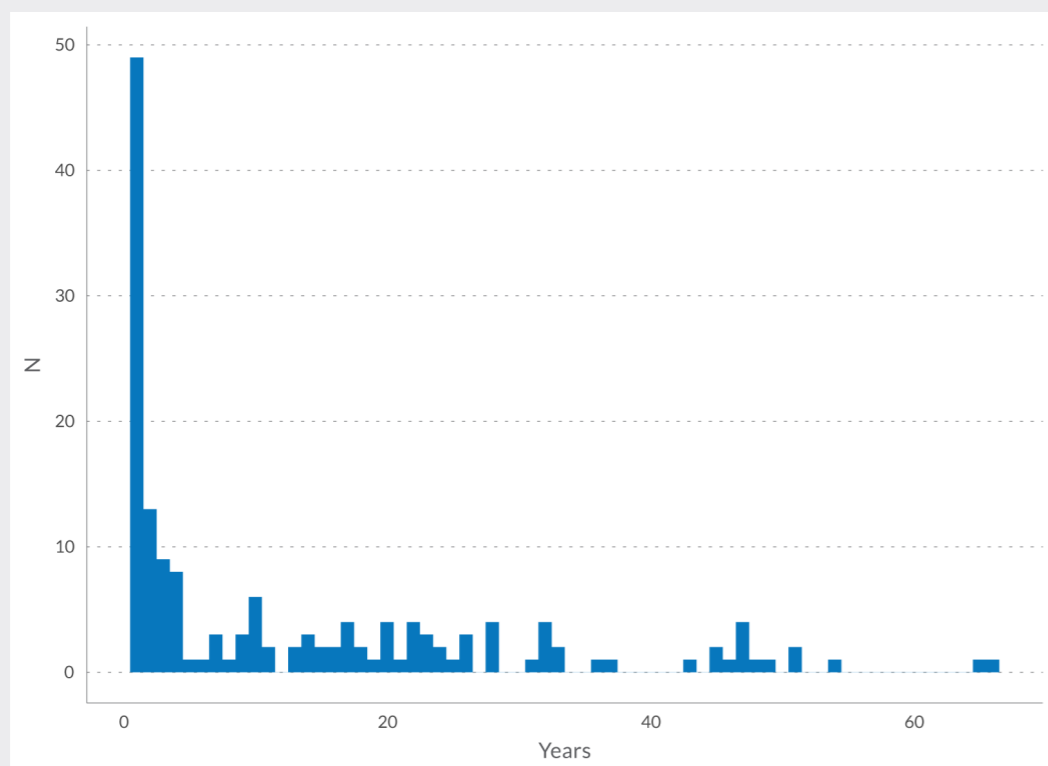
17. Fatality figures from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights would put the per capita death rate in Syria at 298 per 100,000 in 2015. Assuming a 2015 Syrian population value of 18,502,413, as estimated by the World Bank. See The World Bank, "Syria: Population, Total," *The World Bank*, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=SY>.

**Textbox 4.3: When does the Violence Stop? The Duration of Civil Wars in Perspective**

The world looked on anxiously this year as the Yemeni Civil War dragged into its second year and the Syrian Civil War into its sixth, wreaking ever greater destruction on their host societies. The complexity of these conflicts that feature a plethora of actors with diametrically opposed interests is daunting. For these and many other civil wars, the dynamics on the ground are constantly evolving, making it difficult to predict how long these civil wars will last and when the violence is finally likely to stop. We know that a civil war typically ends either as a result of one party being able to impose its will on the other(s), or once it has reached a certain state of *ripeness*.<sup>1</sup> This state is reached when none of the parties expect a satisfactory battlefield solution to come about and all are therefore ready to sit down and find a political solution. Conflict *ripeness* varies from case to case and from moment to moment. It goes beyond the scope of this report to analyze which of the ongoing conflicts are near that state and which may therefore potentially conclude soon. But we can learn something about the duration of civil wars by looking at the historical record and how long they have typically lasted in recent history.

Between 1946 and 2015, excluding ongoing wars, the UCDP/PRIO dataset records 158 cases of internal or internationalized internal conflicts.<sup>2</sup> The average civil war duration is approximately 13 years. 49 (31%) wars are concluded within one year. 31 (20%) instances of civil wars last 1-5 years. 14 (9%) instances of civil war last 6-10 years and 64 (40%) instances last over 11 years.

