Global Conflict Trends and their Consequences[*]

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This report addresses the evolution of the main types of armed conflict around the world. The goal is not only to study trends, but also to pinpoint their drivers and rely on such information to generate scenarios about future developments. Such analysis is then used to study the likely consequences of conflict, especially with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in mind. Simply put, the report centers on how to improve the chances of peace (SDG 16). While previous research has highlighted the importance of development for peace, our main argument is that the path to peace goes through inequality, especially among ethnic groups (SDG 10), thus confirming the analysis of the recent report on *Pathways for Peace* (World Bank and United Nations 2018). In terms of consequences, our analysis centers on violence and various measures of development, as captured by SDGs 1-9. Throughout this report, we will focus especially on the period from 2015, which represents the end of the previous reporting period, but we will also go further back where appropriate to detect trends and patterns of conflict.

Highlighting positive outcomes in terms of SDGs, Figure 1 depicts how the main dimensions fit together. As a point of departure, our analysis in the **first section** of the report centers on the objective of peace. **Then we turn** to the theme of equality, here viewed as a key driver of peaceful outcomes, in addition to the conventional stress on development. In the **third section** of the report, we analyze how conflict put up obstacles to development, broadly measured according to the SDGs 1-9. Development, in turn, feeds back by reinforcing peaceful outcomes.

To keep these positive influences in place, our framework highlights how multilateral institutions contribute to all three main components, that is by promoting norms and practices of equality, by directly preventing and reducing conflict through peacekeeping and other interventions, and finally, by supporting economic and social development (see the dashed arrows). In the **fourth section** of the paper, we spell out how all these interdependencies produce different conflict scenarios that can inform future policy making.
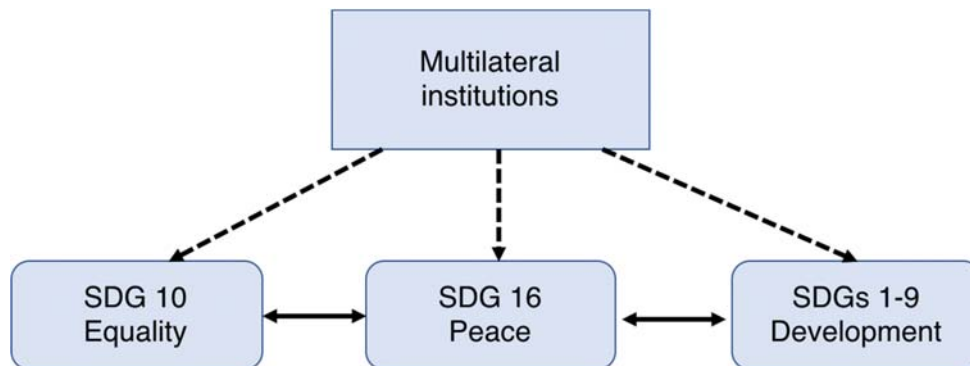

Figure 1. Conceptual map including relevant SDGs.

1. Current conflicts trends

We start our analysis by considering the most important types of political violence in today's world. Our investigation relies on the well-established data sources offered by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (Pettersson and Eck 2018).[1] The UCDP defines armed, state-based conflict in terms of interstate and intrastate conflicts (see Box). Whereas the former pertains to combat between sovereign states, the latter features armed rebellion by non-state actors challenging the sovereignty of incumbent governments within a sovereign state. Intrastate conflicts can contest either the control of the government or control of subnational territory. Below, we will also briefly discuss non-state conflicts that pit non-state actors against each other and one-sided violence, which entails civilian victimization rather than two-sided, armed conflict. The UCDP uses a threshold of 25 battle deaths as a criterion for inclusion in the dataset. An interstate or civil war is defined as a conflict that exceeds 1000 battle deaths.

Box: Definitions of political violence

Armed conflict:
- **Intrastate/civil conflict** refers to violence between a government and at least one non-governmental party within a sovereign country
- **Interstate conflict** refers to violence between two or more governments.
- **Non-state conflict** refers to the use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state,
- **One-sided violence** refers to the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians.

See https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions and our graphic illustration in Appendix 6.

The first question that needs to be addressed is whether interstate and intrastate conflict have been trending in recent years, especially since 2015. Figure 2 displays a simple count of these categories since 1946. The graph indicates that interstate conflicts have rarely occurred since the end of WWII. This pattern also maintains for the period since 2015 (see the gray area in the graph), which counts at most two conflicts without any clearly increasing trend.[2]

In contrast, internal conflict has been much more common, not the least because the state system has expanded massively as a consequence of decolonization in the decades following WWII. The frequency of civil conflict reached its first peak in the early years of the post-Cold War period, followed by a gradual decline. However, this declining trend did not persist until today. After having stabilized in the first decade of the 2000s, the rate of conflict shot up markedly in the early 2010s, reaching an all-time peak in 2015 and 2016. The final year of observation records a slightly lower rate, however, still around the frequency of the earlier peak in the early 1990s (Petterson and Eck 2018).

On the face of it, this trajectory appears to contradict prominent theories of a general decline in conflict (see e.g. Pinker 2011; Goldstein 2011). However, it would be premature to draw any conclusions from a highly aggregated, raw count of conflict incidence because doing so treats all conflicts as equally important. In fact, conflicts differ significantly in terms of their

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[1] For other data sources on conflict, see e.g. ACLED (Raleigh et al. 2010).
[2] See Appendix 1 for a list of conflicts that were active during the highlighted period.

size as counted by the number of people killed. To this effect, we rely on UCDP's count of "battle deaths" that indicate the number of fatalities as a direct consequence of combat.[3]
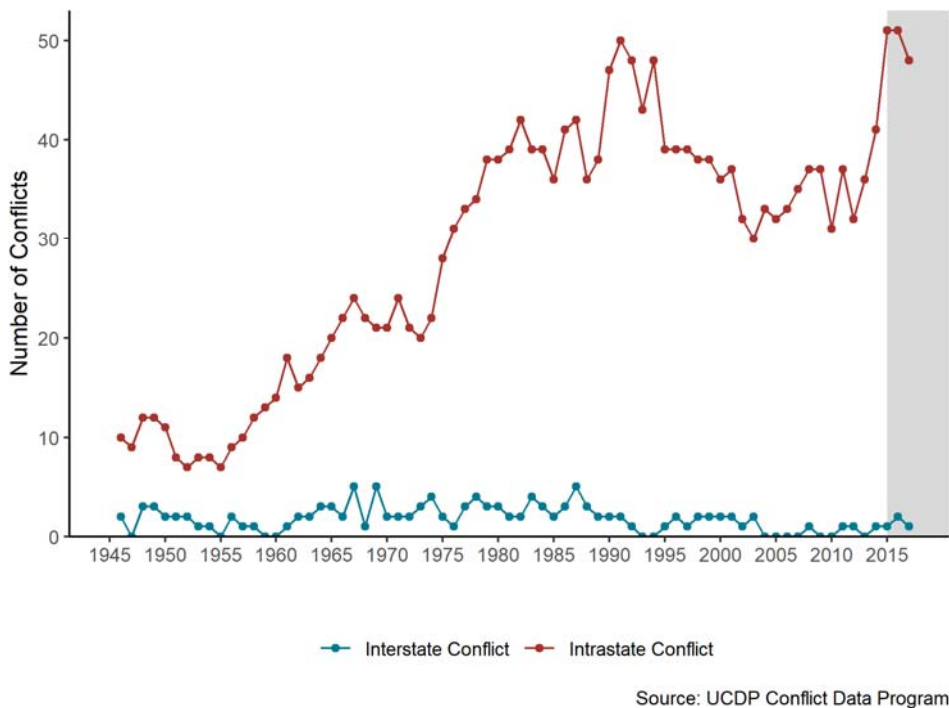

Figure 2. Armed intrastate and interstate conflict.

Based on both interstate and intrastate conflict, Figure 3 offers a summary of relevant trends measured in terms of battle deaths with data drawn from Gleditsch and Clauset (2018). While the time series only dates back to 2013, it captures the beginning of the most recent spike in violence that we referred to in Figure 2. However, this surge of conflict intensity is dwarfed by the peaks during the Cold War. In this sense, the most recent conflict trend does not necessarily contradict the general argument that armed conflict will decline in the long-run.

Global trends mask important variation at the regional level. Figure 4 plots a close-up of the number of battle deaths in interstate and intrastate conflicts into five world regions since 1989. When focusing on the post-Cold War period, there is no decline of conflict intensity. Fortunately, however, the trend has been sinking rapidly from 2015 through 2017 with levels that remain similar to the two previous peaks of the post-Cold War period.

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[3] Conflict may also cause more indirect, longer-term fatalities, for instance due to disease and disruptions of livelihoods (see Ghobarah, Huth and Russett 2003, and further references below).
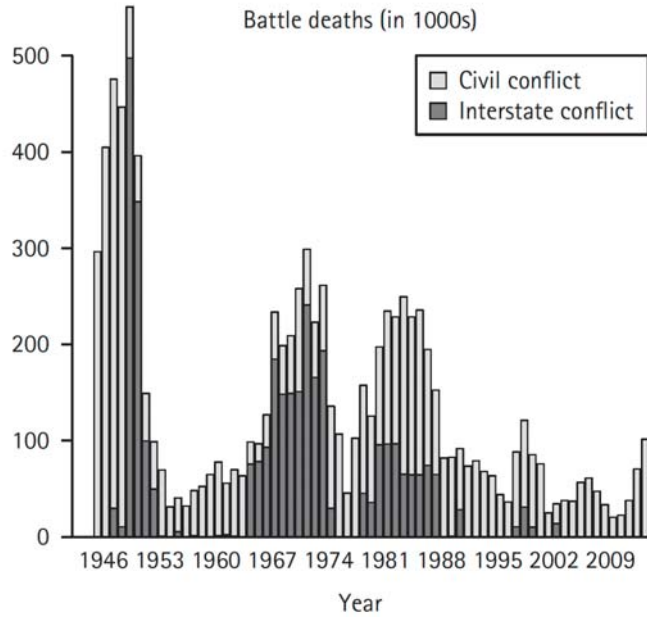
Figure 3. Intensity of armed conflict, 1946 – 2013
Source: Gleditsch and Clauset (2018) based on data from UCDP and PRIO.
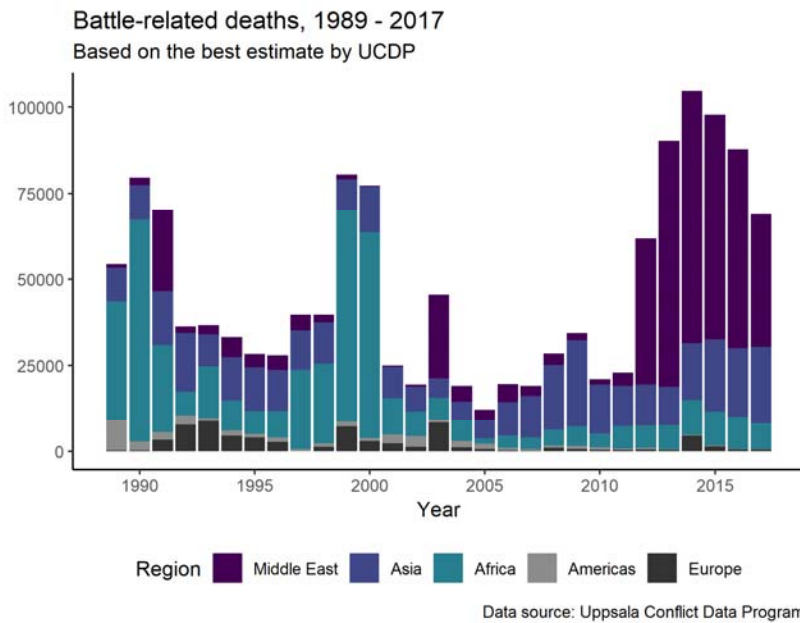
Figure 4. Conflict intensity by world region after the end of the Cold War.

In the years of the post-Cold War period, Africa witnessed the highest numbers of battle-related deaths followed by Asia. The otherwise much publicized conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and other parts of Europe raged throughout the 1990s, but their levels were generally lower than in the aforementioned continents. From 2012, however, there has been a major explosion of fatalities in the MENA region, mostly driven by the Syrian civil war.

Despite its early promise of democratization, the so-called Arab Spring in 2011 further destabilized an already fragile region and paved the way for a series of devastating civil wars that partly followed earlier lines of conflict (International Crisis Group 2017).

Before further analyzing the evolution of armed conflict, we display the trends of two other types of political violence: non-state conflict and one-sided violence. Non-state conflict captures violence involving only non-state actors, such as communal conflict and riots (Sundberg, Eck and Kreutz 2012). As opposed to non-state conflict, one-sided violence describes killings of unarmed victims by an armed organization, whether states or non-state actors (Eck and Hultman 2007). Based on UCDP data covering the period from 1989, Figure 5 shows how non-state conflict has increased considerably in the run up to and in the aftermath of 2015. In contrast, the count of one-sided violence has described a more stable development, although there has been a slight increase since 2009.
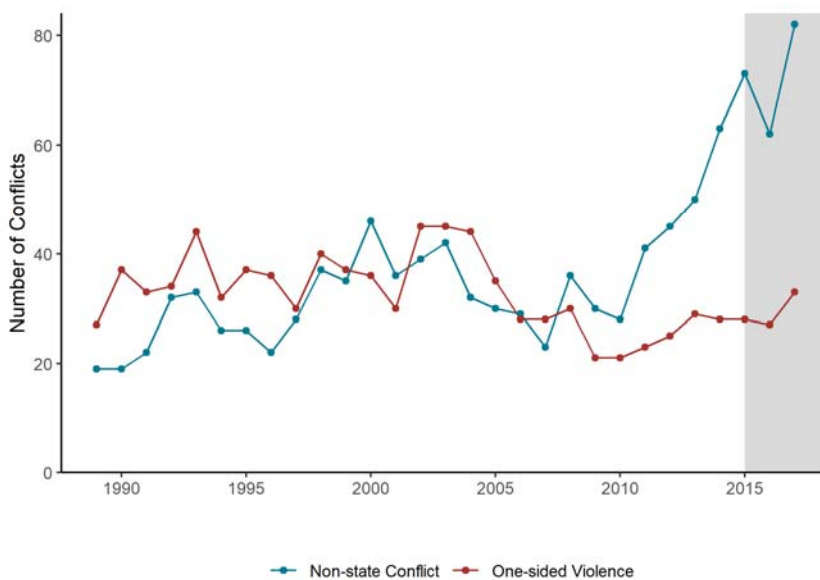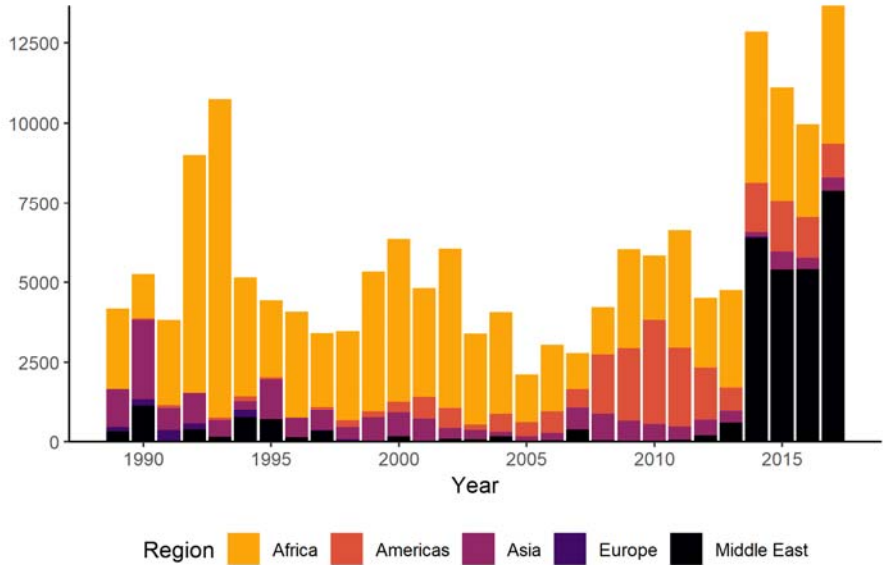

Source: UCDP Conflict Data Program

Figure 5. The number of non-state conflicts and episodes of one-sided violence.

