Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2019

This PRIO Paper examines global trends in conflicts between 1989 and 2019 using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). In addition, it examines trends in conflict recurrence, ceasefires, and peace agreements in the same period. 2019 saw a record high number of state-based conflicts, with a total of 54. Many of these conflicts are related to the Islamic State (IS), which is, despite the crackdown in Syria, far from being defeated: In 2019 it reached Burkina Faso and Somalia.

In 2019, more than 50,000 people were killed in conflict-related events, most of them in Afghanistan and Syria. This was nonetheless a decrease from 2018. The international community is working hard to resolve conflicts across the world. The past 10 years saw an increase in the number of humanitarian ceasefires, especially in the Middle East. However, there has been a relative decrease in peace agreements in the past few years. While non-state conflicts declined from 2018 to 2019, they still remain high and are a persistent threat to security, especially in Africa and Latin America. In 2019, Africa was the only region to see an increase in one-sided violence. Promisingly, however, Africa has also experienced the highest number of peace agreements in this thirty-year period.
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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Executive Summary</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. State-Based Conflicts</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ceasefires</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trends in Peace Agreements</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. One-Sided Violence</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Discussion and Conclusion</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. References</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

1. Figure 1: Number of countries with state-based armed conflicts, by conflict type, 1946–2019 8
2. Figure 2: Conflicts related to the Islamic State, 1989–2019 9
3. Figure 3: Number of conflicts and conflict countries, 1989–2019 10
4. Figure 4: Conflict split between conflicts and wars, 1989–2019 11
5. Figure 5: Share of battle deaths in 2018 and 2019 11
6. Figure 6: Battle deaths as share of population by country, 1989–2019 12
7. Figure 7: Total absolute number of battle deaths by country, 1989–2019 12
8. Figure 8: Number of countries with state-based armed conflict, by region, 1946–2019 13
9. Figure 9: Civil conflicts by international involvement and battle deaths, 1989–2019 14
10. Figure 10: Global trends in incompatibilities, 1946–2019 14
11. Figure 11: Geographical location of state-based conflict countries and conflict events (2019) 15
12. Figure 12: Dyadic conflict recurrence per region, 1989–2018 16
13. Figure 13: Dyadic conflict recurrence per region, 1989–2018 17
14. Figure 14: Ceasefires per year, per region, 1989–2018 19
15. Figure 15: Ceasefires per year per region, 1989–2018 20
16. Figure 16: Ceasefires by type, 1989–2018 21
17. Figure 17: Peace agreements and conflicts, 1975–2018 23
18. Figure 18: Peace agreements by type and number of conflicts, 1975–2018 24
19. Figure 19: Peace agreements by region, 1975–2018 25
20. Figure 20: Full peace agreement by regions, 1975–2018 26
21. Figure 21: Non-state conflicts, by conflict type, 1989–2019 28
22. Figure 22: Total number of non-state conflicts, by region, 1989–2019 29
23. Figure 23: Share of battle deaths in non-state conflict by type of conflict, 1989–2019 29
24. Figure 24: Share of battle deaths in non-state conflict by region, 2018 and 2019 30
25. Figure 25: Incidents of one-sided violence, by perpetrator, 1989–2019* 31
26. Figure 26: Incidents of one-sided violence, by region, 1989–2018 32
27. Figure 27: One-sided violence fatalities by region, 1989–2019 32
28. Figure 28: Fatalities in one-sided violence in 2018 and 2019, by region and IS 33
29. Figure 29: State-based conflict, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence events globally (2019) 33
1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 calls on the world to achieve peaceful and inclusive societies and to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere. An important first step in achieving SDG 16 is to understand conflict dynamics over time, across continents, and the types of violence employed by various actors. We take the lead in this effort by providing a global overview of conflict trends in this paper, as well as three associated PRIO Papers on regional conflict trends. This approach enables us both to look at accumulative global trends of conflict, and also to look beyond them, uncovering regional variations. In this PRIO Paper, we provide an empirically grounded overview of global trends in conflict and peace attempts, which we hope can help policy and decision makers, practitioners, and regional and country experts further understand the contexts they are working in.