**Figure 4.5 Number of UCDP/PRIO-recorded civil wars by duration**

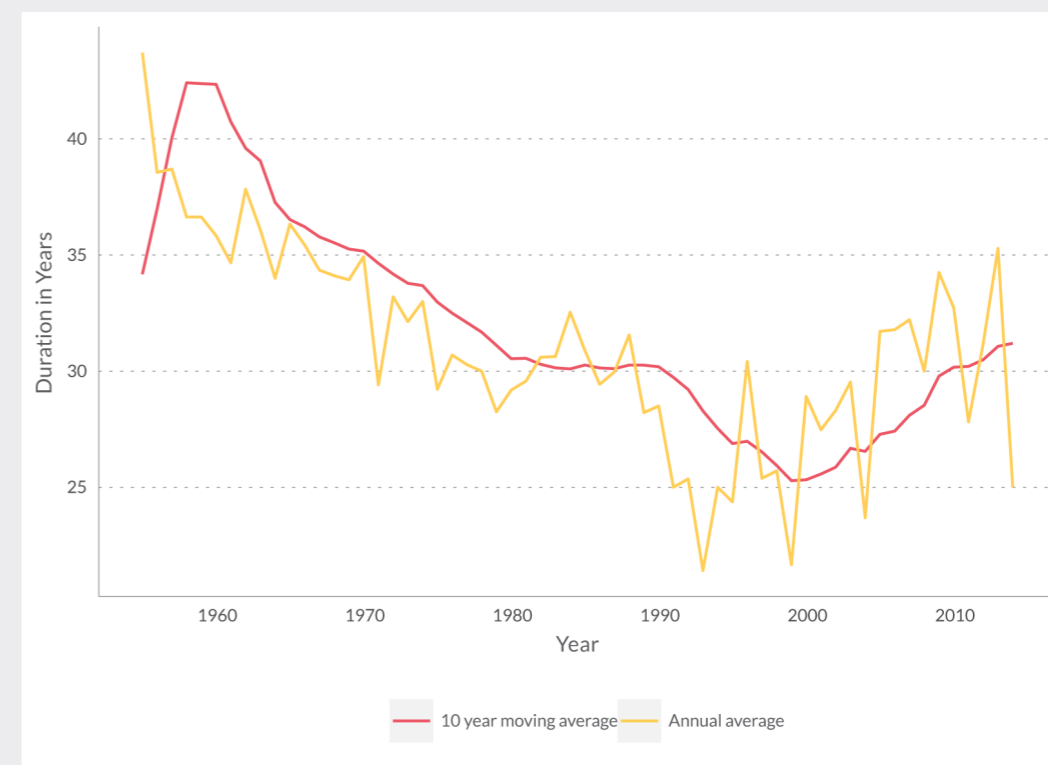


1. I. William Zartman, "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and beyond," *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War* (International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War, 2000, 225-50).

2. We excluded ongoing instances of civil wars as recorded within the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset. Two types of conflict suit the definition of "civil war" in this dataset, namely: *internal armed conflict*, which occurs between the government of a state and one or more internal opposition group(s) without intervention from other states and *internationalized internal armed conflict*, which occurs between the government of a state and one or more internal opposition group(s) with intervention from other states on one or both sides. See Lotta Themnér, "UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook: Version 4-2015" (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2015), [http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/124/124920\\_1codebook\\_ucdp\\_prio-armed-conflict-dataset-v4\\_2015.pdf](http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/124/124920_1codebook_ucdp_prio-armed-conflict-dataset-v4_2015.pdf). An analysis of civil war duration based upon the Correlates of War Project dataset was also carried out and can be provided upon request.

Once a civil war lasts longer than 2 years, the average duration is 21 years. Once a civil war lasts longer than 5 years, the average duration is 25 years. The average civil war duration fell from its peak of roughly 45 years in the 1960s to a low of 25 in the late 1990s, but has since again begun to rise. The decline in the average duration in the 1990s can be attributed to the gradual emergence of the post-Cold War world order, making the waging of proxy wars and covert support of local insurgency groups less common.<sup>3</sup> This trend has since reversed.

**Figure 4.6 Changes in UCDP-recorded civil war durations over time**



Greater foreign involvement in civil wars tends to prolong their duration although the relationship is not unequivocal. In 12 civil war cases involving two countries, 8 cases involving three countries and 5 involving four or more, the average duration of civil war instances increases to 12.5, 22.5 and to 25 years respectively. This effect can be attributed to a number of factors. As more countries become involved in a civil war, strategic objectives become more challenging to achieve due to differences across their respective war aims or strategic interests. The risk of conflict prolongation is especially high in instances in which foreign support is given to opposing military actors involved in a given state-based conflict.<sup>4</sup> If anything, this does not bode well for the ongoing civil wars in the MENA and Sahel regions.

3. See Ann Hironaka, *Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States and the Perpetuation of Civil War* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

4. Hironaka reports that "conflicts in states such as Angola, for instance, which receive intervention on both sides and by the superpowers (actually, in the case of Angola, superpowers intervened on both sides) will be 538 percent longer on average than a civil war without any intervention." See *Ibid.*, 51. See also Frederic S. Pearson, "Foreign Military Interventions and Domestic Disputes," *International Studies Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (September 1974): 259, doi:10.2307/2600156. and Patrick M. Regan, "Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 1 (2002): 55-73.



Despite growing risks of conflict contagion and spillover, ongoing conflicts today remain largely confined within specific states, with the majority of conflicts being fought between local state and non-state actors. Based on calculations using UCDP data, 59% of current conflicts are intrastate, while 41% have already been internationalized as a result of foreign intervention, a quadrupling since the beginning of this century (see Figure 4.6<sup>18</sup>). The effects of contagion are very visible in the MENA region as well as in Africa, where porous borders have complicated efforts to combat insurgency groups and have contributed to the political instability of states at the receiving end. For Europe, spillover effects today most prominently manifest themselves in the forms of isolated instances of one-sided violence and seismic migratory flows moving towards its borders. Further conflict contagion is a real risk though, as the spread of violence in recent years shows. Addressing conflict contagion and spillover through the effective containment of ongoing conflicts, alongside conflict resolution and subsequent stabilization efforts, will prove to be instrumental in preventing the further proliferation and regionalization of political violence in at-risk countries throughout the world.

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### 4.3 Hotspots of Violence: from this Year to Next Year

Given the human cost of political violence and the mounting risk of conflict spillover into neighboring countries and regions, it is crucial not only to contain and stabilize ongoing conflicts, but also to prevent the onset of new conflicts. Strategic early warning of countries at risk can inform strategic early action. Here we present our short- and long-term violence risk outlooks on the basis of forecasting models we have developed in-house.

#### 4.3.1 Forecasting Country Risk of Violent Conflict Onset in 2017-2018: a Long-Term Approach

We distinguish between a long-term and a short-term political violence risk outlook. For the long-term outlook, we replicated a number of state-of-the-art political violence risk assessment models that each rely on different forecasting methods.<sup>19</sup> These models consider various structural characteristics of countries, including, but not limited to, levels of socio-economic development, the demographic make-up and the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system. The typically slowly changing factors that they consider are measured on an annual level, while recent events – sometimes referred to as dynamic data – are not taken into account. Therefore, while such political violence risk models identify countries that are at heightened risk of conflict, they are not designed to predict the timing of conflict onset. Using this approach, we identify a top 20 of countries with

18. Figure 4.6 uses UCDP/PRIO data as the definitions of conflict type used by the UCDP GED dataset do not recognize internationalized intrastate conflicts. For a complete definition of the UCDP/PRIO conflict types see Footnote 21. See also Themnér, "UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook: Version 4-2015."