Focusing on intensity, Figure 6 breaks up the non-state conflict category into five world regions. The surge in non-state conflict is driven by events in the Middle East and Africa. In 2017, the total casualty numbers for this type of political violence reached almost 14000, which is still well below the total number of battle deaths caused by armed conflict at about 70000 (Petterson and Eck 2018). However, in the former case, the trend is strongly increasing as opposed to the latter type of conflict (see Appendix 2 for a list of conflict cases since 2015).

In terms of intensity, one-sided violence killed about 7000 in 2017, which is considerably less than state or non-state armed conflicts (see Figure 7). As with the count-based development, the trend has been much more stable in recent years. When looking at a longer time period going back to the Cold War period, there has been a steady decline of killings (Valentino 2014). In recent years, most cases have occurred in Africa, the Middle East and various locations where the Islamic State has been active (see Appendix 3 for a list of violent instances since 2015).

Figure 6. Intensity of non-state conflict by world region after the end of the Cold War.

Figure 7. Intensity of one-sided violence by world region after the end of the Cold War.

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2. Drivers of civil conflict

Having surveyed four of the most important types of political violence in the contemporary world, we now turn to the search for the factors driving these trends. We focus our attention on civil conflicts for the moment since such conflicts account for most casualties in political violence.[4] As a first analytical step, civil conflicts can be divided into two main types depending on whether they are of ethnic nature or not.[5] In the following section we analyze the former conflict type, before addressing the second one in the final subsection.

Explaining decline of ethnic civil conflict
Using data from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010; Vogt et al. 2015), we define ethnic civil conflict as those instances that feature rebels that advance claims on behalf of, and recruit heavily from, at least one ethnic group.[6] Based on this conceptualization, Figure 8 combines the EPR data with UCDP conflict data (cf. Figure 2) to plot the number of conflicts per year falling into the ethnic and non-ethnic categories. The graph reveals that the spike of conflict during the past decade appears to be driven by non-ethnic conflicts rather than ethnic ones (see the blue curve). Furthermore, for most of the period since the early post-WWII period, ethnic civil conflicts have been more numerous than their non-ethnic counterparts. However, in recent years, non-ethnic internal conflicts have outpaced ethnic ones (see the gray area). This situation stands in stark contrast to the end of the Cold War and the early post-Cold War periods that were dominated by ethnic conflict. Interestingly, ethnic civil conflict continues to follow a slowly but steadily decreasing trend since the mid-1990s.

Ethnic civil conflict continues to dominate the picture if we shift the attention from conflict counts to intensity. Yet the ethnic trend in battle deaths has been falling since 2015. Again, this is a reflection of the Syrian war's loss of some of its earlier peak intensity. We are thus confronted with a mixed trend that partly consists of (1) a decline in conflict due to ethnicity producing less conflict and (2) a surge made up of non-ethnic cases.

In the following, we address both trajectories. The declining trend in terms of ethnic conflict was first detected by Gurr (2000). Contrary to various alarmist scenarios about explosions of violence that were drawn up in the early 1990s, Gurr argued that since the mid-1990s, ethnic conflict had actually been declining around the world and was likely to decline in the foreseeable future. Pointing to inclusive policies and pragmatic compromises that had prevented and resolved ethnic conflicts, he argued that the trend toward peace would continue. Specifically, this "regime of accommodation" features extended group rights, territorial autonomy, central power sharing and democracy, as well as supportive multilateral institutions willing to back up these inclusive provisions with interventions. In this sense, Gurr's essay reflected the liberal optimism that characterized the decades after the Cold War.

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[4] Obviously, this does not mean that non-state conflict and one-sided violence can be ignored. We will return to these types of political violence below.
[5] Here we define ethnicity as a subjectively experienced sense of commonality based on the belief in common ancestry and common culture (see Weber 1978, pp. 385-398; Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013, p. 23).
[6] The link between rebel organizations and EPR groups is established through the ACD2EPR dataset (Wucherpfennig et al. 2012).
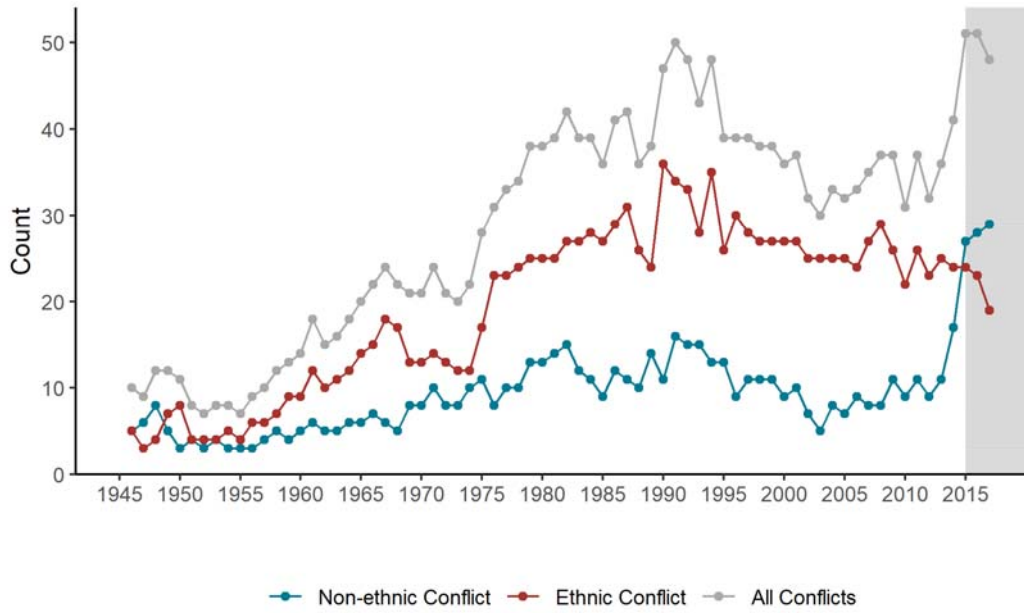
Source: UCDP Conflict Data Program, ACD2EPR

Figure 8. Number of ethnic and non-ethnic civil conflicts.

Today, we are in the fortunate situation of having access to data that can be used to evaluate Gurr's prediction. In the following, we build on, and extend, the analysis of Cederman, Gleditsch and Wucherpfennig (2017). As a starting point, we consider if Gurr was right to talk about the emergence of a liberal and inclusive regime. By and large, there is plenty of support for this conjecture. Figure 9 depicts macro trends in terms of ethnic power relations using the Ethnic Power Relations dataset.
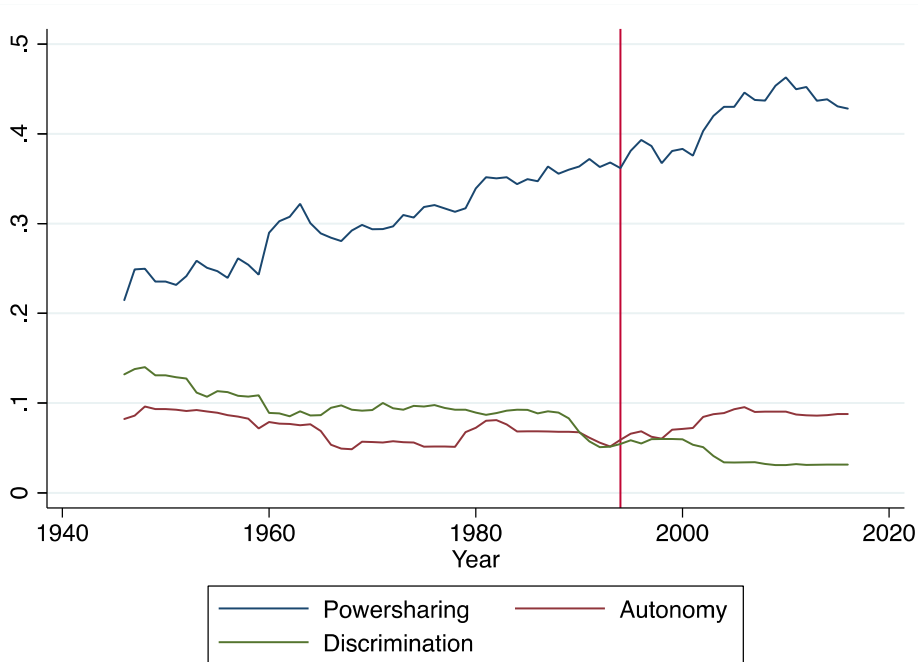

Figure 9. Trends in ethnic groups access to power as average share of countries' populations.

The vertical red line at 1994 marks the start of the period during which Gurr's regime of inclusive accommodation is assumed to apply. The graph displays three dimensions of ethnic groups' power access as average share of their respective country populations. First, we see that the average population share belonging to ethnic groups that participate in some kind of power sharing arrangement has increased steadily during and after the Cold War to levels above 40%. While the trend is less consistent during the Cold War, the same can be said for the population share belonging to autonomous groups after the Cold War, which almost cross the 10% line. Finally, the share of discriminated groups dropped continuously both during and after the Cold War.

Of course, there is plenty of heterogeneity in these trends. Providing a more detailed picture by world region, Figure 10 tracks trends in the proportion of each country's population that is included in the executive through their ethnic group. Clearly, the level of inclusion is very high in western countries, with averages reaching well above 90%. The shares of included population in other parts of the world fall below these high levels but converge on shares above 80%. There is one notable exception, however, and that is the MENA region, for which the level is less than 70%. The picture becomes even more dramatic for discrimination (see Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013, Chap. 9).
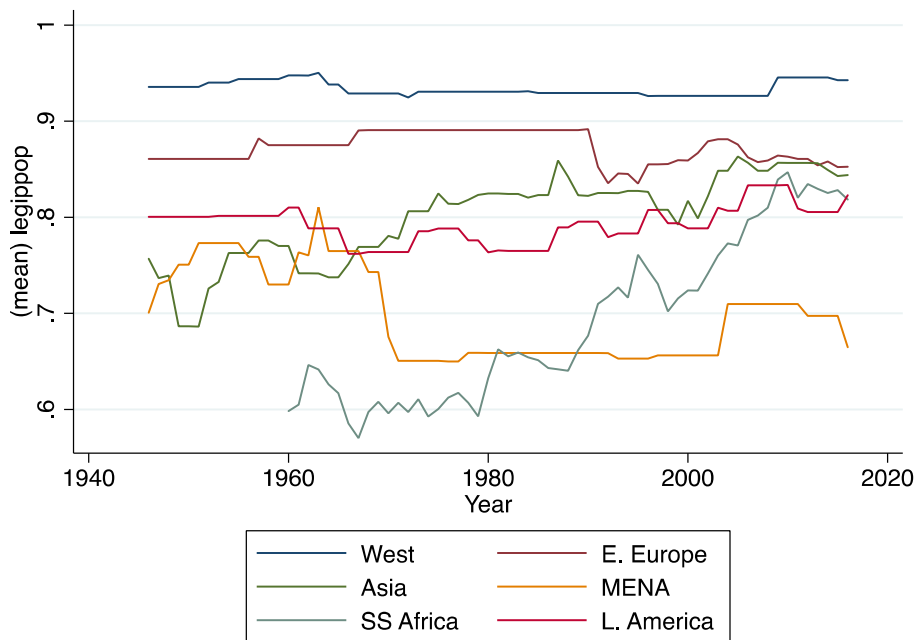
Figure 10. Trends in included population by world region.

We complement this picture with data on democracy and peacekeeping, both of which figure in Gurr's liberal explanation of ethnic-conflict decline. Figure 11 reveals a steadily increasing trend in the number of democratic states according to the Polity IV dataset.[7] Similarly, as another potential contribution to conflict reduction in line with Gurr's logic, Figure 12 shows

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[7] However, it should be noted that other measures of democracy, including the Freedom House and Varieties of Democracy (VDem) dataset record some democratic backsliding during the period after 2015 (Coppedge et al. 2019).

a generally increasing trend in term of UN peacekeeping troops deployed, with the exception for a hiatus in the last 1990s, reflecting the reorganization of the UN's peacekeeping operations as a result of the 2000 Brahimi report.[8]
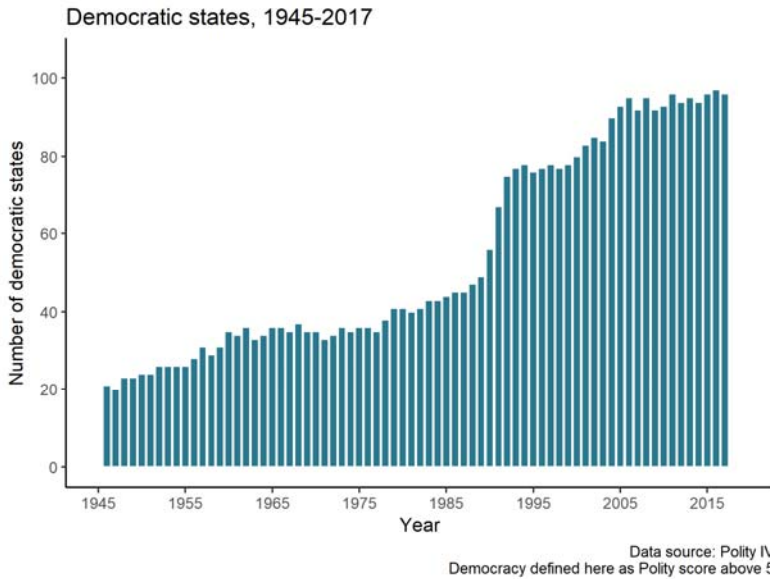
Figure 11. Global trend in terms of the number of democratic states.
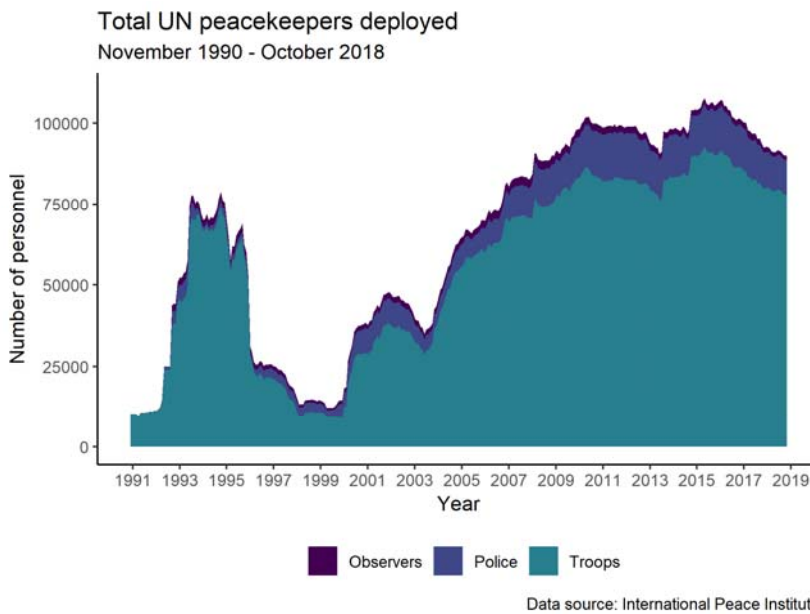
Figure 12. Global trend in UN peacekeeping in terms of troops deployed.