This PRIO Paper should not necessarily be read from cover to cover, but rather be considered as a peace and conflict trends encyclopedia. In this paper, we provide an overview of various aspects of conflict trends on the global level, particularly since 1989. We not only focus on trends in violence but move beyond previous reports by providing data and analysis on conflict recurrence, ceasefires, and peace agreements. Data for this paper comes from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), PRIO and ETH Zurich. The definition of conflict used in this paper is based on the UCDP’s 25 battle-related deaths threshold, and we examine state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts, and one-sided violence. More specific definitions will be presented in the various sections, and in the box below.

This overview of global trends is accompanied by three regional papers on Africa, Asia and the Middle East. All PRIO papers include a section on global trends in peace and conflict. We will also summarize our findings in short policy briefs for all regions.

**Definitions**

- **State-based conflict:** A contested incompatibility over government and/or territory, where at least one party is a state, and the use of armed force results in at least 25 battle-related deaths within a calendar year.

- **Non-state conflict:** The use of armed force between organized groups, none of which is the government of a state, resulting in at least 25 annual battle-related deaths.

- **One-sided violence:** The use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians, which results in at least 25 deaths. Extrajudicial killings in custody are excluded.

- **Battle deaths:** Fatalities caused by the warring parties that can be directly related to combat, including civilian losses.

We would also like to note the limitations of our papers. We relied on UCDP data because it is the best available data when it comes to armed violence, yet some caveats remain. First, we would like to emphasize that these papers provide an overview of trends in data. As such, we neither provide causal explanations for particular trends (although we highlight existing research results), nor expand on particular cases in depth. After completing the regional papers, we sent them out for review to country and region experts and incorporated their comments to ensure that quantitative
evidence is balanced with qualitative data. The second limitation is that we did not provide a separate regional paper on Latin America, although it is one of the most violent places in the world. Latin America experienced relatively fewer episodes of intrastate conflict, but it is plagued by social violence perpetrated by cartels and gangs. These groups and the fatalities from their conflict are difficult to capture with UCDP coding criteria. UCDP needs clearly identifiable actors who commit violent acts and the conflict between the cartels “is not overt in the sense that none of the actors wish to claim ‘credit’ for their actions” (Allansson, 2020). For a comprehensive overview and data on social violence in Latin America, see for example Rivera, 2015. The third limitation concerns data on one-sided violence. UCDP’s data on one-sided violence faces two criticisms: coding source bias and inaccuracy in reported numbers. Coding is based on news reports as well as reports from human rights organizations and UN reports. Open source information can be subject to manipulation by governments and it is difficult to obtain quality data on violence in detention centers and on extrajudicial killings. UCDP one-sided violence figures are viewed by many as too low (see the above point on cartels in Latin America), but as of today this is the only source that provides comparable data over time and space. When discussing one-sided violence, we complement UCDP data with other sources for illustrative purposes. Lastly, we would like to acknowledge that this paper does not apply a gender lens to the analysis. For existing data on various topics related to gender, conflict, and peace, see publications from the PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security. We welcome comments and questions on any part of this paper.
2. Executive Summary

State-based conflicts are at a historic high: In 2019, 54 state-based conflicts were recorded: two more than in 2018 and the same number as in 2016. This number is a record high since 1946. 35 countries experienced civil conflicts and worldwide around 50,000 died in battle-related deaths. The two deadliest conflicts were recorded in Afghanistan and Syria. Despite the fact that the Islamic State (IS) was allegedly defeated in Syria in 2019, the number of IS conflicts increased from 12 in 2018 to 16 in 2019. Internationalized civil conflicts killed more people than “regular” civil conflicts. This could either be due to internationalization increasing the intensity of conflicts, or the fact that more intense conflicts are more likely to become internationalized. State-based conflicts are concentrated in a set of conflict hotspots revolving around Syria, Iraq, and Yemen in the Middle East, in the border between Mali and Burkina Faso, Eastern DRC and Somalia in Africa, and Afghanistan and the Philippines in Asia. For many of the conflict countries in the world, the geographical spread of conflict is limited to certain geographical areas, such as the north-eastern part of Mozambique and the southern tip of Thailand. Conflicts in Africa and Asia experience a higher number of recurring conflicts than other regions, which shows that the underlying incompatibilities and grievances of conflict parties are yet to be resolved.