19. In our work we have found that leveraging a combination of different forecasts often yields more accurate and more consistent predictions than single forecasts. This is in line with a large body of evidence in the forecasting literature, both in the economic and the political realm. The notion of multiperspectivism lies at the heart of our foresight approach which we use in our analyses for the StratMon as well as other Strategic Futures' work. Details regarding the varying conceptual and methodological approaches of the models used can be found in Usanov, A. and Sweijts T., *Models versus rankings: forecasting political violence* (forthcoming) and Röö, H., Sweijts T. Usanov, A., and Farnham, N., *Improving the early warning function of civil war onset models using automated event data* (forthcoming).

the highest risk of violent conflict onset in the coming year. Please note that countries currently in conflict are excluded (see Figure 4.7).

**Figure 4.7 Top 20 countries at risk of violent conflict onset in 2017 (countries in the top 10 are colored)**

Country	Bleaney & Dimico	Rost	JRC	PITF	Average Rank
Chad	4	NA	8	1	1
Bangladesh	3	2	4	20	2
Angola	10	16	12	3	3
Guinea	6	5	26	5	4
Cameroon	2	9	24	8	5
Burundi	15	1	18	11	6
Ivory Coast	9	11	31	4	7
Tanzania	1	18	21	16	8
Niger	8	4	7	39	9
Zimbabwe	14	7	37	7	10
Tajikistan	11	10	25	22	11
Togo	13	6	40	12	12
Eritrea	NA	NA	10	27	13
Haiti	32	29	19	2	14
Nepal	17	23	20	24	15
Congo Brazzaville	28	3	27	28	16
Mauritania	NA	NA	35	9	17
Mozambique	5	12	32	40	18
Iran	NA	NA	22	25	19
Kenya	16	24	1	55	20

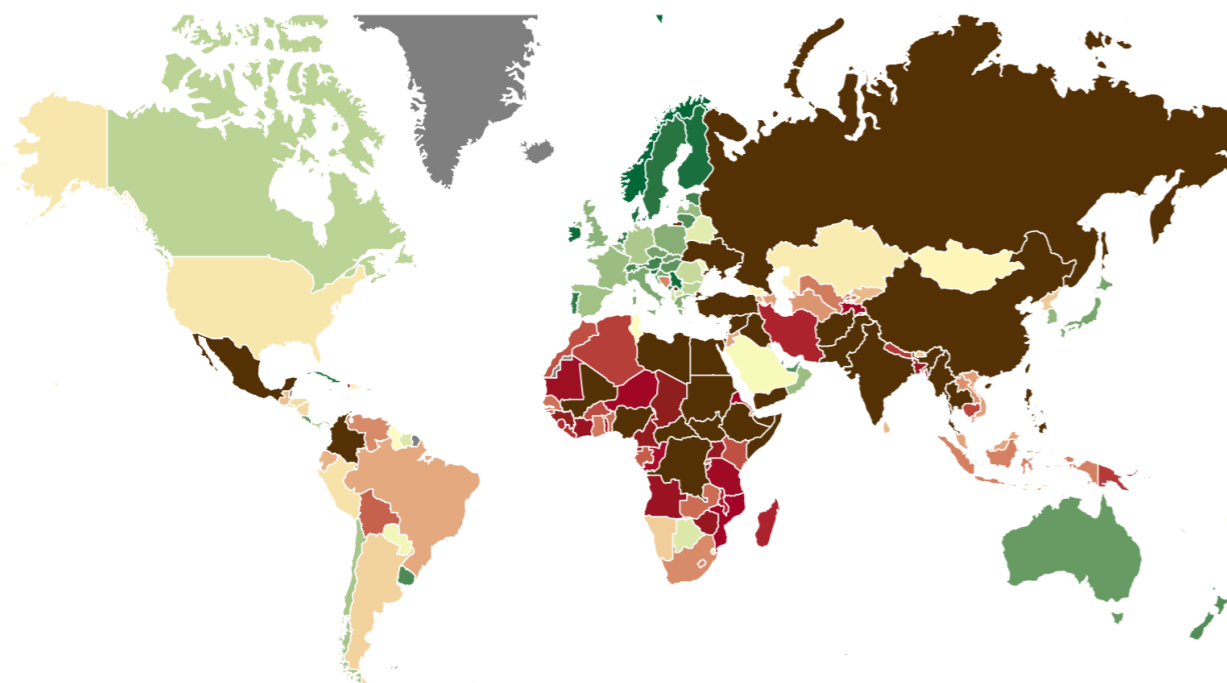
The countries in the top 20 are largely located in continental Africa, with the exception of Bangladesh, Haiti, Iran, Nepal and Tajikistan. In contrast, our model finds no European country to be at high risk of violent conflict.<sup>20</sup> Other regions that contain medium-to-high risk countries are South

20. It is important to note that such models typically have troubles picking up low level violence in developed democracies. See also Douglas M. Gibling, "Combining Behavioral and Structural Predictors of Violent Civil Conflict: Getting Scholars and Policymakers to Talk to Each Other," *International Studies Quarterly*, September 30, 2016, sqw030, doi:10.1093/isq/sqw030.

and Southeast Asia and South America. The highest political violence risk is concentrated in Africa, more specifically in the Sub-Saharan region, with 14 out of the 20 total countries on the list situated there. Sub-Saharan countries are even more dominant among the top 10, with Bangladesh being the only non-African country in this bracket (see Figure 4.7).