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[8] The numbers before the end of the Cold War are quite modest (not shown).

Having established that the macrotrends appear to support Gurr's decline hypothesis, we now use updated group-level data to check whether changes toward the inclusive regime has made the group less likely to rebel after the mid-1990s. Figures 13 and 14 present the result of two counterfactual exercises based on a change from illiberal states to liberal ones along five dimensions that relate to the ending of discrimination, the granting of regional autonomy and inclusion through power sharing respectively, the introduction of democracy, and finally, the intervention by UN peacekeepers (Cederman, Gleditsch and Wucherpfennig 2017). Based on a scenario that introduces the liberal feature in 2004 and lasts through 2013, Figure 13 shows that these shifts tend to have a conflict-preventing effect that is significant for ending of discrimination, and the introduction of power sharing and democracy. Shifting the attention to the probability of ending conflict, Figure 14 displays a similar computation that groups that are fighting in 2004 will cease combat within two years after that year.
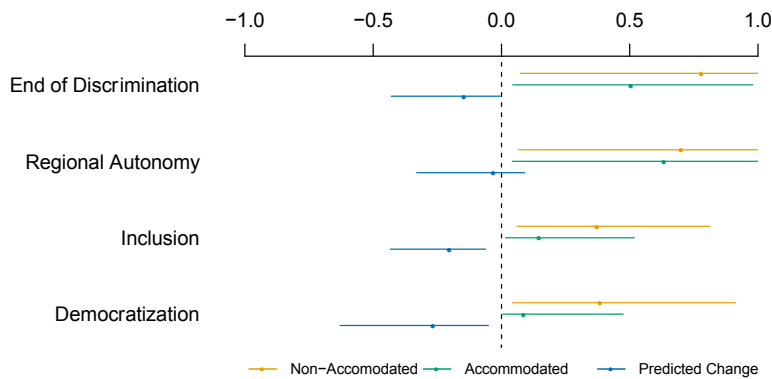
Note: The points indicate the estimated probability and the horizontal lines 0.05 confidence intervals. The net effect of the four dimensions of Gurr's regime of accommodation is shown in blue, here shown as the difference between the accommodated and non-accommodated cases.

Figure 13. Predicted probabilities of at least one conflict onset during 2004 to 2013.
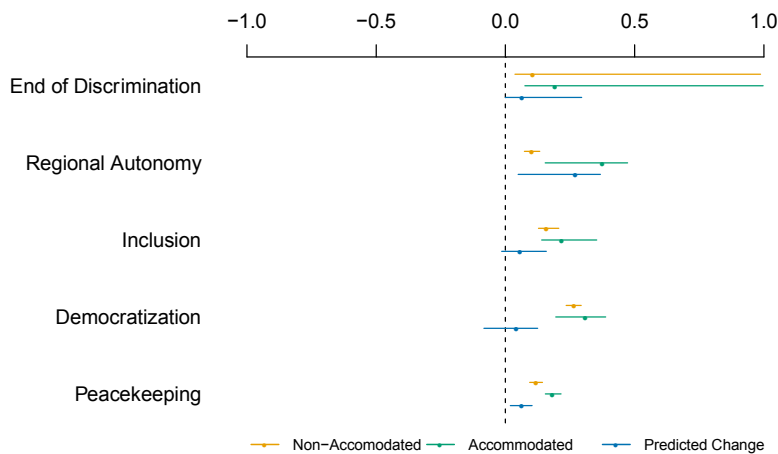
Note: The points indicate the estimated probability and the horizontal lines 0.05 confidence intervals. The net effect of the five dimensions of Gurr's regime of accommodation is shown in blue, here shown as the difference between the accommodated and non-accommodated cases.

Figure 14. Predicted probabilities of conflict termination during 2004 or 2005.

All in all, it can be concluded that Gurr has been right for the right reasons: ethnic civil conflict has been declining since the mid-1990s thanks to a liberal combination of policies and institutions promoting inclusion and cooperation. However, as we will argue below, there are reasons to believe that post-Cold War regime of accommodation has started to erode.

Explaining the surge of non-ethnic conflict
After having analyzed the decline of ethnic conflict, we now turn to the abrupt rise of non-ethnic conflict. What might account for this puzzling trend? Scrutiny of the cases immediately reveals that most of the new outbreaks after 2010 relate to the Islamic State and its allies (Petterson and Eck 2018). While the Islamic State has been fighting along ethnic/sectarian lines in Syria and Iraq, many of these new onsets pertain to cases that primarily concern radical religious interpretations within a given ethnic group, such as the Muslim Brotherhood's relation to the Sunni majority in Egypt or Boko Haram's relation to the Fulani and other ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria. Thus, while ethnic rivalries in Iraq and Syria helped bring about the phenomenon of the Islamic State (Byman 2015; Yosofi 2016), this new surge of civil conflict cannot be reduced to ethnic civil conflict (Juergensmeyer 2018). First, the main conflict cleavage often does not run along the boundaries of the involved ethnic communities so much as through them. Second, the rebels' stated aims typically go well beyond partial or full sovereignty exercised by a specific ethnic group within a given country (Byman 2015, p. 137). Quite on the contrary, the Islamic State and its affiliates are truly transnational in their aims that aim to create a larger caliphate with unclear borders. In fact, rather than being ethno-nationalist, these claims are more based on transnational interpretations of Islam (see e.g. Halimi et al. 2019; Juergensmeyer 2018). Finally, rebel recruitment has generally tended to be transnational as well (Gates and Podder 2015; Oktav, Dal and Kursun 2018).

Conflict researchers have only begun making sense of this challenging phenomenon. For example, Gleditsch and Rudolfsen (2016) find that Muslim-majority countries are more prone to violence than other states, especially due to their overrepresentation among states enacting repressive policies. Putting the stress on ideology, Walter (2017a) goes as far as arguing that this type of rebellion differs fundamentally from two earlier waves of civil war: one most ideologically inspired during the Cold War, and a second, mostly ethnic one, during the early post-Cold War period until the early 2000s. Arguing that extremist ideology of Salafist nature drives the third, and most recent, surge of rebellion, Walter (2017b) proposes an instrumentalist interpretation that explains the rise of extremist ideology as political entrepreneurs' attempt to overcome collective action dilemmas related to rebel recruitment, principal-agent problems concerning control of rebel fighters, and commitment problems making it hard for leaders to bind themselves to principled policies.

Given current conflict cases in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), this account rings true in many respects. Yet, as admitted by Walter, an exclusively instrumentalist explanation loses sight of non-instrumental sources of ideology (see esp. Gutierrez and Wood 2014). In fact, an entirely instrumentalist approach has troubles explaining how political elites succeed in convincing their followers that their cynical use of religion is more than "cheap talk." For this reason, it would seem reasonable to also consider ways in which ideology may respond to preexisting grievances by further articulating and mobilizing them. Contrary to Walter's assertion that ideology is a new aspect of civil wars from the 2000s, which has not been systematically considered by civil war researchers in the past, it is clear that ideology has

figured as an important source of grievance articulation and mobilization well before this point of history.[9]

It is also less clear why radical Islamist ideology has become such a successful means of recruiting foreign fighters, especially in the last few years. One possibility is that rather than being the first eruption of ideological mobilization, the Islamic State and its affiliates profit from the Arab states' previous failed attempts to mobilize secular versions of ethnic nationalism. Clearly, these states suffer from weak state capacity in general. Repeated defeats in military conflict against Israel and its Western allies have discredited attempts at Arab nationalism, whether in its pan-Arab version or in its state-framed manifestations (Berman 2003). Furthermore, the region's mostly authoritarian and exclusive governance structures have been further weakened by their brutal repression of rebellions (Hafez 2003), the violent reactions to the "Arab Spring" merely being the most recent instance.

In such an environment, it goes without saying that grievances targeting incumbent state elites have been widely held and multi-dimensional. To the extent that the regimes have repressed protest violently and blocked peaceful participation in politics, they have left large parts of the population with "no other way out" but to resist with violent means (Goodwin 2001). For example, Islamist oppositional movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, have gained in popularity thanks to their willingness to provide social services (Berman 2003). Their violent repression across the region fueled violent resistance that has been exploited by the Islamic State and other radical Islamist organizations.

Unfortunately, external actors have been much less forthcoming when it comes to criticizing authoritarian rule and exclusive practices than in other parts of the world. Even though Western dependence on petroleum from the Middle East has decreased over time, it has not disappeared. While the United States responded with ambivalence to the uprisings of 2011, the current U.S. administration has been keen to support the regions' incumbent governments regardless of their human rights record. Furthermore, other powers exerting influence in the region, such as Russia, Israel and Saudi Arabia, typically side with the incumbent regimes. In particular, funds from Saudi Arabia play a key role in spreading literalist interpretations of Islam that offer space for violent extremist viewpoints.

Another important factor explaining the surge of Islamist revolts is that new information technology, especially social media, has created much more room for extremist ideology. In contrast to early predictions that social media constitute a new "liberation technology" (see e.g. Diamond and Plattner 2012; Howard 2010), these technological advances have been more successfully exploited by illiberal forces including authoritarian governments (e.g. Weidmann et al. 2016) and ruthless organizations challenging the current state system, such as the Islamic State (Byman 2015; Walter 2017a). Mitts (2018) uses statistical analyses of Twitter users in Europe to show that exposure to Islamophobic tweets increases expressions of pro-ISIS tweets by other users. As explained by Weidmann and Rød (forthcoming), information technology affects not only the opportunities of rebellion, but also diffusion and coordination of grievances, within and across existing state borders. Repressive states make great efforts to regulate access to the Internet and censor its contents, but the task is a difficult one. Social media providers, such as Facebook, have been notoriously slow to curb the

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[9] In particular, nationalism is capable of addressing all the aforementioned organizational challenges mentioned by Walter (e.g. Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug 2013, Ch. 3).

widespread and systematic abuse of their social networks by the promoters of violence, be they Islamist or not.

3. Consequences of political violence

In an influential World Bank report, Paul Collier and colleagues have described civil war as "development in reverse" (Collier et al. 2003). The United Nation's sustainable development agenda reflects this notion and lists peace, justice, and strong institutions as one of the main goals. Building on our summary of recent trends in the most important forms of political violence, we now assess the likely development consequences of armed conflict. In doing so, we summarize the recent academic literature on the human, economic, and social costs of conflict and connect the main findings to the most relevant sustainable development goals. We first focus on attempts to quantify the overall economic and development effects of conflict.

In a second step, we more specifically discuss research on the direct human and economic impacts of violence. At its very core, armed conflict kills people and breaks things. Death, displacement, and the destruction of infrastructure immediately affect development outcomes and hamper economic growth. Third, we highlight indirect development impacts. Destroyed or damaged infrastructure impedes economic exchange as well as the effective provision of public goods and services such as clean water, electricity, education, and medical treatment. In addition, conflict alters incentives and norms among political elites and the general population. Government investment typically shifts from much-needed development programs to military spending, whereas violence-related insecurity shortens time horizons, reduces private investment, and leads to capital flight.

Finally, we discuss more long-term social and political effects after conflict has ended. The erosion of trust between former warring partners destroys economic networks and mutually beneficial exchange. Perhaps even more important, increased social and political polarization, exclusionary policies, and generally lower levels of development heighten the risk of conflict recurrence. In all four parts of our discussion, we relate the main findings from the literature to the ongoing civil war in Syria to assess their relevance and plausibility in a recent high-profile case. To foreshadow our conclusions, conflict has pernicious direct, indirect, and legacy effects on a broad range of important development outcomes. Conflict prevention, the resolution of ongoing wars, and post-conflict reconstruction should therefore be an integral part of any sustainable development agenda. Without significant progress on all three fronts, conflict-affected countries will fall even further behind and most, if not all UN development goals will remain unattainable until the target year 2030.

Quantifying the developmental consequences of conflict is difficult, since the relevant no-conflict counterfactual remains unobserved and not all affected development outcomes can be precisely measured. In Appendix 4, we discuss these methodological and data challenges as well as the most commonly employed solutions.

Aggregate development impacts
Overall levels of development are frequently measured and compared in terms of per capita incomes. Most analysts and policymakers agree that sustainable development is a multidimensional concept and requires much more than GDP growth (Sen 1980). Nonetheless, income is a useful "big picture" proxy of the more economic aspects of

development and strongly correlates with other relevant dimensions such as infant mortality, access to medical treatment and education, or the quality of political institutions. As such, analyses of how armed conflict affects per-capita incomes remain a useful, if incomplete, tool to assess the development impacts of violence.

Collier (1999) presents an early estimate of the effect of conflict on income growth. His multivariate regression analysis shows that during the average conflict year, GDP per capita grows 2.2% percent slower than during peacetime. A 15 year-long conflict is thus associated with about 30% lower per-capita incomes. Relying on fixed effects models, Gates, Hegre and Nygård (2012) reach similar conclusions. According to their simulations, five consecutive conflict years with more than 1000 battle deaths reduce per capita incomes by 20% relative to a no-conflict counterfactual, whereas eight additional years of further conflict widen the gap by 5-10%. When it comes to assessing the speed and extent of post-conflict recovery, the analyses in Gates, Hegre and Nygård (2012) show that the negative impact of short wars is reversed after roughly five peaceful years, whereas long wars are associated with a permanent reduction in per capita incomes of about 10% (see Figure 15).
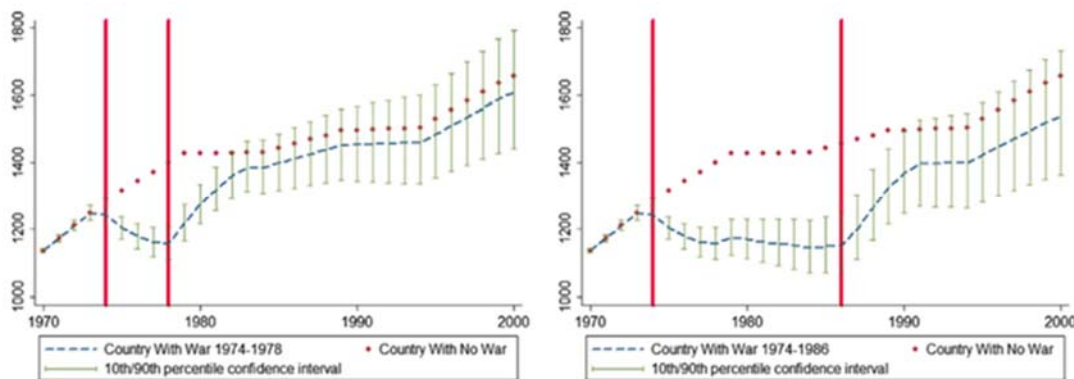
Figure 15. Simulated change in GDP per capita 1970-2000 for conflict and non-conflict country, given short war (1974-1978) and long war (1974-1986).
Source: Gates et al. (2012).

Pioneering the synthetic control method (see Appendix 4), Abadie and Gardezabal (2003) compare the observed growth trajectory of the Basque country during times of secessionist violence and terrorism to a counterfactual without conflict. Their findings suggest that the conflict reduced regional per capita GDP by about 10%. Costalli, Moretti and Pischedda (2017) employ synthetic control modelling to 20 conflict countries. On average, years of ongoing conflict see 17.5% lower per capita incomes than carefully constructed counterfactual peace years.[10] Their analysis also reveals massive heterogeneity across conflicts. Estimates range from a 1.8% average effect in Egypt (1993-1998) to a staggering 74% for the Liberian civil war (1989-1997 and 1999-2003).