Ceasefires and peace agreements: Most ceasefires between 1989 and 2018 were concluded in Asia, followed by Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. Since 2010, the number of humanitarian ceasefires has increased considerably. This is potentially an indicator of how severe recent conflicts have become. Between 2015 and 2018, the number of peace agreements declined, but the number of conflicts rose. One potential explanation for this decline is that this period saw the settlement of some long-standing conflicts, such as the conflict between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

Non-state conflicts and related deaths are declining: In 2019 there were a total of 67 non-state conflicts in the world. This is a slight decrease from 2017 and 2018. The number of non-state conflicts has stabilized at a considerably higher level than we saw a decade ago. While Africa and the Middle East both feature high levels of non-state conflict, the Middle East is characterized by fighting between highly organized actors, while in Africa we see a higher number of communal conflicts. In total, almost 19,600 people were killed in non-state conflicts in 2019. This is a decrease from 2018, yet the number is still amongst the top three since 1989. Although the number of non-state conflicts in Latin America was less than in Africa and in the Middle East, Latin-America experiences the most violent non-state conflicts. This is related to the high level of violence between drug cartels in Mexico.

One-sided violence increased in Africa: Fewer groups are engaged in one-sided violence today compared to the mid-2000s. Similarly to the number of non-state conflicts, Africa has the highest incidents of one-sided violence, followed by Asia and the Middle East. Africa is the only region where we see an increase of groups perpetrating one-sided violence.
3. State-Based Conflicts

State-based conflicts are defined as conflicts where at least one of the conflict parties is the government. Globally, state-based conflicts and especially civil wars are the most common types of conflicts, but the past decades have seen an increase in conflicts waged between non-state actors, excluding the government (we discuss these trends in the section on non-state conflicts).

We differentiate conflicts from wars. To be included in the data as a conflict, there has to be a contested incompatibility that concerns the government (for example the conflict between the Afghan government and the Taliban) and/or territory (for example the conflict between the government of Philippines and the Abu Sayaf Group over the state of Mindanao) and where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths within a calendar year. Battle-related deaths account for fatalities caused by the warring parties that can be directly related to combat. This measurement is important as it provides us with information about the severity of a conflict. War is a state-based conflict that reaches at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a specific calendar year. Note that battle-related deaths do not account for the significant number of indirect deaths from conflict. Such numbers of indirect deaths are difficult to verify due to the lack of reliable data.

Figure 1 depicts global state-based conflict trends between 1946 and 2019. The black line shows battle-related deaths. The figure shows the following four categories: colonial wars, interstate wars, civil wars, and internationalized civil wars.

Figure 1 shows four major conflict trends. At the global level, the predominant form of conflict is civil conflict. We see an increase in the number of civil conflicts, particularly since the 1970s. On the other hand, conflict between states has become rare. 2019 saw two interstate conflicts between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, and between Iran and Israel, both of which were relatively low intensity conflicts. The conflict between Iran and Israel is taking place in Syria where both states

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1 The conflict between Iran and Israel dates back to the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. Both states are involved in the Syrian civil war. Israel has reportedly carried out attacks on Hezbollah and Iranian targets in Syria as a response to rockets fired by Iran into Israel.
have forces and frequently conduct attacks on each other’s positions. Besides the two interstate conflicts, 2019 saw 52 civil conflicts.

The number of conflicts peaked around 1991 and this year was followed by a substantial decrease in the number of conflicts. This trend has two main explanations. First, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was an increase in the number of civil conflicts amongst the former Soviet-Union member states. Second and more importantly, many of the Cold War-era civil wars were proxy wars in which the warring parties received external support from the superpowers. We see an accumulation of ongoing conflicts in the 1970s and 80s, but after the fall of the Soviet Union, superpower support dried up and most proxy wars ended in the early 1990s. This decrease in the 2000s led many to argue (see Pinker 2011) that we are moving towards a more peaceful world.

The third clear trend concerns battle-related deaths. Contrary to the number of conflicts, we see that the number of battle related-related deaths has steadily decreased over the past 20 years. We see a few peaks which are related to specific conflicts, such as the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1999 and 2001, the end of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009, and the civil war in Syria since 2013. While the number of battle deaths in 2014 was at its highest since 1988, it has since decreased every year. In 2019, battle-related deaths were at around 50,000 globally. Note that battle-related deaths only include people killed in actual conflict events, and not indirect deaths due to for example starvation, lack of medical facilities, or destruction of infrastructure.