In addition to geography, another feature shared by the high-risk countries is that a majority of them have experienced some form of state-based, or non-state violence in the last two decades. Another similarity is socio-economic underdevelopment, with 11 out of the 20 countries classified by the World Bank as low income countries (gross national income (GNI) per capita less than US\$1,000).<sup>21</sup> In addition, 6 other countries in this table only narrowly escape the low-income classification and have a GNI per capita below \$2,000. Out of the identified countries, only Angola and Iran can be considered solidly middle-level income (upper middle income group according to the World Bank).

**Figure 4.8 Average risk of violent conflict onset in 2017-2018 displayed by country**



The following factors were determined to be major drivers of risk of violent conflict onset in countries at the highest risk of violent conflict onset in 2017-2018: the level of economic development (GDP per capita, or infant mortality), political regime type, ethnic fractionalization and levels of state repression or discrimination. Other factors that were found to be important in some models are the history of conflict in a given country, conflict status in neighboring states and the abundance of natural resources (in particular oil). What is clear though, is that while many of these countries share a general vulnerability to the onset of conflict, there are

**The following factors were determined to be major drivers of risk of violent conflict onset in countries at the highest risk of violent conflict onset in 2017-2018: the level of economic development (GDP per capita, or infant mortality), political regime type, ethnic fractionalization and levels of state repression or discrimination.**

21. The World Bank, "World Bank Country and Lending Groups," *The World Bank*, 2016, <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>.

different pathways that lead to conflict based on a given country's specific national characteristics. The following country text boxes explore underlying drivers of various countries' political violence onset risks with regard to domestic factors and how these increase their vulnerability to state- and non-state based conflict onset and one-sided violence in 2017-2018.

#### **Textbox 4.4 The Mechanisms of Forecasting: Improving Forecasting Model Accuracy Using Automated Event Data**

Assessing the risk of new onsets of political violence is difficult for a variety of reasons. One of them is the fact the path to conflict differs from state to state. Another is that these are relatively rare events. Since 2000, there have been 24 onsets of civil war in countries that at the time did not suffer from political violence. The two years with the most onsets were 2004 (Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey and Yemen) and 2011 (Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Libya, Syria). The conflict and political violence risk assessment literature focuses mostly on building annual models that assess the risk of conflict onset using structural factors such as the level of socio-economic development, regime type or size of the country. While these long-term models are useful for policymakers because they inform early preventive action, they have two considerable caveats: 1) they don't take into consideration current events and their implications to risks of political violence and 2) much of the data used to feed these models feature significant time lags before they become available.

To overcome those issues, we changed the timeframe of our related structural indicators from annual to monthly and complemented the models with two types of data available with minimum lags and high relevance. These included automated event data of the number of cooperative or conflictual events occurring in countries, the level of rebel and separatist activity, state coercion, as well as food prices. Also important is that countries are susceptible to a contagion effect of violence in neighboring countries, which our short-term model takes into account. We estimated a statistical model which used structural data from two years prior, in combination with event and food price data from the previous month. We used this model to assess the risk of civil war onset for the next month for countries not currently involved in civil war. We trained our model on data from 1979 to 1999 (*in sample*) and then tested their predictive accuracy on the period 2000 to 2015 (*out of sample*). We found that adding these indicators substantially increased the predictive power of our models by allowing us to better differentiate between countries at high and low risk of civil war onset. For example, we found that 18 of the 21 (85%) onsets since 2000 occurred in the top quartile of our risk assessment and 12/21 (57%) onsets occurred in the top 10%. All civil war onsets occurred in the top two quartiles of our risk assessment.



### CHAD

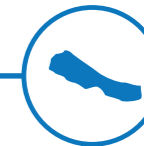
Having long suffered from issues regarding political corruption, and episodes of political violence, **Chad's** internal stability has become increasingly perilous in the face of rising insurgency groups and risk of conflict spillover from its neighbors, namely Sudan and Libya. Further instabilities in neighboring states, such as the Central African Republic, Mali, and Nigeria, have also adversely affected Chad's political and economic state. While it is a key state actor in ongoing counter-terrorism operations in Africa, its history of political violence, geographical proximity to various conflict zones, and political instability limit its ability to lessen tensions within its own borders, and all contribute to its overall risk of civil war onset in 2017. Its current, fragile political situation and vulnerability to nearby insurgency groups leaves them vulnerable to onset of one-sided violence and state-based conflict.



### HAITI

**Haiti's** ability to solve its humanitarian crises has been hamstrung by political stalemates and legislative inefficiencies. Lingering effects of the 2010 earthquake, the subsequent widespread cholera outbreak and the recent destruction caused by Hurricane Matthew in October 2016 has left Haitian people devastated and with no tools on hand to sufficiently address them. Political inaction, economic stagnation and disproportionate levels of poverty have also led to growing internal unrest and contribute to Haiti's high risk of state-based conflict onset in 2017.

### NEPAL



**Nepal** remains in the process of recovering from a series of earthquakes that rocked the nation during April and May 2015, yet the country has still not found stable footing as its government struggles to address the widespread domestic discord. Despite having experienced frequent episodes of political violence and an instance of civil war in recent years, various ethnic minority groups still remain politically and constitutionally marginalized and have virtually no representation on a state level. The repression of minorities and instability of the political climate in Nepal leaves it at risk of state-based conflict onset in 2017.

### BANGLADESH



The state of democracy in **Bangladesh** has come under intense international criticism since the Bangladesh Nationalist Party boycotted the national elections in 2014. Since then, the incumbent Awami League government has repressed public assemblies and other oppositional political and media actors. Abuses of power by national security and police forces, suppression of religious and ethnic minorities and a growing Rohingya refugee population along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border also contribute to internal tensions that in turn lead to a higher risk of non-state and state-based conflict onset in 2017.