Taken together, these analyses provide robust and consistent evidence for large negative income effects of civil war. These findings are directly relevant for SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. The ongoing Syrian war provides a particularly alarming example for the economic development consequences of conflict. Relying on synthetic control estimates,

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[10] See Appendix 5 for a disaggregation of the findings in Costalli, Moretti and Pischedda (2017) by conflict country.

a recent report (World Bank 2017) finds that Syrian GDP in 2016 was about 70% below the no-conflict scenario and 63% lower than in the last pre-conflict year 2010 (see Figure 16). The cumulative income losses between 2011 and 2016 are estimated at USD 226 billion, which is about four times the annual Syrian GDP in 2010. For the ongoing civil war in Yemen, Moyer et al. (2019) calibrate a quantitative forecasting model to estimate several development impacts of conflict. According to their estimates, the intensification of violence since 2014 has up to now almost halved per capita GDP, more than tripled the share of the population in extreme poverty, and has set back the human development index by 21 years.

One concern with these estimates of country-level aggregate impacts relates to the fact that they fail to capture subnational variation in conflict affectedness and development outcomes. As such, they risk to underestimate the impact on the most conflict-affected regions while overestimating the effects on the average community or citizen (Gates, Hegre and Nygård 2012). Recent research frequently uses time-varying satellite imagery of luminosity at night to study more localized development effects of armed conflict and other socio-political processes (see e.g. Michalopulos and Papaionnaou 2013; Rohner, Thoenig and Zilibotti 2013). Remote-sensed night lights have emerged as a useful proxy for local economic well-being, electricity infrastructure, and population densities (Weidmann and Schutte 2017; Min and Gaba 2014).
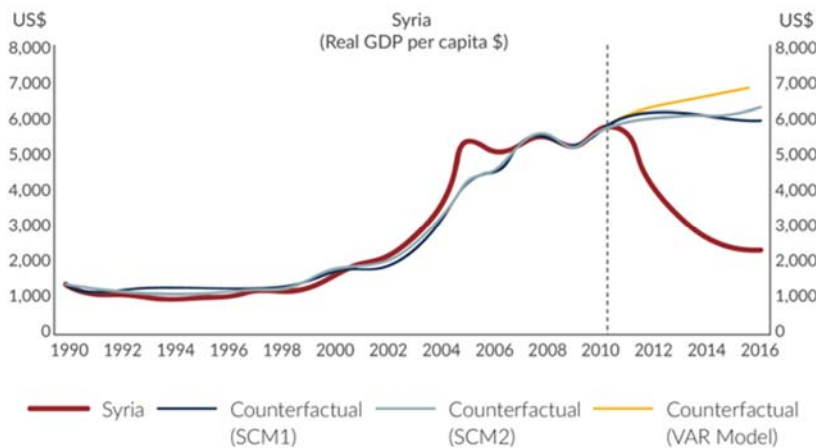
Figure 16. Comparing the counterfactual real GDP per capita by different methodologies with annual estimates.
Source: World Bank (2017).

In Figure 17, we use the latest high-resolution data from the Suomi-NPP satellite to map changes in night lights between 2012 and 2016 (first and last year of available data). The graph shows Syria and its immediate geographic neighborhood. Two observations stand out. First, Syrian luminosity has decreased whereas most places in its peaceful or less conflict-affected neighbors have seen night lights growth. The clearest exceptions are heavily conflict-affected areas in Iraq around Mosul, Kirkuk, and Ramadi. Second, luminosity has decreased across the entire populated territory of Syria along its Western and Northern borders as well as in the Euphrates valley. These widely distributed negative effects reflect a particularly deadly and protracted multi-party conflict that is fought between well-armed government and rebel forces who benefit from significant external support in terms of airstrikes, financing, training, and recruits. In combination, these factors arguably go a long way toward explaining why the aggregate development impacts as estimated by the World

Bank (2017) appear larger than the average effect sizes from the academic literature summarized above.[11]

Other development impacts of conflict
What specific channels are driving the large aggregate development effects of armed conflict? And how does violence shape additional dimensions of broadly conceived sustainable development? In what follows, we outline how violence directly and indirectly affects specific targets of the UN sustainable development goals and discuss more long-term social and political legacies of war that may further complicate progress toward the SDGs.

The loss of life resulting from battlefield action is the perhaps most direct and tragic development impact of armed conflict. As we show above, between 70'000 and 100'000 people were killed in battle each year since 2015. Compared to estimates of deaths from non-political interpersonal violence, these figures may at first appear low (Hoeffler 2017). However, each life lost in armed conflict directly interferes with progress towards SDG 16 and, as we discuss below, conflict tends to kill many more people via its indirect effects than due to immediate combat. Damage to buildings, physical infrastructure, and a country's capital stock constitutes another important consequence of armed combat, directly reducing economic productivity and broader development prospects.
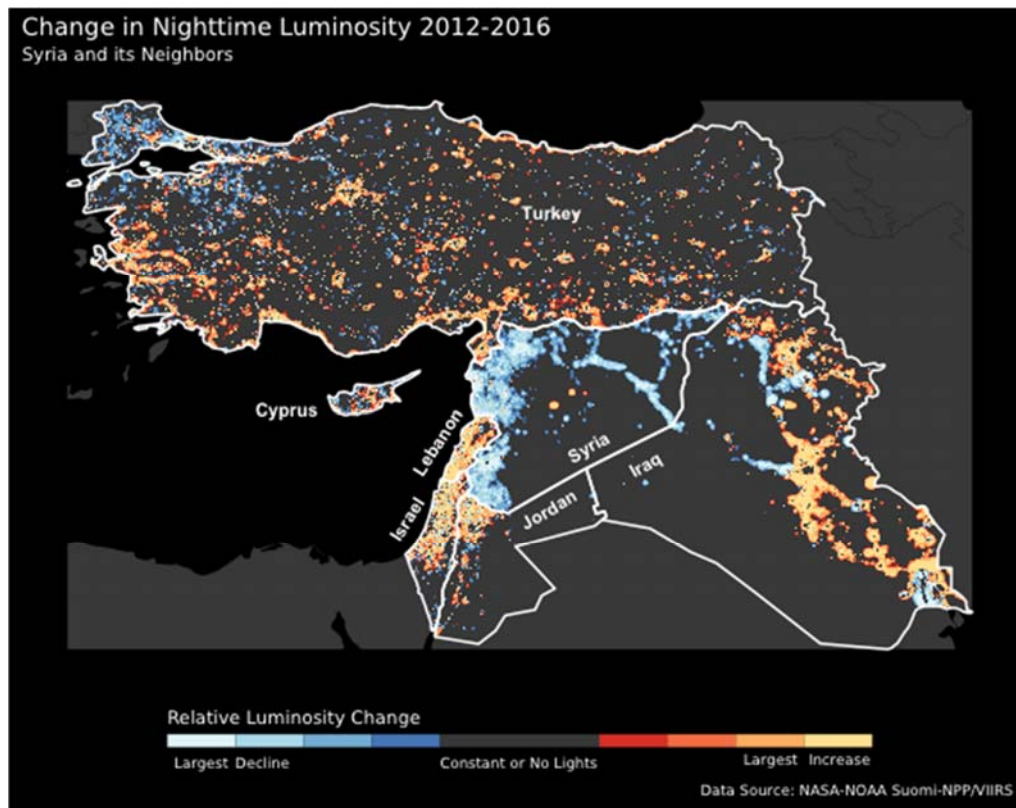
Figure 17. Change in nighttime luminosity 2012-2016. Syria and its neighbors.

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[11] Li et al (2017) conduct a more systematic analysis of urban night light change between 2012 and 2017 across all 14 Syrian provinces. Luminosity drastically decreased in all 14 provinces, but the heaviest losses are recorded for Aleppo, Idlib, Deir-ez-Zor, Daara, and Al-Raqqah.

The kind of infrastructure that is affected determines the impact on specific development goals. According to the World Bank's *Toll of War* report (World Bank 2017), the Syrian conflict has destroyed or damaged 27% of the country's housing stock, 66% of all medical facilities, 63% of schools and other educational facilities, as well as 12 out of 18 power plants. The water and sanitation sector is affected as well. In the cities of Aleppo, Hama, and Idlib, about 60% of all water towers are damaged or destroyed, at least in Aleppo leading to a complete breakdown of the public provision of clean water (Arshad and Aoun 2017). Damage and destruction to these important infrastructures imply direct setbacks for the SDGs related to health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), water and sanitation (SDG 6), energy (SDG 7), and infrastructure (SDG 9).

And yet, the destruction of infrastructure and the associated inability of state and non-state actors to provide public services constitute only part of the picture. Wartime dynamics also shape actors' incentives and willingness to address important development needs. During conflict, public spending typically shifts from public service delivery and development programs to military and other security-related spending. During an average conflict year, the share of military spending in GDP increases by about 30% and higher levels of security expenses typically persist throughout the first decade after conflict has ended (Collier et al., 2003). As a result of shifting spending priorities and the collapsing wartime economy, the Syrian government cut subsidies for fuel and foodstuffs. Between 2011 and 2015, the fuel prices increased tenfold, whereas the prices for sugar and rice more than doubled (World Bank 2017).

Private investment suffers at least as much as public expenditures. The breakdown of order and the associated risks of damage or expropriation crowd out current and future investments. Collier, Hoeffler and Pattillo (2002) estimate that during the average civil war, more than a tenth of the private capital stock leaves the country. Perhaps most importantly, widespread insecurity and the fear of death or injury affect ordinary workers and citizens. Analyzing firm-level data from the Kenyan flower industry, Ksoll, Macchiavello and Morjaria (2016) find that during the most intense episodes of non-state violence around the 2008 elections, more than half of all workers stayed at home, which led to a temporary increase in labor costs by about 70%.

In combination, loss of life, destroyed or damaged infrastructure, reduced public service delivery and private investment, as well as widespread insecurity and fear of violence severely disrupt economic networks, markets, and exchange within conflict-affected countries and across borders. Martin, Thoenig and Mayer (2008) estimate that civil wars reduce international trade by 20% in the first conflict year and up to 50% when conflict lasts longer than 15 years. The physical mobility and security of economic actors as well as communication between them is severely restricted.

Governments' inability or unwillingness to effectively respond to humanitarian and development needs adversely affects progress towards key development targets. Gates et al. (2012) find that civil wars increase malnutrition rates by five to eight percentage points (SDG 2). The share of Syrians in extreme poverty (SDG 1) was estimated at 12.3% in 2007. While reliable data for more recent conflict years is lacking, the World Bank (2017) estimates that this share may have risen to 54 to 67%. As far as public health (SDG 3) is concerned, conflict-affected communities appear to be particularly vulnerable to disease and epidemics (Collier et al. 2003). Cholera outbreaks in South Sudan, Somalia, and the DRC as well as the reemergence of polio in Syria illustrate this pattern (World Health Organization 2015; World

Bank 2017). Deteriorating living conditions and widespread destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure during the ongoing Yemeni conflict contributed to the large-scale spread of Cholera and outbreaks of diphtheria and measles (Moyer et al. 2019). The median civil war with 2500 battle deaths reduces overall life expectancy at birth by one year and is associated with 10% higher infant mortality rates (Gates et al. 2012). Since the onset of hostilities in Syria, life expectancy has declined by 5 years eradicating about three decades of previous progress (World Bank 2017). Against this backdrop, it seems plausible that five to ten times more people die from conflict-related development impacts than from battlefield action (Gleditsch and Lacina 2005; Hoeffler 2017).

Conflict impacts on forced migration
Fear of violence, destruction of houses, collapsing wartime economies and lost access to public services force many people to leave their home and relocate to safer places within conflict countries or abroad. Figure 18 depicts global numbers of cross-border refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) between 1980 and 2017. The recent surge in civil conflict reported in the first part of this paper is clearly matched by a drastic surge in flight and displacement since the year 2010. These aggregate figures do not allow any firm conclusions about the share of refugees and IDPs that is directly attributable to conflict relative to other causes such as natural disasters or repression and discrimination outside of civil conflict episodes.
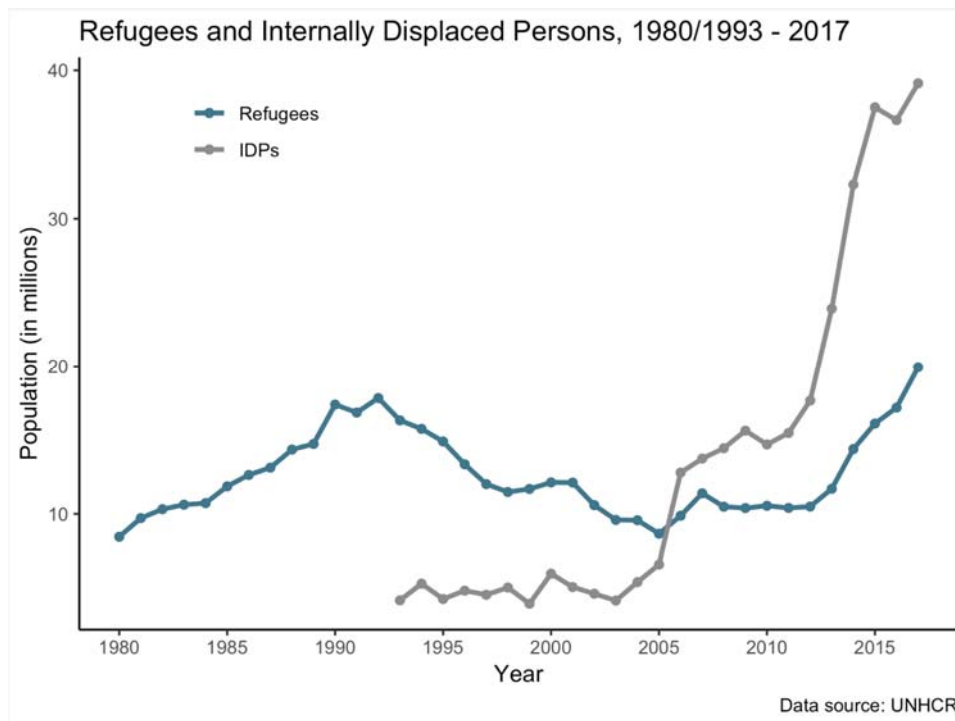
Figure 18. Refugee flows between and within countries.

However, a closer look at the recent high-profile cases of Syria and Myanmar suggests that large-scale population movements closely track patterns of civil conflict, non-state, and state-sponsored violence against civilians. Figures 19 and 20 show trends in refugee and IDP numbers for both countries.