Around 2013 we can see a sharp increase in the number of conflicts. While this increase is very worrisome, the main reason for this trend is the expansion of the Islamic State (IS). Figure 2 shows the share of conflicts that are related to IS compared to other conflicts. The first conflict in which IS was registered as a conflict actor was recorded in Iraq in 2004. In 2013 and 2014, IS also spread to Lebanon and Syria. However, in 2015 we see a substantial increase in the number of conflicts with IS engagement.

This trend is concurrent with IS declaring a worldwide Caliphate on 29 June 2014. Over the course of 2014 and 2015, Islamic groups in countries such as Mali, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria pledged allegiance to IS. In many of these countries, Islamic groups were involved in civil conflicts against their own government. For a large share of these countries, from 2014
onwards, IS effectively became an external third party to an existing civil conflict, leading to new conflicts between IS and the particular state’s government. Despite the fact that IS was allegedly defeated in Syria in 2019, we see that the organization still has a good grip on conflicts around the world, and that the number of IS conflicts increased from 12 in 2018 to 16 in 2019, spreading to Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Mozambique. While IS had operated in Cameroon in 2015 and 2016, in the cases of Burkina Faso and Somalia, 2019 was the first time these countries experienced a conflict involving IS. As the graph in Figure 2 shows, conflicts involving the IS represent about 25–30% of all conflict in the past five years. In fact, without the IS conflicts we would have seen a fairly stable development in the number of conflicts over the past 20 years. Besides the number of conflicts involving IS, we can also see a peak in battle deaths related to IS between 2015 and 2017. At the same time, even though the number of IS conflicts is stable, the number of battle deaths in these conflicts has decreased substantially in the past two years.

Figure 3 shows the total number of conflicts (orange line) and the number of countries (blue columns) that have experienced conflict. Up until 2011, the ratio between countries and conflicts seems quite stable. The number of conflicts is slightly higher than the number of countries, suggesting that some countries have more than one conflict. However, after 2011, we see an increase in conflict-countries, but not as sharp as in the number of conflicts. This is related to IS conflicts discussed previously, as they often occur in countries already engaged in conflict. However, one year stands out, 2016, when we saw conflict in 38 countries. This was a steep increase from 2015 with 31 conflict-countries, but it was followed by an equally steep decrease in 2017 when 32 conflict countries were recorded. This one-off peak in 2016 is related to several “old” African conflicts that became active only for this year, such as conflicts in Congo between the government and the Ntsiloulous rebel group (last active in 2002), Rwanda and the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) (last active in 2012) and Mozambique between the government and Renamo (last active in 2014). These conflicts are not related to IS and had relatively low intensity, yet the peak shows that unaddressed grievances contribute to conflict recurrence (see the section on conflict recurrence).
Figure 4: Conflict split between conflicts and wars, 1989–2019
Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database and UCDP Battle Death Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)

Figure 5: Share of battle deaths in 2018 and 2019
Source: UCDP Battle Death Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)
As noted above, the number of battle deaths is often driven by a few high-intensity conflicts. In Figure 4 we differentiate between conflicts that experience between 25 and 999 battle deaths within a year, and wars that are conflicts with more than 1,000 battle deaths. The graph indicates that the share of wars has been quite stable since 2000. Approximately 15–20% of conflicts had more than 1,000 battle deaths, with a slight increase between 2014 and 2017. The number of battle deaths related to conflicts (less than 1,000 killed each year) is stable and it remains rare that more than 10,000 people are killed across all the conflicts in a year.

Figure 5 shows global trends in the share of battle-related deaths in 2018 and 2019. It shows that a few conflicts account for a large number of battle-related deaths. We can see that in 2019, Afghanistan accounted for most battle-related deaths. In fact, Afghanistan experienced an escalation from 2018 to 2019. Battle-related deaths increased from 25,679 in 2018 to almost 30,000 in 2019. Syria remained the second deadliest conflict in 2019 but battle-related deaths decreased to 7,304 in 2019 from 11,824 in 2018. In 2018, Yemen experienced the third largest number of battle-related deaths (4,515), but due to a considerable de-escalation in 2019 (1,663 battle-related deaths), Yemen was replaced by Somalia and Libya.