### IRAN



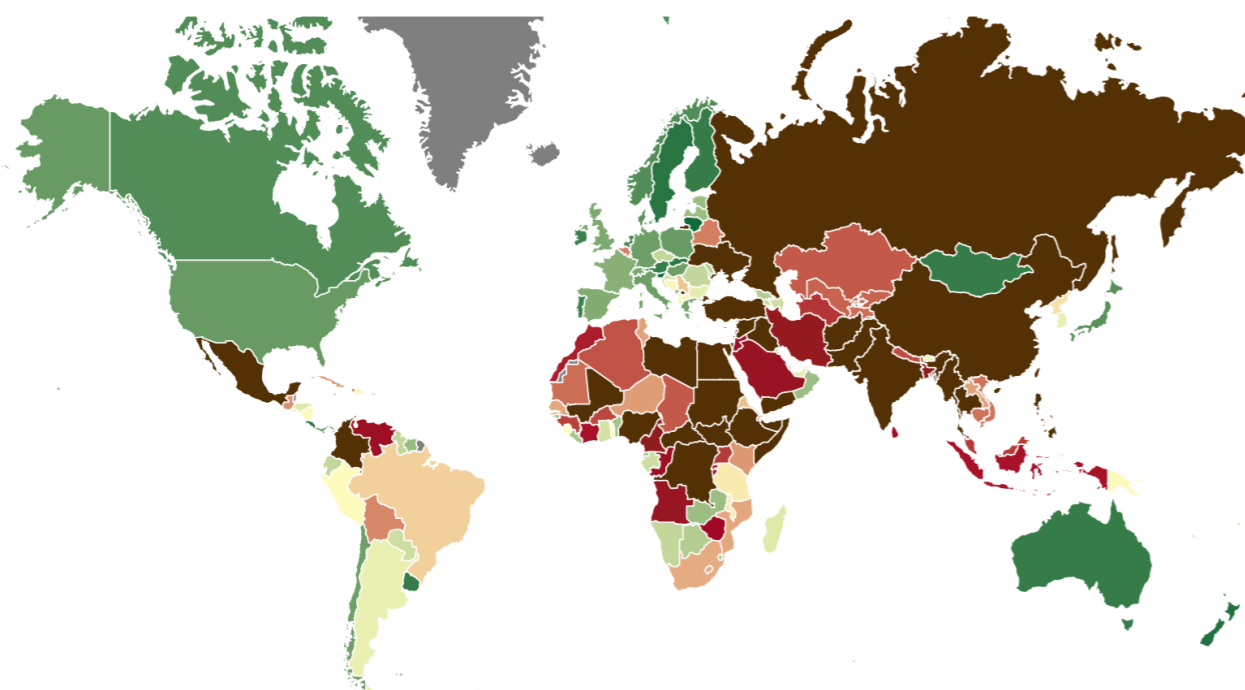
**Iran** is subject to international criticism concerning its authoritarian political structure, and state repression of oppositional actors. A Shi'a majority nation, Iran's position of relative stability is also challenged by its bordering conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and the rise of Sunni extremism. Iran's authoritarian mode of governance, continued repression of political dissidents, and geographical proximity to conflict areas all lead to a heightened risk of state-based conflict and one-sided violence episode onset in 2017.

### 4.4 Forecasting Country Risk of Violent Conflict Onset: Short-Term Models

The probability of civil war onset can be predicted using various structural factors. However, these alone do not sufficiently rationalize most instances of political violence. For those violent risks to materialize, a 'spark' or a 'trigger' is needed, which can come in the form of a sudden rise in food prices, a violent government crackdown on a peaceful demonstration or the assassination of a leading political figure. The demonstrations that marked the beginning of the Arab Spring were initially triggered by the December 2010 self-immolation of a street vendor in Tunisia. While the underlying drivers of conflict were present in this case, it was the triggering event that put things in motion. In order to increase our ability to gauge the probability of conflict onset, we need to consider both structural factors and triggering events in their combination. We have done that by feeding our 'structural' models with automated event data. This allows us to detect such events and accurately adjust the political violence onset risk of a given country accordingly. It also considerably boosts the accuracy of risk assessments with shorter term horizons. Textbox 4.4 provides more information on the mechanisms of forecasting. Textbox 4.5 explains how the incorporation of automated event data in risk forecasting models can increase accuracy using the Arab Spring as a case study.

Similar to the findings of our long-term risk forecasting model, Figures 4.9 and 4.10 demonstrate that most identified nations at short-term risk of violent conflict onset are located within Africa and Asia. However our incorporation of event data into our short-term model places several European countries, such as Belgium and Belarus, at medium short-term risk of violent conflict onset. The inclusion of event data allows our short-term model to account not only for factionalist tensions within a given country, but also for the activity of radical groups, which places Belgium as the only Western European nation at medium risk of experiencing some form of violence.