More than half of Syria's pre-war population has been internally displaced (6.1 millions) or left the country (6.3 millions) as of 2017. The most intense period of fighting between 2013 and 2014 has seen the sharpest increases in forced migration. Since then, overall numbers have grown at slower rates. At the same time, the composition between IDPs and cross-border refugees has shifted towards the latter. In the early stages of the conflict, most people were displaced inside Syria. In recent years, more and more Syrians fled the country. Most Syrian refugees went to neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. However, the share of refugees fleeing to other, mainly European countries is increasing. The large-scale demographic displacement further disrupts economic activity and development. Model-based estimates from a recent World Bank report (2017) suggest that casualties and migration alone account for about 5% of the cumulative conflict-related GDP losses. In addition, refugees and IDPs are perhaps the most vulnerable subpopulation with respect to conflict-related effects on malnutrition, disease, education, and employment (see e.g. Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2013).
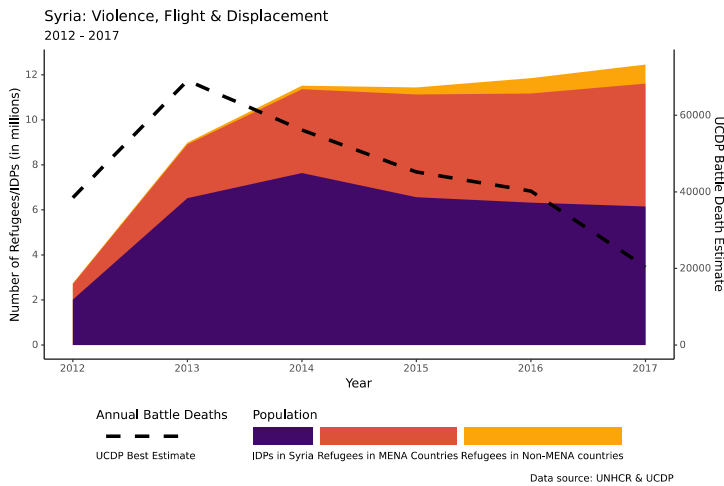
Figure 19. Political violence and refugee flows in Syria, 2012-2017.
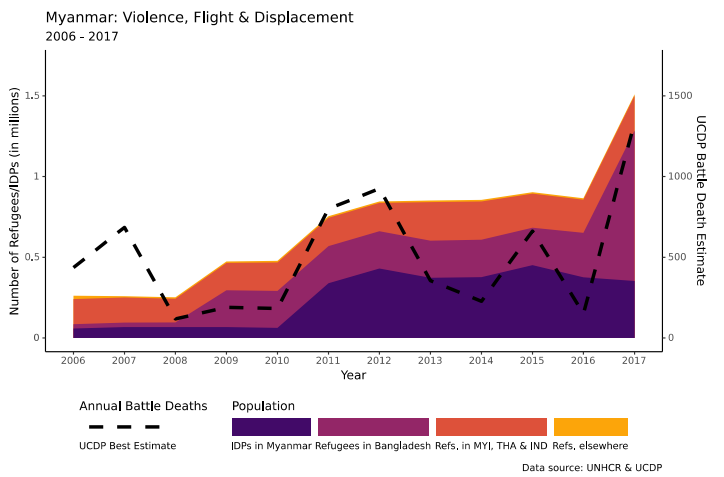
Figure 20. Political violence and refugees in Myanmar, 2006-2017.

Figure 20 illustrates "forceigration" trends for Myanmar which has recently come under scrutiny for the government's scandalous treatment of the Rohingya people and other Muslim minority groups. Unfortunately, the UNHCR figures are not disaggregated with respect to religion or ethnicity. Nonetheless, the state-sponsored campaigns of expulsion, killing, and ethnic cleansing that started in summer 2017 are clearly associated with a sharp increase in refugees from Myanmar, especially to Bangladesh. A somewhat less pronounced increase is visible in 2012, when large-scale communal violence between Buddhists and Rohingya in Rakhine state broke out. The first surge after 2008 most probably reflects the combined impact of cyclone Nargis, the military crackdown on the Saffron revolution, as well as ongoing ethnic conflict in Myanmar's peripheral regions.

Due to ongoing conflict in Syria and Myanmar's obvious unwillingness to protect its Rohingya population, the prospects for a soon and safe return of refugees and IDPs are bleak in both cases. Their fate will, to a large extent, depend on the response of home communities, host countries, and the international humanitarian community.

Social and political effects
On top of these effects, conflict-related damage to less tangible forms of social and political capital seems at least as important. In stark contrast to economic recessions or natural disasters, civil war fundamentally transforms political institutions, social norms, and identities (Wood 2008). Civil war leads to a militarization of individual life trajectories as well as local and national-level governance modes. Soldiers and rebel combatants are socialized in their fighting units rather than in school, within their families, or civilian peer groups (Wood 2008). As a result, they develop conflict-specific skills and capital that may be difficult to put to productive use once conflict has ended. As such, they remain attractive recruits for illicit economic and conflict actors in post-conflict settings and neighboring countries. While targeted job training, capital inputs, and counselling may effectively reduce these individual-level conflict legacies, a comprehensive rollout of such interventions likely comes at considerable cost (Blattman and Annan 2016).

At the level of villages and local communities, military, paramilitary, and rebel elites often replace civilian leaders or traditional governance structures (Wood 2008). While a recent literature on rebel governance highlights significant variation between actors when it comes to patterns of civilian abuse, public service delivery, and extractiveness of rule, the upshot is mostly increasingly violent and less accountable governance (Mampilly 2011, Arjona 2016, Stewart 2018; Wood 2008).

Perhaps most importantly, civil conflict is associated with political mobilization along conflict lines, a hardening of social and political identities, and dwindling potential for compromise between current and former warring parties. Recent micro-level studies in post-conflict settings have found that exposure to violence increases pro-social behavior and capacity for collective action (Bellows & Miguel, 2009; Blattman, 2009; Voors et al., 2012; Gilligan et al., 2014; Gonzalez & Miguel, 2015). However, these effects seem to reflect an increase in ``parochial altruism'' in that they are limited to members of the local community or the own social group (Bauer et al. 2016). Trust and cooperation across ethnic, religious, or other social dividing lines often declines during conflict and remains low long after conflict has ended (Grosjean 2014; De Juan and Pierskalla 2016; Beber, Roessler and Scacco 2014). Rohner, Thoenig and Zilibotti (2013) find that Ugandan communities most heavily affected by a plausibly exogenous surge in violence show lower levels of social trust and report more salient ethnic identities. Rozenas, Zhukov and Schutte (2017) report that spatial variation in

Soviet-led one-sided violence and deportation in 1940s Ukraine predicts contemporary anti-Russian voting.

Heightened social and political polarization and institutional erosion increase the risk of conflict recurrence and further reduce development prospects. Where wartime cleavages and identities persist into the post-conflict period, inequality-reducing and inclusive policies are harder to achieve. Beyond their role as important development target in their own right, such policies are essential in preventing the onset and recurrence of civil conflict. Counteracting these negative social and political effects seems crucial to break vicious cycles of violence and conflict traps. In addition, trust, social capital and inclusive political norms and institutions are important accelerators of post-conflict reconstruction. Where formal and informal mechanisms of dispute resolution, contract enforcement, and inter-ethnic trade collapse, economic recovery after conflict will take longer or remain permanently out of reach. Ethnically or religiously divided societies are particularly vulnerable to these legacy effects. Costalli, Moretti and Pischedda (2017) show that the GDP losses due to conflict are especially high in ethnically fractionalized countries and attribute this effect to disruptions to inter-ethnic cooperation and trade.[12] In a similar vein, Rohner, Thoenig and Zilibotti (2013) only find negative effects of violence on nighttime luminosity in ethnically diverse Ugandan districts.

The dramatic migration response to recent armed conflict as well as responses in host countries may export some of these effects to other countries. Where nationalist politicians or populists portray migrants as unwelcome strangers or, worse, as security threat, the already precarious situation of forced migrants deteriorates. Unfortunately, such tendencies are already evident in European responses to Syrian refugee flows (Dinas et al. 2019; Hangartner et al. 2019; Becker and Fetzer 2017). Similarly, the BJP-led Indian government embraces an increasingly Hindu nationalist agenda and has visibly hardened its stance towards Rohingya and other Muslim refugees from Myanmar (Yhome, 2018).

Assessing the importance of these social and political effects of conflicts relative to direct loss of life, displacement, and damaged infrastructure is difficult. However, the World Bank (2017) attributes only 10 percent of the total economic loss of the Syrian civil war to the destruction of physical capital, casualties, and migration. The remainder is likely due to disrupted social and economic networks, local and national-level political institutions, as well as altered norms and incentives. More importantly, however, social trust, norms of compromise, and political institutions are much harder to rebuild than physical capital once conflict has ended. Political hardliners, ethnic nationalists or religious fundamentalists ruthlessly exploit the legacies and memories of past conflict. Counteracting polarization, radicalism, and exclusionary tendencies in post-conflict societies should therefore be a priority in reconstruction efforts and broader development policy.

Conclusion
Armed conflict not only directly interferes with SDG 16, it negatively affects key targets of the entire UN sustainable development agenda. Beyond killing people, destroying infrastructure, and directly impeding the provision of key public services, political violence has pernicious indirect effects. These relate to shifting incentives for public spending and private investment, fear of violence and large-scale population displacement, as well as hard-

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[12] See Appendix 5 for case-specific ethnic fractionalization scores and estimated GDP impacts provided by Costalli, Moretti and Pischedda (2017)..

to-reverse damage to the social and political fabric of societies. As a result, conflict itself contributes to poverty, deep inequalities, and polarized political identities that bear the risk of further violence. Development policy should double down on efforts to avoid this vicious cycle in the first place or break it once violence has started. Prevention, conflict resolution, and effective post-conflict reconciliation, reform, and reconstruction are needed to secure progress toward the UN's sustainable development goals. In what follows, we outline specific scenarios and policy recommendations along these lines.

4. Future scenarios

In this section, we shift the focus from an analysis of past events to an assessment of future scenarios. The temporal scope covers the period until 2030. For this reason, we provide mostly qualitative speculation about possible future trajectories, supplemented with preliminary quantitative forecasts. We caution that probability estimates of conflict processes over such a long time span are associated with high uncertainty.

In fact, all types of large-scale political violence are low probability events that depend critically on historical contingency and massive complexity that become especially pronounced during periods of geopolitical upheaval (Cederman and Weidmann 2017, Bowlsby et al. 2019). Arguably, given the weakening of the U.S.-dominated world order and the possible shift to a multipolar system, the world is currently undergoing such a period of transformation (Malley 2018). For this reason, scenarios communicate a more open-ended, but potentially more fruitful information about the future than does long-term forecasting of specific cases, which risks conveying a sense of misplaced, narrow precision.

The previous analysis shows that armed conflict significantly impacts human wellbeing either directly (see SDG 16) or more indirectly via different channels (see SDGs 1-9). We start by considering the threat of ethnic civil conflict before turning to non-ethnic civil conflict. The section ends with suggestive analysis regarding future interstate conflict.

Future scenarios of ethnic civil conflict
One of the most surprising findings from the trend analysis in Section 2 is that ethnic civil conflict—despite the surge of civil conflict—has continued to decline as originally anticipated by Gurr (2000). We recorded a slow, steady decrease of in the number of internal conflict along ethnic lines since the mid-1990s.[13] To a large extent, this trend appears to be driven by inclusive policies and institutions together with international engagement (Cederman, Gleditsch and Wucherpfennig 2017). Should this liberal regime continue to operate, we expect a steady decline of discrimination and exclusion over time.

Yet, if there is a reversal weakening the liberal regime, the scenario could turn more violent relatively quickly (Cederman 2019). Unfortunately, there are some signals of such a deterioration. Recently-rising ethnic nationalism could bring about such a turn of events. At this point, researchers have found only a few indications that point toward an erosion of the liberal world order, and even less conflict data to base this scenario on. If the analysis of the previous sections is correct, however, the future may well bring a disruption of the peaceful

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[13] As noted in Section 1, the intensity of ethnic conflict measured in terms of battle deaths has described a surge in recent years, mostly due to the Syrian civil war.

trend in ethnic civil conflict and possibly even a renewed increase of this type of political violence.

More than anything else, the political shocks of the British voters' decision to leave the European Union (Brexit) and the U.S. presidential election of 2016 mark an acceleration of the shift toward illiberal politics. Yet ethnic nationalism as expressed by various populist parties has been on the rise during the past decade (Mudde 2016). Today, right-wing populist parties that subscribe to ethnic nationalism have gained power in several countries, including Austria, Hungary, Italy, Norway and Poland, to name a few. Beyond the West, the wave of ethnic nationalism and populism has spread to Russia, Turkey, India, the Philippines, and Brazil among others.

In what were until recently viewed as promising emerging democracies, the governing ideology has become defined in narrowly ethnic terms. Ethnic nationalists thus have more leeway to repress ethnic minorities. It may be the case that ethnic nationalism today exerts more influence than it ever did since World War II. Rather than gradually eroding, the liberal world order could experience a much more swift decline. One of the crucial factors is that the shift toward ethnic nationalism has not only occurred in democratizing countries with a less established history of democracy and inclusive politics, but now also applies to some of the most established and powerful democracies. The United States, in particular, took the lead in creating the current world order in 1945 as a way to prevent nationalist excesses that were blamed for the geopolitical chaos of the interwar period and World War II. Yet, the current U.S. administration has explicitly distanced itself from the founding principles of the postwar regime by repudiating multilateralism in favor of unilateral actions or bilateral negotiations. A weakened European Union preoccupied with internal problems has struggled to act as a counterweight to this radical and sudden change of course.

Beyond the Western core of the liberal regime, there has been a diffusion of ethnic nationalism. Whereas the post-Cold War period began with global and regional diffusion of liberal democracy (Gleditsch and Ward 2006) and inclusive practices (Cederman, Gleditsch and Wucherpfennig 2018), there are now signs that illiberal policies are diffusing more rapidly. Such a pattern is evident in Eastern Europe, where a wave of exclusionary policies are targeting ethnic minorities. Even more recently, ethnic nationalists in Europe have renewed their attempts to form an international alliance targeting supranationalist governance and liberal inclusive policies more generally (New York Times 2019). The important fact to note, then, is that diffusion of governmental norms and practices can be reversed to operate in an illiberal direction that accelerates the erosion of the current world order.

Rather than applying consistent pressure on leaders around the world to democratize while refraining from discrimination and repression, the current US government appears to be indifferent to many of its allied governments' harsh treatment of their minorities. Its indifference to democratic governance and human rights has given authoritarian leaders much more leeway to repress their internal critics and minority groups. However, several democratic countries have also toughened their approach to ethnic minorities, as evidenced by Israel's adoption of the "Nation state law" in the summer of 2018.

To render the scenarios more concrete, we rely on a model to generate future trajectories until 2030 (see Figure 21). The model is derived directly from the framework introduced in Section 2 above (see Cederman, Gleditsch and Wucherpfennig 2017). As displayed in Figure 18, we estimate the model based on the post-Cold War period from 1990 until 2017 while

varying three dimensions: number of excluded and discriminated groups, number of democracies, and level of peacekeeping. In the "status quo" scenario, we leave all these three dimensions at their current levels.

To capture a continued trend characterized by declining ethnic conflict since the early 1990s, we also present an optimistic scenario that features a further reduction of the number of excluded groups worldwide by 6% by 2030 compared to the level in 2017. In this scenario we also assume that one country per year switches from autocracy to democracy. In terms of peacekeeping, we assume a slight increase in the absolute number of operations, from 15 operations in our sample in 2017 to 17 operations on average in 2030. With the declining trend in the average number of conflicts, this scenario simulates a more active role of the international community in conflict resolution.

Finally, the pessimistic scenario simulates a reversal of the liberal world order back to the situation at the end of the Cold War. In this case, we reverse the progress in terms of inclusion by introducing 6% more excluded groups than in 2017. We also model a "democratic backlash" that features a reversal of 26 of the 31 countries that democratized since 1990. Moreover, this scenario simulates a decline in the number of peacekeeping missions from 15 to an average of 8.
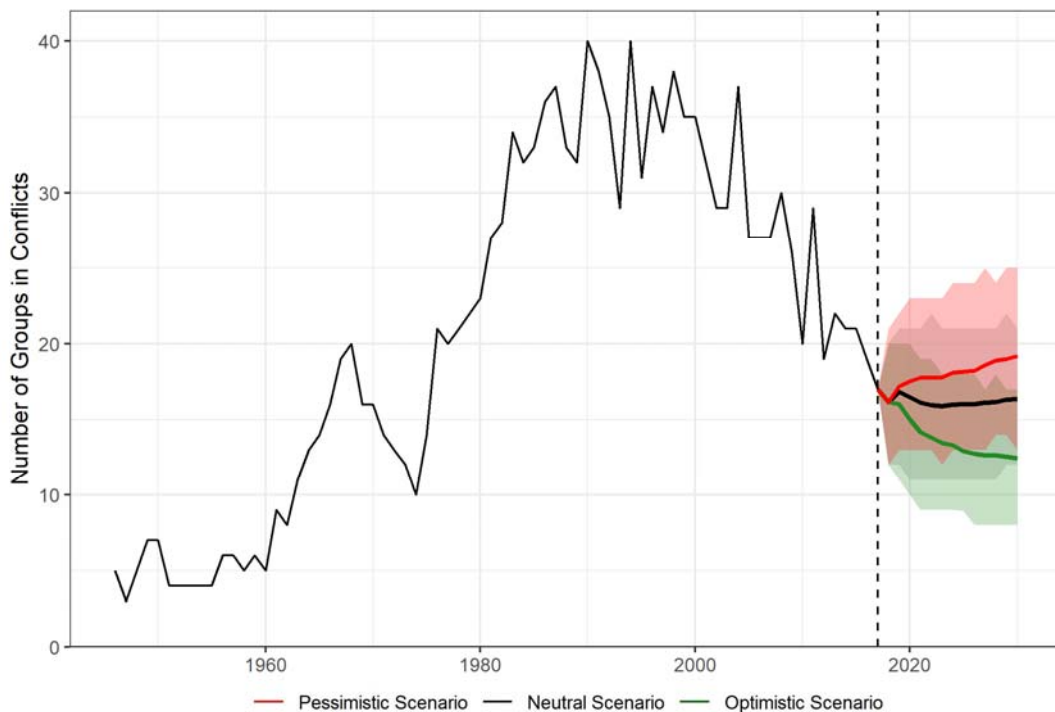
Figure 21. Three projections of ethnic civil conflict from 2018 to 2030 under three different scenarios.