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<td>Eritrea-Ethiopia</td>
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<td>DR Congo</td>
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<th>Country</th>
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<td>Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
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However, while a country can have a large number of battle deaths in one year, the prevalence of violence over time can be equally if not more devastating. In Figure 6 we show the total number of battle deaths for the top 20 countries in the world between 1989 and 2019. Two countries stand out, Syria and Afghanistan. In addition, Ethiopia, which has both experienced a civil war, as well as an international war against Eritrea in 1999–2000, stands out. Figure 7 indicates the ranking of countries when we take battle deaths as a share of the population into account. This is important...
to consider as well since the relatively low numbers in absolute battle deaths can be substantial for a small country. Syria and Afghanistan are still topping the list. In Syria 1.6% of the population has been killed in conflict. The most notable difference from the list with absolute number is Bosnia-Herzegovina in third place, where almost 0.4% of the population was killed in the conflict in the early 1990s. In addition, we see a number of smaller countries entering this list such as Sierra Leone, Libya, Tajikistan, Burundi, and Rwanda (note the 1994 genocide is not included here).

To gain a more nuanced understanding of the relative share of state-based conflicts in the world, we show regional variation in state-based conflict trends between 1946 and 2019 in Figure 8. As is apparent from the graph, between 1946 and 2019, Africa experienced the largest number of distinct state-based conflicts in this period (101), followed by Asia (77), Europe (48), the Middle East (38) and the Americas (26). While Asia and Africa have the largest share of the conflicts, the Middle East has seen the largest relative increase in the past six years.

Figure 9 shows the breakdown of civil conflicts (i.e. the figure excludes interstate conflicts) by the involvement of third parties. An internal conflict is regarded as internationalized if one or more third party governments are involved with combat personnel in support of the objective of either side. The UN or regional Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) could count as such, depending on their mandates, but do not automatically make a conflict internationalized. In most cases, this means support for the government side, but for example in Ukraine, Russia is supporting the insurgents. The involvement of IS in a conflict is not counted as an internationalization of conflict by the UCDP.

Figure 9 indicates a sharp increase in internationalized civil conflict since 2014. This trend is associated with the increase of IS related conflicts. While approximately half of IS conflicts are also internationalized civil conflicts, this does not alone explain the sharp increase in the internationalization of conflict. In addition, we can also see that in the past five years the share of battle deaths related to internationalized civil conflict has surpassed the number of people being killed in “regular” civil conflict (i.e. non-internationalized conflicts). This could either be due to internationalization increasing the intensity of conflicts, or the fact that more intense conflicts are more likely to become internationalized.
Lastly, Figure 10 shows conflicts by incompatibility type. An insurgent group is coded as either aiming at replacing the government in the country, such as in Libya or in Yemen, or to get more autonomy in a region or seek secession, such as Kashmir in India and Pakistan. Since the 1990s the share of territorial and governmental conflicts has been approximately the same. However, in 2015 we see an increase in territorial conflicts. These are related to conflicts that involve IS. IS’s aim is to include all Islamic areas under their Caliphate, thus they are not challenging the government in countries where they are fighting but they engage in a conflict over the Muslim territories. For example, the government in Nigeria experienced a conflict with both IS and Boko Haram. Boko Haram is challenging the Nigerian government, so their conflict is coded as a governmental conflict, while the conflict with IS is coded as a territorial conflict.

Figure 9: Civil conflicts by international involvement and battle deaths, 1989–2019
Source: Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database and UCDP Battle Death Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)

Figure 10: Global trends in incompatibilities, 1946–2019
Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)
35 countries experienced state-based violence in 2019. This, however, does necessarily mean that all of a country is engulfed in conflict. In fact, conflicts are very often limited to smaller geographical areas within countries, with a few exceptions. We examine the geographical location of conflicts within countries using the 2019 version of the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED), which codes the geographical location of all conflict events (Sundberg & Melander, 2013). This dataset covers state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence (the latter two are presented in Figure 29).