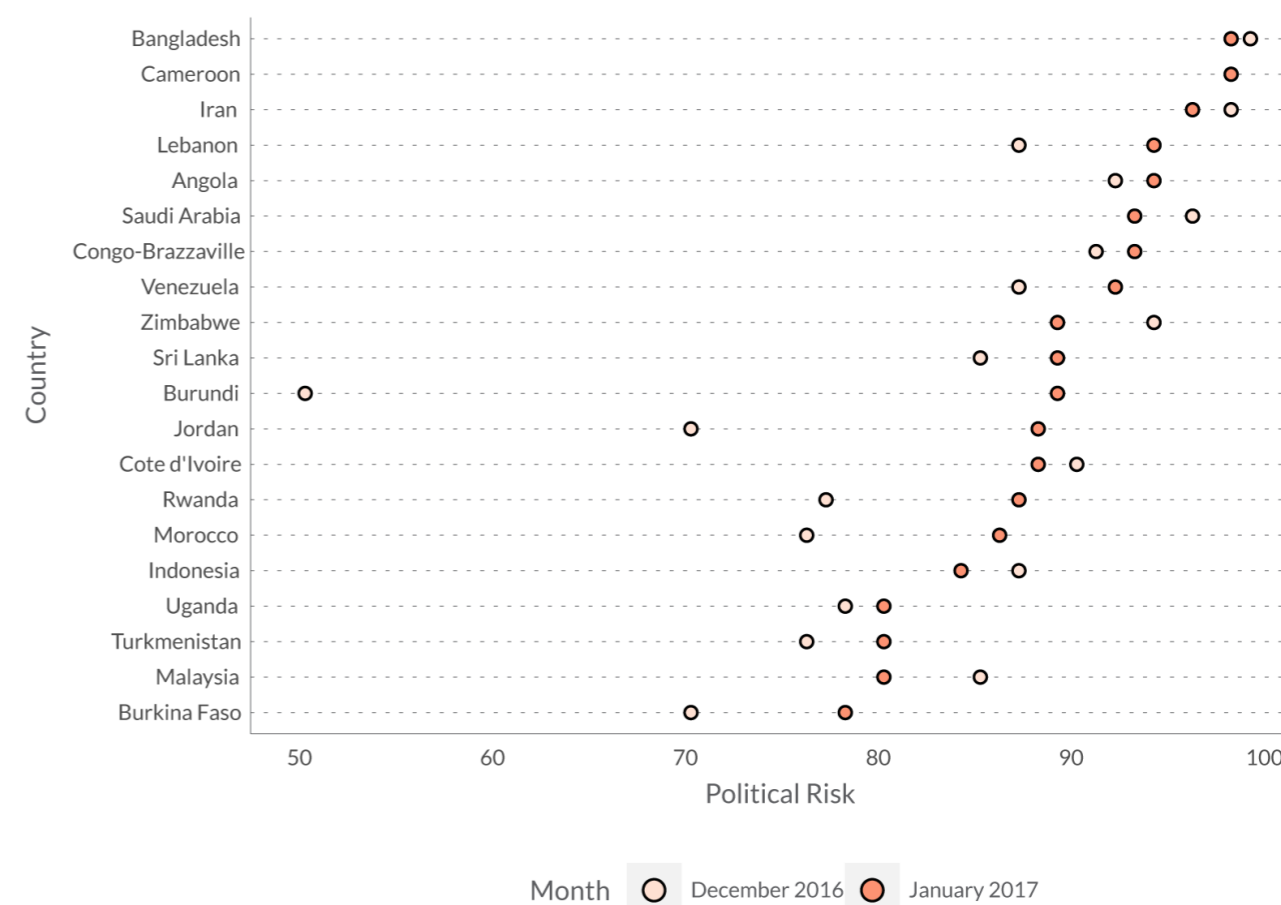
**Figure 4.9 Short-term risk of violent conflict onset displayed by country (as of January 2017). Risk scale is from green (low) to red (high), with countries in conflict displayed in brown. Countries with a population less than 500,000 are displayed in gray.**



As our short-term model incorporates short-term indicator data on a monthly basis in addition to the yearly values yielded by our long-term model, we can not only judge a given country's general risk state, but can also quantify how sudden changes or 'sparks' (measured through event data) can amplify country risk on a short-term horizon. The geographical distribution of violent conflict onset risk as determined by our short-term model are displayed in Figure 4.9.

The high concentrations of violent conflict onset risk in the MENA region, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia are indicative of the political instability presently found in these regions. Overall, the security forces of countries that suffer the greatest risk of violent conflict onset are typically engaged in activities aimed to minimize their risks of political violence. Many of these countries suffer from (potential) political infighting, either between the state and insurgency or oppositional actors. Also, the incorporation of state coercion or force posture indicators demonstrate how violent conflict onset risk of countries within, or in close proximity to conflict zones are affected. For example, as police or military alert statuses are raised in response to a nearby threat, risk of political violence episode onset rises accordingly. This indicator sensitivity is useful for countries such as Iran, Indonesia and Algeria, who all face public security threats due to terrorism, conflict spillover, or public demonstration risks.

**Figure 4.10 Top 20 Countries at short-term risk of violent conflict onset (as of January 2017)**

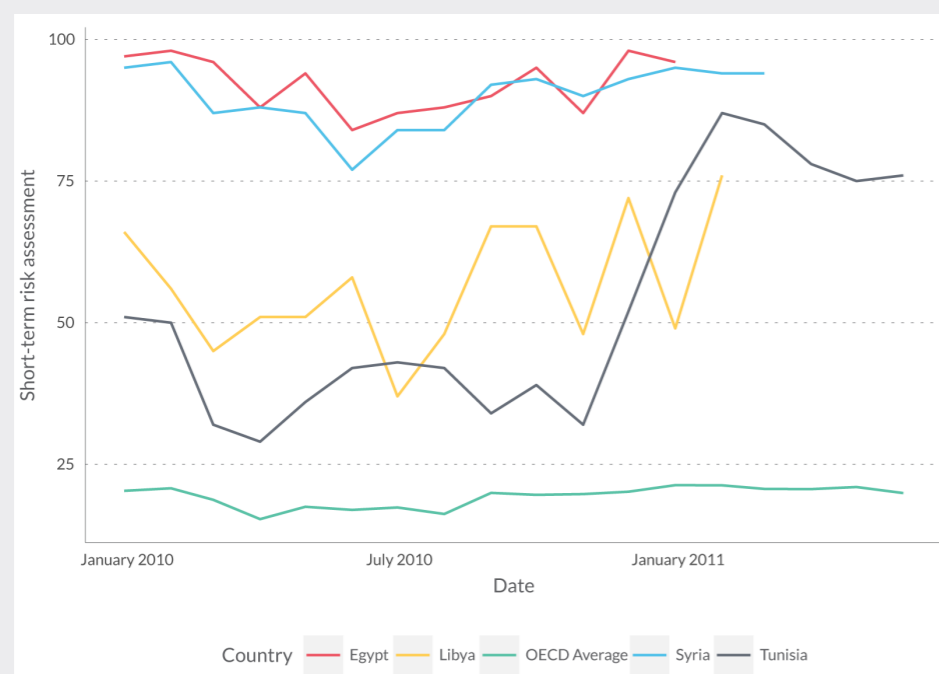


#### Textbox 4.5 The Arab Spring: Increasing Short-Term Forecast Accuracy Using Automated Event Data

Our long-term forecasting model – which does not include automated event data among its indicators – was not particularly effective at forecasting the Arab Spring. However our short-term models accurately assessed significantly higher risks in the involved regions in the months leading to political violence instance onsets.