With these different assumptions, we get a difference of around seven groups in conflict by 2030 between the pessimistic and optimistic scenarios. As indicated, these simulations spanning 13 years come with a considerable amount of uncertainty and rest on several assumptions. For example, while we model both the onset and ending of conflicts, we do not attempt to capture the change of units in the system, for example through secession or other

types of border change. Second, it is possible that major geopolitical events, such as interstate warfare, might occur (see below). In the current configuration, we do not attempt to trace conflict diffusion between countries. However, it is well known that civil conflicts sometimes diffuse from one country to another, especially in unstable regions (see e.g. Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008). Thus, the models that consider such realistic mechanisms could well generate a more dramatic difference between the optimistic and pessimistic scenarios. Despite these caveats, we conclude that changes in inclusive policies and practices together with variation in the commitment of the international community toward intervention make a real difference in terms of conflict levels by 2030.

Future scenarios of non-ethnic conflict
What can be said about future trends of non-ethnic conflict? As we have argued above, in recent years, these instances of political violence have been mostly driven by Islamist extremist groups. The section on conflict trends shows that, since the early 2010s, the Islamic State has been responsible for most of the new outbreaks of internal conflict.[14]

Given the recency and suddenness of the rise and decline of the Islamic State, it is arguably harder to accurately model future scenarios involving non-ethnic conflicts than ethnic ones. The territorial hold of the Islamic State has been crushed, at least in the form of the self-proclaimed caliphate in Syria and Iraq (Callimachi 2019). However, there are several other insurgencies that involve Islamist rebels fighting in the name of the Islamic State, including rebellion in Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, the Sahel Region and Somalia (Pavlik 2019). It can be assumed that many of these groups will continue to fight despite the collapse of the caliphate, potentially under a different label. Nevertheless, the fall of the caliphate represents a major setback for the Islamic State viewed as a diffuse wave of loosely interconnected rebellions.[15]

The most pessimistic scenario emphasizes that there is still a very large number of committed fighters who will outlive the collapse of the Islamic State's core area in the Middle East. For example, a report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) cautions that various radical Islamist groups continue to pose a direct threat to the West (Jones et al. 2018). According to their analysis, the number of jihadist fighters worldwide is as high as 230,000, which represents a fourfold increase since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in 2001. Coming to similar conclusions about an alarmingly increasing trend in radical Islamism, Svensson and Nilsson (2018) present new data on the link between religion and conflict that indicate that the number of religious internal conflicts has surpassed that of the non-religious ones in recent years. Again, this trend is mostly due to the surge of transnational Islamist claims. These and several other authors argue that there is something inherent about religion as opposed to other types of claims that increases the risk and intensity of conflict (e.g. Brubaker 2015; Toft and Zhukov 2015). In practical terms, Jones et al. (2018) argue that radical Islamists will be able to exploit rapid improvements of new, relatively cheap technology, including armed drones and social media. Furthermore, it is possible that the network will profit from a possible withdrawal of Western troops (Ibid.). These arguments

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[14] At the same time, it should be recalled that the political violence caused by the Islamic State has not only been of non-ethnic nature. Indeed, in several cases, including Syria and Iraq, it has also opportunistically exploited ethnic cleavages. Below we will return to the interaction between ethnic and non-ethnic violence.
[15] In the case of terrorist attacks, there is also the category of "copycat" actions by individuals who may be inspired by the Islamic State. The collapse of the caliphate can be expected to reduce the frequency of such attacks. However, this section covers conflict rather than one-sided violence.

generate a pessimistic scenario characterized by jihadist organizational resilience that will continue to cause considerable conflict for years to come.

A somewhat more optimistic scenario recognizes that the Islamic State has been seriously weakened and thus much less attractive as a model of recruitment and struggle. Furthermore, the loss of its territorial footing has dealt a severe blow to the organization. While this does not imply that it has been uprooted or that new extremist successor organizations could not emerge, the decline in intensity signals that the spike in conflict in recent years could well subside, very much as previous, wave-like outbursts of conflict have come and gone since the end of World War II. It is thus not entirely farfetched to imagine a scenario that contains a rapid decline of non-ethnic conflict.

Focusing on the threat posed by Islamist terrorism to the West, Heller (2018) criticizes the aforementioned report by Jones et al. (2018) for exaggerating the extent to which the Islamic State is a unified organization. In this sense, there is probably less to "global jihad" than "local jihad." However, this reassessment recognizes that, while the direct terrorist threat to the West may decline, there is still plenty of room for political violence and thus future onsets, but it will mostly concern Islamic extremists' opportunistic attempts to exploit existing grievances in non-Western countries. In this very sense, Al Qaeda, and more recently the Islamic State, have profited from the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and other Western interventions, as well as their chaotic aftermaths.

The optimistic scenario is further undermined by the profound and lasting instability of the entire MENA region that resembles an "institutional instability trap" (Levitsky and Murillo 2009), which emerges in cases where lack of institutional stability discourages political actors from investing in lasting and stable institutions, which in turn further destabilizes the institutional setup. This lack of trust makes it even harder for democracy and inclusive policies to take root. Indeed, this is the world region that suffers from the lowest rates of democracy and power sharing, whether territorial or governmental (Vogt, Bormann and Cederman 2016). The aftermath of the Arab Spring has shown that while the thirst for democratic governance is great, the region's states have so far failed to respond to such desires, with widespread violence and/or reasserted authoritarian rule as the more likely outcomes. The backlash has largely failed to produce truly stable authoritarian regimes, as illustrated by the revolts in Algeria and Sudan that occurred in the spring of 2019. While these new developments could usher in more inclusive regimes, they also increase the risk of political violence.

As we have seen in the previous section, the institutional instability trap is further compounded by the legacy of violence, which has also been plentiful in terms of full-blown civil war, non-state conflict and one-sided violence. All these dynamics make it unlikely that the region will experience any important decline in political violence within the foreseeable future, and will thus stand in the way of a general pacification of the world (see e.g. Pinker 2011).

Within the MENA region, but also more generally, the interconnectedness of ethnic and non-ethnic political violence contributes to keeping the rate of conflict high. In particular, radical Islamism thrives where wide-spread grievances have not been successfully redressed by previous challenges to the regimes. In many cases, as illustrated by the Palestinian resistance movements, opposition activists start by expressing their grievances along primarily secular, ethno-nationalist lines, complaining about political and economic exclusion and

discrimination. The same shift can be observed in the case of the Islamic State (Juergensmeyer 2018). To the extent the governing elite is irresponsive, and possibly even repressive in its response, extreme Islamists are in a good position to exploit longstanding frustrations to promote their own transnational projects. Their chances of success increase to the extent they are able to offer public goods to the population, including social and educational services. While the Algerian and Sudanese revolts give some hope that democratization and more openness could be on offer, at the moment of writing, the outcome is wide open. Furthermore, the other regimes in the region appear to become more illiberal or remain solidly authoritarian.[16]

Scenarios of interstate conflict
Beyond political violence erupting within countries, we also need to consider scenarios beyond countries' borders. Given the very low frequency of interstate conflict after the end of the Cold War, our analysis of trends in the first section of this report does not elaborate extensively on this type of conflict. For the same reason, quantitative projections of conflict risk are particularly tricky in this domain.

Nevertheless, while interstate conflict has almost gone extinct, fresh outbreaks of this type of political violence cannot be entirely excluded. In fact, the decline of multilateralism and the simultaneous rise in ethnic nationalism pose a series of risks that could trigger disputes, and possibly even large-scale war. The "my-country-first" formula increasingly adopted by populist politicians around the world may curry domestic support but may also inspire more aggressive foreign policies that hurt international stability (Snyder 2000). There are some indications that ethnic nationalism and ethno-political inequality are associated with more interstate disputes (see e.g. Caprioli and Trumbore 2003).

Against this backdrop, a number of conflict scenarios could be proposed:

First, irredentist policies will become more likely in places where state borders intersect with ethnic boundaries. In particular, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, together with its support for Russian rebels in the eastern part of Ukraine, show that revisionist interstate disputes are not a thing of the past. Further reinforcing this point, the increased tension along the Indo-Pakistani border in the spring of 2019 renews attention to the disputed Kashmir region.

Second, the MENA region remains a tinderbox that could give rise not only to more internal conflict, but also to interstate conflict. The prospect of a larger conflict pitting Iran against Israel and Saudi Arabia is of particular concern. Within this context, the internationalized civil war in Yemen can be seen as proxy warfare fought along sectarian lines, with Iran supporting the Shiite Houthi rebels in their fight against the Sunni Saudi-led coalition. Yet following the brutal murder of Saudi journalist Khashoggi, a U.S. permanent resident, Western governments' support for Saudi military operations in Yemen has been declining. Even so, a regional military conflict with Iran cannot be entirely ruled out, especially if the United States does not work to prevent such action.

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[16] Whereas a large number of recent onsets of civil conflict are due to the Islamic state, it would be a mistake to think that extremist ideology is an exclusively Islamist phenomenon. In fact, there are also several cases of Christian, Hindu and Buddhist extremism that have produced political violence in the past, and would be able to do so in the future. For example, our discussion of one-sided violence in Myanmar in the previous section illustrates that there are cases where Muslim minorities are victimized by Buddhist majorities.

Third, the relations between the United States and China have become increasingly tense, not only because of the ongoing trade war, but also because of geopolitical competition in the South China Sea. We express caution over rising Sino-American tensions related to trade policy, competing views of the appropriate role of the state in national economies, and influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Fourth, we caution risk relating to the use of nuclear weapons by state actors. The government of the United States has started renouncing previous measures of arms control, including the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty in Europe. This could lead to a dangerous nuclear arms race that would pit the United States against both Russia and/or China. The conflict between less developed nuclear powers, such as India and Pakistan, is also a cause of concern, not the least because of the geographic proximity undermining nuclear crisis stability.

Perhaps the most worrying tendency is the gradual erosion of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This development increases the risk of first use of nuclear weapons: as norms of treaty compliance weaken, aspiring nuclear powers such as North Korea and Iran have an incentive to build up such arsenals. At the same time, incumbent regional powers may have an incentive to engage in preemptive action against newer nuclear powers. Unfortunately, the U.S. exit from the Iranian nuclear agreement and uncertainty over ongoing North Korea negotiations reduce the room for de-escalatory diplomacy.

5. Conclusions for policy making

To conclude, we offer a set policy recommendations that can be derived from our analysis. We draw the following conclusions for policy making:

First, it is important to recognize that the recent increase in armed conflict masks a continued decline of ethnic civil conflict. In this sense, our trend analysis differs from the more pessimistic picture painted by the *Pathways for Peace* report (World Bank and United Nations 2018). Given the continued importance of this category of political violence, this is a positive development. Therefore, the priority has to be to maintain, and possibly even accelerate, this beneficial downward trend. The main way to sustain the decline of ethnic conflict centers on mechanisms relating to equality among ethnic groups, including the granting of group rights, governmental and territorial power sharing, democracy and international efforts, including peacekeeping. While measures promoting economic development and state capacity also help reduce conflict, progress toward pacification will not be effective without addressing issues relating to equality and justice. In these respects, our analysis is fully in line with the conclusions of the *Pathway for Peace* report. Apart from contributing to pacification, inclusive governance is an end itself, as stipulated by SDG 10.

Second, and more ominously, however, the very mechanisms and institutions that are responsible for the decline of ethnic civil conflict are currently threatened by a surge of populist ethno-nationalism, which targets tolerance and inclusive policies toward ethnic minorities while at the same time opposing multilateral measures across the board. Should this political trend continue to entrench itself, it may well threaten the accommodative regime that has brought about the reduction of ethnic civil conflict in the first place. The recommendation in this case would be to do whatever is possible to minimize the pernicious influence of ethnic nationalism by strengthening actors opposing such a development and

who speak out in favor of tolerance. For example, publishing stories involving migrants who have integrated successfully could constitute a counterweight to frequent media accounts of migrants having committed crimes.

Third, there has been a worrying surge of non-ethnic conflict that appears to be related to extremist Islamist movements. While there is some hope that the increased activity of religiously motivated rebel organizations and terrorist cells will decline after the collapse of the Islamic State's caliphate in early 2019, the future is very uncertain. This is partly due to the amorphous and multi-faceted motives of jihadist groups of this type. Because the Islamic State and its offshoots have tended to exploit ethno-sectarian cleavages within its Sunni heartland, the emphasis on ethnic equality can be expected to help prevent further opportunistic mobilization. Furthermore, the radical Islamists have managed to provoke fierce resistance to Islam as a whole among populist politicians even in established democracies, some of whom hold power. While anti-terrorist defenses are obviously justified, an all-out hate campaign targeting Muslims across the board, partly for electoral reasons, seriously threatens the cohesion of Western states. Rising intolerance toward Muslims may also increase Islamist extremism and violence worldwide. Our main recommendation is to support interventions that reduce discriminatory and inflammatory discourse and policies in order to reduce polarization along religious lines.[17]

Fourth, this report lends support to the United Nation's new emphasis on prevention. In line with the conclusions of the *Pathway for Peace* report, our analysis of consequences of political violence indicates that the best way of minimizing suffering is through preventive measures. Going well beyond direct death and physical destruction, such consequences involve devastating long-term damage to social networks, human capital and trust in institutions that reinforce each other in powerful ways through perpetuation of violence and out-migration. The MENA region shows how such a negative equilibrium can be very difficult to overcome. Indeed, most of the countries in this region exhibit high levels of inequality and conflict together with disappointing economic growth and meddling by self-interested regional and external powers. It would seem impossible that this region will see lasting progress toward peace without external pressure on the region's states, giving them incentives to opt for more inclusive policies and institutions. If enacted before violence breaks out, such measures could contribute to keeping the peace in less violent regions of the world.

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[17] Clearly more research is needed to design such policies (see e.g. Sharma 2019; Scacco and Warren 2018 for two recent studies).