Figure 11 shows the location of all state-based conflict events in 2019. The figure indicates a few conflict hotspots in the world. These hotspots are located in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen in the Middle East, in the border area between Mali and Burkina Faso, Eastern DRC and Somalia in Africa, and Afghanistan and the Philippines in Asia. Outside of these three regions there are very few conflicts. We can see a cluster of conflict events in Eastern Ukraine, and also in the eastern parts of Colombia. However, for many of the conflict countries in the world the geographical spread of conflict is limited to certain geographical areas, such as the north eastern part of Mozambique and the southern tip of Thailand.
4. Conflict Recurrence, 1989–2018

Conflicts entail considerable human and economic loss and finding a negotiated solution to them is in most cases difficult. Research has shown that conflict can trap countries in a vicious circle: amongst other things, it negatively impacts economic growth and increases the likelihood of further war (Collier et al., 2003). Whether a civil war recurs or not is in part conditioned by how the conflict ended. Previous research found that civil wars are less likely to recur in case of government victories or after peacekeepers’ deployment (Kreuz, 2010). On the other hand, the likelihood of conflict recurrence is higher if the previous conflict is fought with rebels aiming for the replacement of government and if conflict actors were mobilized along ethnic lines (ibid.). Preventing the recurrence of conflict and the conflict trap is one of the most important tasks policy-makers face. What are the global trends and regional trends in conflict recurrence?

This section uses data from PRIO’s Conflict Recurrence Database (Jarland et al. 2020). This dataset counts a state-based conflict as recurrent when there is at least one calendar year between the last event in the previous and the first event in the following episode – where an episode is a period of uninterrupted conflict, and an event is an isolated attack or battle within that episode. The dataset uses UCDP’s definition of state-based conflict, but it extends it and includes all violent events related to that conflict, rather than relying on the commonly used threshold of 25 battle-related deaths to define a conflict.

Conflict recurrence is analyzed both at the dyadic and at the state-based conflict level. As we indicated earlier, a state-based conflict is defined as an armed conflict over a stated incompatibility, where at least one of the actors is the government of a state. A dyad refers to a pair of belligerents in an armed conflict. Note that a conflict can have more than one dyad. The total number of conflict episodes identified between 1989 and 2018 is 347, with a total of 627 dyad-episodes. The PRIO Conflict Recurrence Database also codes the issue over which conflict recurrence occurred and information on actors, i.e. whether the recurring conflict is fought between the same, overlapping, or new actors. This data enables us to have a more nuanced overview of how unaddressed grievances can give rise to renewed conflict.

![Figure 12: Dyadic conflict recurrence per region, 1989–2018](source: PRIO Conflict Recurrence Database)
Figure 12 shows the number of conflict episode recurrences across actor dyads (i.e. between the same armed actors) across regions between 1989 and 2018. The graph shows whether a dyad experienced no recurrences, two, three, or more recurrences.

Figure 12 shows that, on the dyadic level, Africa experienced the highest number of non-recurring conflicts (127), followed by Asia (55), Europe (31), the Middle East (25), and the Americas (19). Conflict episodes recur four or more times on 14 counts in Asia, followed by Africa (9), the Middle East (5), Europe and Americas (1). We can also see that, across regions, dyadic conflicts in Asia recur three or more times. For example, the conflict in Myanmar between the government and the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), which started in 1990, recurred both in 1994 and 1999. The Middle East has a relatively lower share of dyadic conflict recurrence episodes in all recurrence categories. For example, the Turkish government fought the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), and the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK). The conflict against the DHKP-C started in 1990 and the last episode ended in 2016. This conflict recurred five times between the same or overlapping actors. The Turkish government’s conflict against the TAK started in 2005 and ended in 2017 and recurred three times. This example shows that Turkey experienced multiple recurring episodes of conflicts with different actors (different dyads recurred in the same period).

Figure 13 depicts the number of recurrences at the conflict level. Africa experienced the highest number of non-recurrent conflicts (30), but it is also the same region, together with Asia, that witnessed the highest number of four or more recurrent conflict episodes (12). Asia experienced the second highest number of one-episode or non-recurrent conflicts (19), followed by the Middle East and the Americas (15), and Europe (11). Africa experienced the highest number of two-time recurring conflict episodes (15), followed by Asia (5), the Middle East (4), and Europe (2). The picture somewhat changes when it comes to three-time recurring conflicts: In this category, Asia experienced the highest number of three-time recurring conflict episodes (12), followed by Africa (4), Europe (3), and the Americas and the Middle East (1).
This data shows that there is important regional variation in recurring conflicts. Conflicts in Africa and Asia experience a higher number of recurring conflicts than other regions. The frequent recurrence of conflicts and dyadic recurrences shows that the underlying incompatibilities and grievances of conflict parties have not been resolved.
5. Ceasefires