Our short-term model constantly put Syria and Egypt in the top quartile of risk in the years of 2010 and 2011 (see Figure 4.11). In Egypt, the risk peaked at the 98th percentile in December 2010 and it remained at a very high level (96th percentile) in January 2011 when the Egyptian Revolution began. Syria was in the top 10% of risk assessment in the months leading up to the start of Syrian Civil War. The models also showed increased risk in countries like Tunisia, which came close to a political violence onset but ultimately managed to avoid it. Adding the OECD average risk assessment shows that OECD member states were on average in the 20th percentile for the observed period of 18 months (start of 2010 until mid-2011).

**Figure 4.11 Short-term risks of civil war onset in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Tunisia in months prior to their Arab Spring revolutions**



In contrast to the findings of the long-term forecasting model, here Mongolia and some African countries such as Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania have improved risk levels of violent conflict onset. While their yearly structural data puts them at medium-to-high risk of violent conflict onset in 2017 (see Figure 4.8), short-term fluctuations in their country risk status (as measured by event data) are less severe and skew their risk downwards as a result. Overall, concentrations of violent conflict onset

**Overall, concentrations of violent conflict onset risk cluster in Central and Southeast Asia, while the greatest concentration remains in Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region.**

risk cluster in Central and Southeast Asia, while the greatest concentration remains in Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region.

Bangladesh stands out in both our short-term and long-term models as a country at risk of civil war onset. Bangladesh scores consistently high on its level of activity of rebel or separatist groups, activity of radical groups and state coercion levels. Radical political polarization, oppressive governmental measures, the restriction of social and civil freedoms, episodes of violence at the hands of national police and security forces and the intimidation and oppression of ethnic and religious minorities all leave Bangladesh prone to civil war onset in the short term. This is further compounded by the factionalist nature of Bangladesh's political system, as the risk of internal conflict is greatly heightened when two political actors of roughly equal size and popular support are subjected to increasing political polarization and violence across political schisms.

Several countries in South and West Africa (Congo, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Mauritania, Angola and Chad) also stand out as countries with high risk of violent conflict onset. Many of these countries were also identified by our long-term model and largely share similar structural issues that result in their inclusion in our risk of violent conflict forecasting model. Each of these countries are either factionalist partial democracies, or partial autocracies. Furthermore their sharing borders with countries currently involved in episodes of political violence heightens their risk of conflict spillover, consequently heightening their risk of violent conflict onset in the short term.

Similar to previous cases, Iran and Lebanon are – respectively – cases of partial autocratic or factionalist partial democratic states that are at high risk of civil war onset in the short term. Their susceptibility to political violence is further aggravated by ongoing regional conflicts. Wars in Afghanistan and Syria are at risk of spilling over borders and have already resulted in an influx of refugees seeking asylum after being displaced from their homes in conflict areas. Issues regarding political representation, inadequate observation of human and civil rights and freedoms, legacies of recent instances of military conflict and war and the persecution of social and religious minorities within these countries also heighten their risk of internal political conflict and risk of violent conflict onset in the short term.

**Wars in Afghanistan and Syria are at risk of spilling over borders and have already resulted in an influx of refugees seeking asylum after being displaced from their homes in conflict areas.**

#### Textbox 4.6 The Netherlands' Stake in a Crisis-Stricken Venezuela

Venezuela is an important at-risk country for Dutch national security interests because of its proximity to the 'overseas' Dutch countries and territories in the Caribbean. The situation in Venezuela is dire. High food prices, considerable corruption, the violent abuse of power by security and police forces and repressive actions taken towards public assemblies and media actors are sowing societal tension and fueling further popular dissatisfaction with the sitting government. Political tensions have remained high in Venezuela since the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013. In recent years, as a result of a poor economic performance and a rapidly devaluing Venezuelan bolivar, Venezuela, despite its oil riches, is facing a severe foodstuff crisis – bread and meat imports have decreased by 94% and 63% from last year, respectively. The IMF has predicted its economy to shrink by 10% by the end of 2016.<sup>1</sup> Venezuela's violent conflict risk has fluctuated over the past decade often putting it in the highest risk category. (see Figure 4.12 below)

1. Patrick Gillespie, "Venezuela Food Crisis Deepens as Shipments Plummet," *CNNMoney*, August 11, 2016, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/08/11/news/economy/venezuela-food-shortages/index.html>.

**Figure 4.12 Changes in Venezuela's short-term and long-term risk of civil war onset between 2000 and 2016**



Various events and dynamics have strained Dutch-Venezuelan relations in the past two decades. The Dutch government's political alignment with the United States – a longtime adversary to the Chavez and Maduro governments – has also further problematized its relationship with Venezuela. The poor state of bilateral relations reached a low in the summer of 2014 when Venezuelan official Hugo Carvajal was detained by Dutch authorities in Aruba over US accusations of drug-trafficking activities.<sup>2</sup> He was arrested on an American warrant after his appointment as consul to Aruba and subsequent arrival to the island country. After some debate regarding the validity of his diplomatic immunity, he was released from detainment by the Aruban government and returned to Venezuela. This decision was met with some degree of controversy, as the Venezuelan navy had deployed at least one war frigate near Aruba and Curaçao during Carvajal's detainment. It was later revealed that the Venezuelan government had also threatened to halt all flight connections between Venezuela and Aruba and Curaçao and withdraw a key oil contract signed between the government of Curaçao and its state-sponsored oil company, Petroleum of Venezuela.<sup>3</sup> While no event of similar magnitude involving the Netherlands and Venezuela has occurred since the Carvajal extradition affair, it remains a prime case demonstrating the influence of the Venezuelan government on economic and political affairs in the Caribbean and Dutch overseas countries and territories in particular. Due to its geographical proximity and subsequent risk to Dutch national security, the deteriorating domestic situation within Venezuela must be closely monitored in order to mitigate any adverse effects of a potential outbreak of violent conflict in Venezuela.