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Appendix 1
Overview | Armed Conflict 2000 - 2017
Data source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Side A	Side B	First Year in Conflict	Last Active Year	Years in Conflict (Total)	Cumulative Battle Deaths
Gov. of Syria	Military faction (forces loyal to Nureddin Atassi and Youssef Zeayen), Muslim Brotherhood, Syrian insurgents	1966	2017	12	233084
Gov. of Afghanistan	PDPA, Jam'iyyat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami-yi Afghanistan , Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan - Khalis faction, Jabha-yi Nijat-i Milli-yi Afghanistan , Jam'iyyat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Mahaz-i Milli-yi Islami-yi Afghanistan , Ittihad-i Islami Bara-yi Azadi-yi Afghanistan , Harakat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, Hizb-i Wahdat, Military faction (forces of Shahnawaz Tanay), Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami, Taleban, UIFSA, UIFSA, Taleban	1978	2017	40	178131
Gov. of Iraq	Military faction (free Officers Movement), Military faction (forces of Abdul Wahab al-Shawaf), Military faction (forces of Abd as-Salam Arif), NCRC, SCIRI, al-Mahdi Army, Ansar al-Islam, IS, Ansar al-Islam, RJF, IS	1958	2017	27	72216
Gov. of Sudan	Sudanese Communist Party, National Front, SPLM/A, NDA, SPLM/A, JEM, SLM/A, SLM/A, NRF, SLM/A - MM, SLM/A-Unity, SSDM/A, SPLM/A-North, SRF, SSLM/A, SRF, Darfur Joint Resistance Forces, SARC, SARC	1971	2017	37	49039
Gov. of Syria	IS	2013	2017	5	37188
Gov. of Somalia	SSDF, SNM, SSDF, SPM, USC/SSA, USC/SNA, USC/SNA, SRRC, ARS/UIC, Al-Shabaab, ARS/UIC, Hizbul Islam	1982	2017	28	32033
Gov. of Turkey	PKK	1984	2017	33	29217
Gov. of Pakistan	MQM, TTP, Lashkar-e-Islam, TTP, TTP - TA, IMU, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Lashkar-e-Islam	1990	2017	15	28590

Gov. of DR Congo (Zaire)	CNL, Military Faction (Forces of Jean Schramme), FLNC, AFDL, MLC, RCD, RCD, CNDP, CNPSC (Yakutumba), M23, APCLS, Forces of Paul Joseph Mukungubila, CNPSC (Yakutumba), Kamuina Nsapu, CMC, Kamuina Nsapu, MNR	1964	2017	20	18888
Gov. of Algeria	Takfir wa'l Hijra, AIS, GIA, GIA, AQIM, MUJAO	1991	2017	27	18822
Gov. of India	Kashmir insurgents	1990	2017	28	17652
Gov. of Yemen (North Yemen)	Opposition coalition, Royalists, NDF, AQAP, Ansarallah, AQAP, Forces of Hadi, Forces of Hadi	1948	2017	23	17387
Gov. of Uganda	Military faction (forces of Idi Amin), Kikosi Maalum, Military faction (forces of Charles Arube), Fronasa, Kikosi Maalum, UNLF, FUNA, NRA, UNRF, NRA, UFM, HSM, UPDA, UPA, Lord's Army, LRA, LRA, UPA, ADF, WNBF, UNRF II	1971	2017	40	13322
Gov. of Nigeria	Military faction (forces of Patrick Nzeogwu), Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad	1966	2017	9	11876
Gov. of Philippines	Huk, CPP, Military faction (forces of Honasan, Abenina & Zumel)	1946	2017	56	7948
Gov. of Philippines	MIM, MNLF, ASG, MILF, MNLF - NM, MNLF - HM, BIFM, al-Harakat al-Islamiyah, ASG, Maute group	1970	2017	46	7886
Gov. of India	CPI, CPI-ML, PWG, MCC, PWG, CPI-ML-J, MCC, CPI-Maoist	1948	2017	33	6022
Gov. of Afghanistan	IS	2015	2017	3	5590
Gov. of United States of America	al-Qaida	2001	2017	17	5336
Gov. of Azerbaijan	Republic of Artsakh	1991	2017	13	5318
Gov. of Nigeria	IS	2015	2017	3	5004
Gov. of South Sudan	SSDM/A, SSLM/A, SSLM/A, SPLM/A In Opposition, SSDM/A - Cobra Faction	2011	2017	7	4639
Gov. of Ukraine	United Armed Forces of Novorossiya, DPR, LPR, United Armed Forces of Novorossiya	2014	2017	4	3526

Gov. of Libya	Forces of Muammar Gaddafi, NTC, Forces of the House of Representatives, Zintan Military Council, Forces of Khalifa al-Ghawil, Forces of the House of Representatives, PFLL	2011	2017	4	2716
Gov. of Libya	IS	2015	2017	3	1892
Gov. of Turkey	IS	2015	2017	3	1834
Gov. of Thailand	Patani insurgents	2003	2017	15	1823
Gov. of India	Gov. of Pakistan	1948	2017	22	1725
Gov. of Myanmar (Burma)	PNDF, KIO	1949	2017	41	1588
Gov. of Mali	AQIM, Ansar Dine, Military faction (Red Berets), AQIM, MUJAO, Signed-in-Blood Battalion, al-Murabitun, JNIM	2009	2017	7	1576
Gov. of Philippines	IS	2016	2017	2	1518
Gov. of Egypt	IS	2015	2017	3	1412
Gov. of Egypt	al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, Harakit Sawa'id Misr, Jama'at Ansar al-Islam	1993	2017	8	904
Gov. of Cameroon	UPC, Military faction (forces of Ibrahim Saleh), Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad	1960	2017	6	807
Gov. of Niger	IS	2015	2017	3	648
Gov. of Myanmar (Burma)	APLP, Mujahid Party, Mujahid Party, ANLP, CPA, CPA, RPF, RPF, ALP, RSO, ARSA	1948	2017	33	611
Gov. of Myanmar (Burma)	MNDAA	2009	2017	4	491
Gov. of DR Congo (Zaire)	BDK	2007	2017	3	456
Gov. of Angola	FLEC-R, FLEC-FAC, FLEC-R	1991	2017	10	408
Gov. of Chad	IS	2015	2017	2	329
Gov. of Lebanon	IS	2014	2017	3	272
Gov. of India	UNLFW	2015	2017	3	247
Gov. of Myanmar (Burma)	PSLF	2013	2017	4	216

Gov. of Russia (Soviet Union)	IS	2015	2017	3	177
Gov. of Kenya	Al-Shabaab	2015	2017	3	176
Gov. of Pakistan	IS	2016	2017	2	148
Gov. of Bangladesh	IS	2016	2017	2	88
Gov. of Mali	IS	2017	2017	1	43
Gov. of Iran	IS	2017	2017	1	27
Gov. of Eritrea	Gov. of Ethiopia	1998	2016	4	98217
Gov. of Colombia	FARC, ELN, FARC, M-19, EPL	1964	2016	53	19543
Gov. of Congo	Ninjas, Cobras, Cocoyes, Cocoyes, Ninjas, Ntsiloulous	1993	2016	6	14227
Gov. of Rwanda	FPR, ALiR, FDLR	1990	2016	17	9528
Gov. of Mozambique	Renamo	1977	2016	18	4414
Gov. of Ethiopia	OLF	1977	2016	34	2145
Gov. of Ethiopia	Ogaden Liberation Front, WSLF, AIAI, ONLF, ONLF	1964	2016	31	1533
Gov. of Pakistan	BLF, BLA, Baloch Ittehad, BLA, BRA, BLF, UBA	1974	2016	15	1077
Gov. of Turkey	Devrimci Sol, MKP, TAK, YSK	1991	2016	4	535
Gov. of Cameroon	IS	2015	2016	2	472
Gov. of Iran	KDPI	1946	2016	18	198
Gov. of Syria	SDF	2016	2016	1	158
Gov. of Tunisia	IS	2016	2016	1	72
Gov. of Jordan	IS	2016	2016	1	34
Gov. of Burundi	Military faction (forces loyal to Gervais Nyangoma), Palipehutu, CNDD, Frolina, Palipehutu-FNL, CNDD-FDD , CNDD-FDD , Palipehutu-FNL, RED-TABARA , FPB, Military faction (forces of Godefroid Niyombare)	1965	2015	19	8771
Gov. of Russia (Soviet Union)	Forces of the Caucasus Emirate	2007	2015	9	2941
Gov. of Myanmar (Burma)	NSH, SSIA, SNUF, SSA, SSNLO, SURA, SSRA, TRC, MTA, RCSS, SSPP	1959	2015	46	1978

Gov. of Mali	MPA, FIAA, ATNMC, CMA	1990	2015	8	778
Gov. of Yemen (North Yemen)	IS	2015	2015	1	246
Gov. of Syria	PYD	2012	2015	3	123
Gov. of Mali	FLM	2015	2015	1	41
Gov. of Algeria	IS	2015	2015	1	26

Appendix 2
Overview | Non-state Violence 2000 - 2017
Data source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Side A	Side B	Location	First Year in Conflict	Last Active Year	Cumulative Battle Deaths	Active Years (Total)
Juarez Cartel	Sinaloa Cartel	Mexico	2004	2017	8762	11
IS	SDF	Syria	2015	2017	8210	3
Lou Nuer	Murle	Sudan	2006	2017	3495	8
Gulf Cartel	Los Zetas	Mexico	2010	2017	2641	8
Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council	Forces of the House of Representatives	Libya	2014	2017	1838	4
Jalisco Cartel New Generation	Los Zetas	Mexico	2011	2017	1134	6
Ma'aliyah	Rizeigat Baggara	Sudan	2002	2017	1093	7
Fulani	Tiv	Nigeria	2011	2017	951	7
Jalisco Cartel New Generation	Sinaloa Cartel	Mexico	2015	2017	945	3
Baluba	Batwa	DR Congo (Zaire)	2016	2017	913	2
Cartel Independiente de Acapulco	La Barredora	Mexico	2011	2017	893	3
anti-Balaka	FPRC	Central African Republic	2013	2017	823	3
IS	Taleban	Afghanistan	2015	2017	816	3
Hawar Kilis Operations Room	IS	Syria	2016	2017	806	2
Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad	Yan Gora	Nigeria	2013	2017	718	4
anti-Balaka	UPC (Ali Darass Fulani supporters)	Central African Republic	2014	2017	604	4
IS	Tahrir al-Sham	Syria	2017	2017	595	1
IS	Forces of Hadi	Yemen (North Yemen)	2015	2017	579	3

AQAP	Forces of Hadi	Yemen (North Yemen)	2015	2017	566	3
Misseriya	Salamat Baggara	Sudan	2013	2017	545	3
Forces of the House of Representatives	IS	Libya	2015	2017	494	3
Oromo	Somali (Ethiopia)	Ethiopia	2000	2017	451	4
Hawar Kilis Operations Room	SDF	Syria	2016	2017	445	2
Taleban	High Council of Afghanistan Islamic Emirate	Afghanistan	2015	2017	390	3
anti-Balaka, FPRC-AK	FPRC	Central African Republic	2017	2017	367	1
Bor Dinka	Murle	Sudan	2007	2017	364	4
Liwa al-Aqsa	Tahrir al-Sham	Syria	2017	2017	346	1
Hausa	Yoruba	Nigeria	1998	2017	299	4
Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, Southern Front	IS	Syria	2016	2017	256	2
Ahrar al-Sham, Southern Front, Tahrir al-Sham	IS	Syria	2017	2017	252	1
Jaysh al-Islam	Rahman Corps, Tahrir al-Sham	Syria	2017	2017	210	1
Los Ardillos	Los Rojos	Mexico	2015	2017	200	3
Rizeigat Abbala	Zaghawa	Sudan	1996	2017	197	2
Hezbollah	Tahrir al-Sham	Lebanon	2017	2017	190	1
Ahrar al-Sham	Tahrir al-Sham	Syria	2017	2017	183	1
Black Axe	Eyie	Nigeria	2011	2017	179	5
Anti-Balaka - Mokom, FPRC, MPC (Al Khatim rebels), RPRC	UPC (Ali Darass Fulani supporters)	Central African Republic	2016	2017	176	2
Pakam Dinka	Rup Dinka	South Sudan	2017	2017	172	1
Bwatiye	Fulani	Nigeria	2016	2017	167	2
IS	Southern Front, Tahrir al-Sham	Syria	2017	2017	161	1
Wanhihem community	Wanikade community	Nigeria	2017	2017	150	1

Ahrar al-Sham, FSA, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam	IS	Syria	2016	2017	142	2
NDC-R	Mayi Mayi Mazembe	DR Congo (Zaire)	2017	2017	135	1
Comando Vermelho	GDE	Brazil	2017	2017	116	1
Sinaloa Cartel	Forces of Damaso	Mexico	2015	2017	113	2
FDN	PCC	Brazil	2017	2017	99	1
CMA	GATIA	Mali	2016	2017	98	2
CMC	CNRD	DR Congo (Zaire)	2017	2017	91	1
Fulani	Mambila	Nigeria	2002	2017	90	2
anti-Balaka	MPC (Al Khatim rebels)	Central African Republic	2017	2017	79	1
Bor Dinka	Mundari	Sudan	2009	2017	77	2
SPLM/A-North	SPLM/A-North - MA faction	South Sudan, Sudan	2017	2017	72	1
Deebam	NDV	Nigeria	2016	2017	70	2
Fulani	Irigwe	Nigeria	2017	2017	66	1
BDB	Forces of the House of Representatives	Libya	2017	2017	63	1
Comités locaux de vigilance	Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad	Cameroon	2017	2017	62	1
anti-Balaka	Peuhl militia (Zemio)	Central African Republic	2017	2017	62	1
Dogon	Fulani	Mali	2012	2017	61	2
Derna Mujahideen Shura Council	Forces of the House of Representatives	Libya	2016	2017	60	2
Lulua-Luba	Chowe-Pende	DR Congo (Zaire)	2017	2017	58	1
Ahrar al-Sham, FSA, Jaysh al-Islam, Tahrir al-Sham	IS	Syria	2017	2017	56	1

3R	anti-Balaka	Central African Republic	2017	2017	54	1
Hamar	Kababish	Sudan	2017	2017	53	1
Nour al-Din al-Zenki	Tahrir al-Sham	Syria	2017	2017	46	1
Ayiel Dinka	Waat Dinka	South Sudan	2017	2017	44	1
Jalisco Cartel New Generation	La Nueva Familia	Mexico	2017	2017	43	1
Operations Room Combating Daesh, Shuhada al-Wadi militia	Anas al-Dabbashi Brigade, Brigade 48	Libya	2017	2017	43	1
Jalwau	Thiyic Dinka	South Sudan	2017	2017	43	1
Habaniya	Salamat Baggara	Sudan	2017	2017	41	1
Al-Shabaab	Aaro Aaro	Somalia	2017	2017	39	1
Ikot-Offiong community	Oku Iboku community	Nigeria	2017	2017	37	1
Fulani	Kadara	Nigeria	2017	2017	37	1
GATIA, MSA	IS	Mali	2017	2017	36	1
FPRC	UPC (Ali Darass Fulani supporters)	Central African Republic	2017	2017	33	1
IS	Saraya Ahl al-Sham, Tahrir al-Sham	Lebanon	2017	2017	33	1
Aliap Dinka	Atuot Dinka	South Sudan	2017	2017	30	1
PCC	Sindicato RN	Brazil	2017	2017	30	1
IS	Jaysh al-Asha€™er	Syria	2017	2017	29	1
Bambuti, Batwa	Batabwa	DR Congo (Zaire)	2017	2017	27	1
IS	Jaysh al-Islam	Syria	2017	2017	26	1
Toubou	Zaghawa	Chad	2017	2017	25	1
IS	MSA	Mali	2017	2017	25	1
Christians (Nigeria)	Muslims (Nigeria)	Nigeria	1991	2016	5617	12
IS	Jabhat Fateh al-Sham	Syria	2014	2016	892	3
Fatah Halab	IS	Syria	2015	2016	776	2
Agatu	Fulani	Nigeria	2013	2016	458	3
Falata	Salamat Baggara	Sudan	2015	2016	290	2