Armed conflicts involve considerable human suffering and thus stopping violence is one critical aim of any peace effort. Yet, violence can be halted during the lifecycle of a conflict by agreeing to a ceasefire. A ceasefire, however, does not necessarily mean that the underlying incompatibility between the belligerents has been addressed. Armed conflicts often experience ceasefires, yet until recently research did not pay enough systematic attention to the purpose, type, and impacts of ceasefires on conflict dynamics. We use Clayton et al.’s (2019) definition of ceasefires, where “ceasefires can be defined as all arrangements by or between conflict parties to stop fighting from a specific point in time.” Data in this section comes from the ETH/PRIO Civil Conflict Ceasefire Dataset, which includes information on all ceasefires during civil conflict between 1989 and 2018. The dataset codes whether a ceasefire is unilateral, bilateral, multilateral, verbal/written, or non-implemented. It also disaggregates ceasefires by purpose, timing, and type. Figure 14 shows all ceasefires between 1989 and 2018 across regions.

![Figure 14: Ceasefires per year, per region, 1989–2018](image)

Source: ETH/PRIO civil conflict CeaseFire dataset

Most ceasefires in this period were concluded in Asia (679), followed by Africa (626), the Middle East (364), Europe (348), and the Americas (90). Yet, the relative share of each region has undergone some important changes over time: For example, between 1991 and 1995, most ceasefires were recorded in Europe. From 1995, most ceasefires were agreed in conflicts in Asia and Africa. This development in part indicates an important geographical shift regarding the location of conflicts. The Middle East experienced the highest numbers of ceasefires in 2014 (45) and in 2016 (48), all of which were concluded in four conflict countries: Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Israel. The highest number of ceasefires (49) was recorded in 2003 in Africa in the following countries: Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Burundi, Somalia, and Sudan. This number is also the highest number for one region specifically.
Although the number of ceasefires (and conflicts) in Europe significantly decreased after 1995, 2014 saw a new peak in ceasefires in Europe when 32 ceasefires were recorded, all in Ukraine between the government and the Maidan, the government and the Donetsk Peoples Republic (DPR) and between the government and the Lugansk People’s Republic (LPR). Though numerous, ceasefires in 2014 in Ukraine were mostly not implemented and fighting quickly resumed. UCDP reports that the period between July and August 2014 was the most intense in the conflict between the government and the DPR. Since 2016, the conflict in eastern Ukraine remained in a deadlock and there is no political settlement in place (UCDP Government of Ukraine – DPR).

Figure 15 shows all ceasefires between 1989 and 2018 differentiating between the different types of ceasefires. The figure shows whether a ceasefire had a humanitarian-, peace process-, holiday-, election-, or other-related purpose.

Figure 15 shows that most ceasefires are related to peace processes, followed by humanitarian, other categories, holiday, and election-related ceasefires. We can see that ceasefires peaked in 1993 when 132 ceasefires were recorded, 96 of them being peace process related during the Yugoslav wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Peace process related ceasefires in 1993 were recorded in 18 other countries. Another significant trend is that since 2010, the number of humanitarian ceasefires has increased considerably, a potential indicator of how severe a conflict is. In 2016, a record high of 25 humanitarian ceasefires were recorded, all of them in Syria and Yemen. Election-related ceasefires are relatively fewer than peace process- and humanitarian-related ones. In 2018, three election-related ceasefires were recorded, all in Colombia.

As indicated earlier, ceasefires come in many forms and can be categorized into three broad types depending on the comprehensiveness of the agreement: Cessation of Hostilities, Cessation of Hostilities including compliances, and definitive ceasefires. Cessation of Hostilities ceasefires can be understood as informal arrangements to stop fighting but without any provisions to monitor
parties’ compliance to the agreement. Cessation of Hostilities including compliances are formal agreements usually linked to a peace process. These ceasefires include specific compliance measures and stipulate the monitoring and/or verification of the agreement. The third class, definitive ceasefires, are usually part of a peace agreement and they include a compliance mechanism. Definitive ceasefire agreements can also provide provisions to disarm and demobilize conflict parties (Clayton et al., 2019: 2). Figure 16 shows all ceasefires between 1989 and 2018 by differentiating between three different classes of ceasefires: Cessation of Hostilities, Cessation of Hostilities including compliances, and definitive ceasefires.