2. MercoPress, "Dutch Government Releases Former Venezuelan General Retained on DEA Request," *MercoPress*, July 28, 2014, <http://en.mercoPress.com/2014/07/28/dutch-government-releases-former-venezuelan-general-retained-on-dea-request>.

3. Kejal Vyas and José de Córdoba, "Aruba Says Venezuela Raised Military Pressure on It," *Wall Street Journal*, July 29, 2014, sec. World, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/aruba-says-venezuela-raised-military-pressure-on-it-1406594604>. Similarly controversial is Venezuela's Law of Control for Integral Air Space Defense that was approved in June 2012. Identified as "one of the preferred illegal drug trafficking routes, mostly for cocaine, from South America to the Caribbean region, Central America and the United States," Chavez moved to limit drug flows through Venezuela by legalizing the forcible disablement (i.e. shooting down) of unidentified aircrafts on suspicious flight paths moving through Venezuelan airspace. The measure has resulted in the downing or disabling of seven suspicious aircrafts in 2015 alone. U.S. Department of State, "Country Report: Venezuela," Report, 2015 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report INCSR (Department Of State, The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs., March 19, 2015), <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2015/vol1/239028.htm>. Javier Ignacio Mayorca, "Venezuela's Shoot-Down Policy Produces Mixed Results," *InSight Crime: Investigation and Analysis of Organized Crime*, July 7, 2016, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/venezuela-s-shoot-down-policy-produces-mixed-results>.

Saudi Arabia also has a very high risk of political violence due to proximity of civil wars in Syria and Yemen, very high discrimination levels, high state coercion and lively activity of radical Islamist groups. In fact, in the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset, which employs a broader definition of political violence, Saudi Arabia is already considered to be in conflict due to spillover from Yemen's Civil War.

The Central Asian nations of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are all either partial factional democracies, or partial autocracies with high levels of state-led discrimination. As former Soviet republics still remaining largely within Russia's sphere of influence, matters of political representation, coercive state actions and radical domestic activity continue to be considerable issues hindering their transition towards democratic rule. As a result, internal tensions, political and civil suppression of their respective populations and their proximity to conflict zones in Russia and South Asia exposes them to a higher violent conflict onset risk in the short-term.

While Burundi did not place high on our list of countries at greatest short-term risk of violent conflict onset immediately prior to January 2017, recent developments have dramatically elevated its position in our ranking. This change is in large part due to the heightened national security alert issued in response to the attempted assassination of presidential advisor Willy Nyamitwe on November 28.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Burundi President Nkurunziza hinted at the possibility of him running for a further fourth presidential term in 2020, sparking fears of a resurgence of severe political violence on the level of that which had been witnessed last year after Nkurunziza's pursuit of a third presidential term despite controversies regarding its constitutionality.<sup>23</sup> The Burundi government is also embroiled in ongoing political disagreements with both the African Union and the European Union on the grounds of military wage payment and aid-related issues. As a result of resurging political factionalism, its military involvement in neighboring, conflict-stricken Somalia, as well as the ongoing political and civil suppression of local political opposition actors, Burundi is at high short-term risk of violent conflict onset.

#### 4.5 In Conclusion: the State of Violence

Current trends in global violence are a cause for concern. Violence levels have continued their upward trajectory. An increasing number of societies is affected by one or multiple forms of violence. Total conflict deaths are down from last year but continue to be at historically high levels since 2004 and still exceed the one hundred thousand mark. Political violence is not equally spread out over the globe. Current violence clusters in MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa. Many of the ongoing conflicts are not constrained by national borders. A clear trend is the internationalization of intrastate conflict: the number of internationalized intrastate conflict as a percentage of all intrastate conflicts, has quadrupled since the beginning of this century. The majority of countries at risk of new conflict both in the long and the short term is also concentrated throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, a variety of intractable conflicts persist in Africa and Asia. Countries at risk include Chad, Angola, Guinea, Cameroon, Burundi and Ivory Coast in Africa and Iran, Tajikistan, Nepal and Bangladesh in Asia. The risk of inter-state conflict is particularly high in Asia due to the risk of escalation of territorial disputes between India and Pakistan and China and its neighbors. The fragile situation in Venezuela, meanwhile,

22. Pierre Emmanuel Ngendakumana, "Burundi: Willy Nyamitwe Assassination Attempt Worsens the Situation," *AllAfrica*, December 6, 2016, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201612060074.html>.

23. Isaac Mugabi, "Burundi: Mixed Reactions to Possible Fourth Term for Burundian President," *Deutsche Welle*, January 3, 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201701040075.html>.

poses a potential security risk to the Dutch countries and territories in the Caribbean.

The prognosis is especially troubling for Europe. At the same as it is increasingly embroiled in a Second Cold War with Russia, the majority of large-scale episodes of ongoing violence reside both within (Ukraine) and immediately outside its borders (MENA). The risk of further violence metastasizing into European countries in the form of lone wolf, or coordinated terrorist attacks in major cities, is real. This spillover effect has already begun as European capitals have been rocked by terrorist activity in recent times. Given the risks associated with further conflict contagion and the challenges posed by the massive influx of refugees fleeing from the MENA region, the need to contain the violence and address the larger risk drivers within the peripheral regions of Europe is paramount. Overall, for these reasons our outlook on global violence for the coming year is far from positive.

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## Cover Picture

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Euromaidan in Kiev, 19 February 2014. Author: Amakuha.