Mare' Operations Room	IS	Syria	2015	2016	283	2
Fatah Halab	SDF	Syria	2015	2016	244	2
Murle	Nuer	Ethiopia	2006	2016	209	2
Beltrán Leyva Cartel	Sinaloa Cartel	Mexico	2008	2016	202	4
Derna Mujahideen Shura Council	IS	Libya	2015	2016	198	2
IS	Yan Gora	Nigeria	2015	2016	176	2
Anuak	Nuer	Ethiopia	2002	2016	165	3
Fatah Halab, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham	SDF	Syria	2015	2016	130	2
Jaysh al-Islam, Jaysh Asoud al-Sharqiya, Martyr Lieutenant Ahmed Abdou Brigades, Rahman Corps	Tahrir al- Sham Army	Syria	2016	2016	100	1
Marakwet	Pokot	Kenya	2001	2016	95	2
Panyar Dinka, Rek Dinka	Waat Dinka	South Sudan	2016	2016	86	1
Greenlanders	NDV	Nigeria	2012	2016	84	2
APCLS, FDLR, Nyatura	Mayi Mayi Mazembe, NDC-R	DR Congo (Zaire)	2016	2016	73	1
Panyar Dinka	Waat Dinka	South Sudan	2016	2016	62	1
Hutu	Nande	DR Congo (Zaire)	2016	2016	58	1
Igbo	Fulani	Nigeria	2016	2016	58	1
Los Zetas - Jorge Ivan Hernandez Cantu faction	Los Zetas - Juan Pedro Salvador Saldivar Farias faction	Mexico	2016	2016	48	1
Maban	Uduk	South Sudan	2016	2016	48	1
SRF	Subol Al-Salam Brigade	Libya	2016	2016	44	1
Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham	SDF	Syria	2016	2016	44	1
Los Zetas - Cártel del Noreste faction	Los Zetas - Old School Zetas faction	Mexico	2016	2016	43	1
Awlad Omran clan	Awlad Serur (Misseriya)	Sudan	2016	2016	43	1
Ahrar al-Sham	Liwa al-Aqsa	Syria	2016	2016	40	1
Masalit	Rizeigat Baggara	Sudan	2016	2016	39	1

Fulani	Koulango , Lobi, Malinké	Ivory Coast	2016	2016	33	1
Bakonzo	Bamba	Uganda	2016	2016	30	1
Bambara	Fulani	Mali	2016	2016	28	1
Mahadi	Rizeigat Abbala	Sudan	2016	2016	26	1
FSA, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, Levant Front	SDF	Syria	2016	2016	25	1
IS	NSA	Syria	2016	2016	25	1
IS	PYD	Syria	2014	2015	2241	2
IS	Jaysh al-Sanadid, Khabour Guards, MFS, PYD	Syria	2015	2015	828	1
Birom	Fulani	Nigeria	2002	2015	785	7
Misseriya	Rizeigat Abbala	Sudan	2008	2015	740	5
Christians (CAR)	Muslims (CAR)	Central African Republic	2013	2015	614	3
IS	Jaysh al-Sanadid, MFS, PYD	Syria	2015	2015	595	1
Dinka	Nuer	Sudan	1997	2015	540	5
Pokot	Turkana	Kenya	1995	2015	538	9
Euphrates Volcano	IS	Syria	2015	2015	500	1
Sinaloa Cartel	Tijuana Cartel	Mexico	2004	2015	384	4
Habaniya	Rizeigat Baggara	Sudan	2006	2015	348	2
Misseriya	Ngok Dinka	Sudan	2011	2015	314	3
Harkat Hazm	Jabhat Fateh al-Sham	Syria	2014	2015	274	2
Guerreros Unidos	Los Rojos	Mexico	2014	2015	236	2
Ahrar al-Sham, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham	Shohadaa al-Yarmouk	Syria	2015	2015	234	1
Hezbollah	Jabhat Fateh al-Sham	Lebanon	2013	2015	146	3
Eastern Qalamoun Operations Room	IS	Syria	2015	2015	145	1
Aknaf Bait al-Maqdis, FSA, Jaysh al-Islam, PFLP-GC, PLO	IS	Syria	2015	2015	134	1
Al-Zayadia	Berti	Sudan	2015	2015	127	1

Samburu	Turkana	Kenya	1996	2015	104	2
Fulani	Jukun	Nigeria	2014	2015	104	2
Luac Jang Dinka	Thiyic Dinka	South Sudan	2015	2015	92	1
Toubou	Zwai	Libya	2015	2015	85	1
Toubou	Touareg	Libya, Niger	2015	2015	81	1
Kuei Dinka, Pakam Dinka	Rup Dinka	South Sudan	2015	2015	78	1
Hezbollah	IS	Lebanon	2015	2015	75	1
Ahrar al-Sham, Furqan Brigades, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, Yarmouk Army	Jaysh al-Jihad (Saraya al- Jihad)	Syria	2015	2015	70	1
Eastern Ghouta Unified Military Command	IS	Syria	2015	2015	68	1
Kuteb	Tiv	Nigeria	2015	2015	64	1
Deebam	Deewell	Nigeria	2006	2015	63	2
Sinaloa Cartel - El Pepillo faction	Sinaloa Cartel - Los 28 faction	Mexico	2015	2015	61	1
Ahrar al-Sham, Ajnad al-Sham, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, Jaysh al-Sunna, Liwa al-Aqsa, Liwa al-Haq Idlib, Sham Legion	IS	Syria	2015	2015	57	1
High Council of Afghanistan Islamic Emirate, IS	Taleban	Afghanistan	2015	2015	56	1
Fatah Halab, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham	IS	Syria	2015	2015	51	1
Forces of Mullah Abdol Rauf Khadim	Taleban	Afghanistan	2015	2015	50	1
Ansar Dine	CMA	Mali	2015	2015	42	1
Sinaloa Cartel - Los Memos faction	Sinaloa Cartel - Los Salazar faction	Mexico	2015	2015	41	1
Supporters of APC	Supporters of PDP	Nigeria	2015	2015	39	1
Eyie	Maphite	Nigeria	2015	2015	38	1
Ajdabiya Revolutionaries Shura Council	Forces of the House of Representatives	Libya	2015	2015	26	1
Jaysh al-Mukhtar	MEK	Iraq	2015	2015	26	1

| BLA | UBA | Pakistan | 2015 | 2015 | 26 | 1 |
| Black Axe | Maphite | Nigeria | 2015 | 2015 | 25 | 1 |

Appendix 3
Overview | One-sided Violence 2000 - 2017
Data source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Location	Actor Name	First Year in Conflict	Last Active Year	Cumulative Battle Deaths	Active Years (Total)
Iraq	Islamic State	2004	2017	25125	14
Sudan	Government of Sudan	1989	2017	12005	27
DR Congo (Zaire)	Government of Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire)	1989	2017	10372	22
Nigeria	People Committed to Propagating the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad	2010	2017	8978	8
Uganda	Lord's Resistance Army	1989	2017	7717	25
Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma)	Government of Myanmar (Burma)	1991	2017	5058	25
Burundi	Government of Burundi	1995	2017	4337	12
Lebanon, Syria	Government of Syria	2011	2017	4010	6
India	Kashmir insurgents	1990	2017	3099	19
Ethiopia	Government of Ethiopia	1989	2017	2949	14
Pakistan	Taleban Movement of Pakistan	2007	2017	2436	11
Iraq, Kuwait	Government of Iraq	1990	2017	2321	14
Central African Republic	anti-Balaka	2013	2017	1924	4
India	Communist Party of India-Maoist	2005	2017	1880	13
Afghanistan	Taleban	1996	2017	1826	15
South Sudan	Government of South Sudan	2012	2017	1541	6
Uganda	Alliance of Democratic Forces	1997	2017	1472	10
Somalia	Al-Shabaab	2008	2017	1184	9
Pakistan	Army of Jhangvi	1998	2017	978	10
Central African Republic	Union for Peace in the Central African Republic	2014	2017	806	4
Kenya	Government of Kenya	2007	2017	304	3
DR Congo (Zaire)	Kamuina Nsapu	2017	2017	201	1
DR Congo (Zaire)	Bana Mura	2017	2017	174	1

Central African Republic	Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation	2016	2017	138	2
DR Congo (Zaire)	Mayi Mayi Mazembe	2016	2017	132	2
Cameroon, Nigeria	Government of Cameroon	1994	2017	127	3
Myanmar (Burma)	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army	2017	2017	78	1
Central African Republic	Anti-Balaka - Maxime Mokom, Patriotic Movement for the Central African Republic, Patriotic Rally for Renewal in the CAR or Gathering for Reconciliation among Central Africans , Popular Front for the Rebirth of the Central African Republic	2017	2017	69	1
Central African Republic	Patriotic Movement for the Central African Republic	2017	2017	55	1
DR Congo (Zaire)	Coalition for movements of change	2017	2017	33	1
Burkina Faso, Mali	Ansaroul Islam	2017	2017	30	1
DR Congo (Zaire)	Mayi Mayi Mazembe, Reformed Nduma Defence of Congo	2017	2017	27	1
Mali	Dozos (Mali)	2017	2017	25	1
Rwanda	Government of Rwanda	1990	2016	511532	10
Nigeria	Government of Nigeria	1990	2016	3993	14
Central African Republic	Popular Front for the Rebirth of the Central African Republic	2013	2016	1333	4
South Sudan	Sudan People´s Liberation Army/Movement In Opposition	2013	2016	726	3
Syria	Syrian insurgents	2012	2016	711	5
Algeria	al-Qaida Organization in the Islamic Maghreb	2004	2016	201	4
Philippines	Government of Philippines	1990	2016	97	3
Turkey	Kurdistan Freedom Falcons	2016	2016	37	1
Central African Republic	Patriotic Movement for the Central African Republic , Popular Front for the Rebirth of the Central African Republic	2016	2016	37	1
DR Congo (Zaire)	ADF, Vuba militia	2016	2016	31	1
Central African Republic	Anti-Balaka - Maxime Mokom	2016	2016	25	1
Thailand	Patani insurgents	2004	2015	1865	12
DR Congo (Zaire)	Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda	2004	2015	1515	9
DR Congo (Zaire)	Perci	2015	2015	47	1
Central African Republic	Democratic Front for the People of Central Africa	2015	2015	39	1
Philippines	Communist Party of the Philippines	2015	2015	34	1

| DR Congo (Zaire) | Elements | 2015 | 2015 | 34 | 1 |

Appendix 4: Methodological and data challenges in impact assessments of armed conflict.

Impact assessments of armed conflict face the fundamental problem of causal inference. As researchers, we do not observe what would have happened in the absence of conflict. Instead, we have to compare development outcomes in conflict-affected countries with plausible counterfactual scenarios. Academic and policy analysts typically adopt one of three empirical strategies:

- 1.) Multivariate regression analysis controlling for important socio-economic and political variables to get at the effect of conflict at similar levels of e.g. per capita GDP, democracy, and historic conflict affectedness. Limitations:
    - o Omitted variables: unobserved third factors that drive both conflict and development.
    - o Reverse causation: an already present negative development trajectory or correctly anticipated economic downturns cause conflict outbreak rather than vice versa
- 2.) Restricting comparisons to individual countries: development outcomes during conflict are compared to the same country's development trajectory before and after war. This is typically done by means of fixed effects regression models.
    - o Removes all unobserved and time-invariant heterogeneity across countries.
    - o Does not effectively solve the problem of time-varying omitted variables that cause both conflict and underdevelopment: e.g. hardening ethnic identities and political polarization disrupting inter-ethnic trade networks and, over the long haul, leading to conflict.
    - o At the same time, fixed effects regressions risk to remove insightful variation from the model. For many of the most severe and long-lasting conflicts, we do not observe long peaceful periods before and/or after war. As a result, we may underestimate the real development impacts of conflict.
- 3.) Construct a more plausible counterfactual by means of the synthetic control method: compare the development trajectory of one or more conflict-affected countries to a weighted average of peaceful countries that are similar to the conflict country in terms of e.g. pre-war socio-economic development, political system, ethnic and religious demographics. Reassuringly, war initiation and combat strategies do not follow the logic of real or natural experiments. That said, carefully constructed synthetic control methods come closest to the ideal of credible counterfactual analysis and causally valid statements about the development consequences of armed conflict.
    - o Oftentimes, conflict in one country affects trade, development, politics, and the likelihood of conflict in neighboring countries or the broader region. As many socio-economic and political indicators similarly cluster in space, neighboring countries at peace typically receive large weights in the synthetic control counterfactual. Where the development impacts of conflict spill over to countries in the counterfactual control group, synthetic control methods may underestimate effects.
- 4.) Simulation estimates based on a theoretically informed general equilibrium model. First, the analyst develops and parametrizes a theoretical model with plausible assumptions on agents, factors of production, overall productivity, matching frictions, etc. In a second step, the method assesses how conflict affects key parameters in the model (e.g. by destroying physical capital, reducing the labor force, or disrupting markets and economic networks). Then, these conflict effects are used to simulate the overall economic impact of violence on the economy over multiple time periods.

- General equilibrium models are useful in quantifying more broad and long-term aggregate effects of conflict on the economy. The key limitation is the reliance on theoretical assumptions. If the behavior of agents in real-world conflict economies deviates from theoretical assumptions, estimated general equilibrium impacts will be severely biased.
- Most of these models narrow the focus to the economy. As such, they fail to capture social and political impacts that may reinforce or counteract purely economic effects.

- Regardless of the chosen method, issues of data availability and quality complicate the analysis. During conflict, data collection by the state, international organizations, and civil society actors is frequently interrupted due to acute security concerns. At the same time, many of these actors are not neutral players but have strong incentives to misrepresent key indicators in order to win the information war and control the narrative in terms of how many people got killed, houses destroyed, etc. New technologies and unconventional data sources such as satellite images or social media communication may help to address these challenges but risk suffering from their own biases. Facing severe data and measurement challenges, analysts interested in the consequences of violence are well advised to triangulate between sources and validate different measures against each other.

The development impacts of conflict are multidimensional. Quantifying them requires choosing appropriate indicators. Some aspects of the UN sustainable development agenda are more easily measured than others. As a result, analysts typically either focus on aggregate indicators such as GDP or specific outcomes like mortality rates or damage to e.g. road infrastructure. For less tangible social and institutional impacts, researchers typically resort to qualitative assessments, theoretically informed assumptions and model parameters, or survey data in post-conflict settings. A complete impact assessment should go beyond easily quantifiable impacts but acknowledge the inherent uncertainty and measurement challenges in terms of longer-term social and political effects.

Appendix 5: Estimated GDP Impacts of Intrastate Conflict across 20 Cases

Differences between GDP per capita during average conflict year and synthetic counterfactuals across 20 civil wars (Table 1 from Costalli, Moretti and Pischedda; 2017)

Country	Percentage Effect	Ethnic Fractionalization
	(1)	(2)
Cote d'Ivoire	–16.1	0.87
Congo, Republic of	–0.4	0.72
Djibouti	–27.9	0.80
Algeria	–3.0	0.30
Egypt	–1.8	0.25
Haiti	–13.4	0.10
Kenya	–3.2	0.89
Liberia	–74.0	0.89
Nigeria	–6.5	0.89
Nicaragua	–22.4	0.50
Nepal	–14.2	0.68
Peru	–14.1	0.66
Rwanda	–14.4	0.22
Senegal	–2.8	0.81
Sierra Leone	–24.2	0.79
El Salvador	–21.6	0.15
Somalia	–51.9	0.39
Thailand	–5.1	0.36
Turkey	–1.6	0.19
Uganda	–31.7	0.93
Average	–17.5	0.57
Correlation		-0.23

Column 1 reports the percentage difference between the observed GDP per capita and its synthetic counterfactual averaged during the treatment period. Column 2 reports the ethnic fractionalization index.

Appendix 6: Schematic Illustration of Different Conflict Types

Arrows indicate direction of armed force
Based on: www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/