Figure 16: Ceasefires by type, 1989–2018
Source: ETH/PRIO civil conflict CeaseFire dataset

Figure 16 shows that, across all ceasefire types, by far the most prevalent type is Cessation of Hostilities, i.e. informal agreements without any provisions to ensure compliance. In total, 1,588 Cessation of Hostilities were recorded between 1989 and 2018, followed by Cessation of Hostilities including compliances (369) and definitive ceasefires (150). The large difference between the number of Cessation of Hostilities and Cessation of Hostilities including compliances can have multiple different reasons: On the one hand, the informality of the Cessation of Hostilities agreement makes it a less costly option for conflict parties to agree on. At the same time, the lack of costs (i.e. no enforcement measures) also means that these ceasefires can easily break down since there is no third-party to enforce compliance. Cessation of Hostilities are however not “inferior” to other agreement types, since they can be quickly activated for specific purposes such as humanitarian efforts, election-, or holiday-related purposes. The highest number of Cessation of Hostilities (105) was recorded in 1993, the majority of them during the Yugoslav wars in the territories of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The highest number of Cessation of Hostilities including compliances (34) was recorded in 2016, the majority of them in Syria between the government and various non-state actors and in Ukraine between the government and the Lugansk People’s Republic (LPR), and between the government and the Donetsk Peoples Republic (DPR). The highest number of definitive ceasefires (17) was recorded
in 2003, the majority of them in Ivory Coast and Burundi. In 2018, 67 ceasefires were recorded in total, a slight increase from 64 in 2017. In 2018, 50 Cessation of Hostilities, 14 Cessation of Hostilities including compliances, and 3 definitive ceasefires were recorded. The three definitive ceasefires were all recorded in South Sudan, between the government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement in Opposition (SPLM/A IO).
6. Trends in Peace Agreements

Conflicts can end in three different ways: one side’s decisive victory, the cessation of violence (“other” category), or with a peace agreement. Previous research found that the majority of civil wars end without a decisive outcome (“other” termination category) (Kreuz, 2010). Between 1990 and 2005, 18.4% of all intrastate conflicts (27 out of 147) ended with a peace agreement (Kreuz, 2010). Since 2015, UCDP recorded only one peace agreement that led to conflict termination, the Final Colombian Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2016 (Pettersson, Högbladh, and Öberg 2019: 594). These findings suggest that although the number of peace agreements have increased since the end of the Cold War, there are several challenges in finding and implementing a negotiated settlement to a conflict.

We use UCDP’s definition of peace agreements which “address the incompatibility, or conflict issue, stated by the warring parties, by either settling all of it, or by clearly outlining a process for how to regulate it” (Harbom, Högbladh, and Wallensteen 2006). This section uses data from the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset, which includes all peace agreements between warring parties active in the UCDP Dataset in the 1975–2018 period. The dataset differentiates between three different types of peace agreements, depending on how they address the incompatibility. Full peace agreements settle the incompatibility between the parties, while in partial peace agreements, there are still issues to be resolved. Peace process agreements only outline negotiations on the core issues of the conflict (Pettersson, Högbladh, and Öberg 2019). Figure 17 depicts all peace agreements between 1975 and 2018. The black line displays the number of conflicts over time in the same period.

Figure 17 shows that the total number of peace agreements peaked in 1994, followed by an overall decline. We also know that in 1991, the peak in the number of armed conflicts corresponded to a similar peak in peace agreements. In 1994, there were a total of 24 peace agreements and 48 conflicts. However, after the 1994 period, the pattern changed and the number of armed conflicts was not followed by a similar rise in peace agreements (Pettersson, Högbladh, and Öberg 2019: 594). For example, in 2016, 54 conflicts and only four peace agreements were recorded (in Afghanistan, Sudan, and two peace agreements in Colombia).
Previous research suggests three potential explanations for this. First, such systemic changes as the end of the Cold War paved the way for the settlement of multiple long-standing conflicts. Second, the rise and expansion of IS and conflicts with religious claims can make settlement more difficult. Third, most recent intrastate conflicts are internationalized conflicts. This type of conflict is associated with longer conflict duration and the presence of external actors can make it more difficult to find a negotiated solution (Pettersson, Högladh, and Öberg 2019: 595 citing Eck, Lacin & Öberg 2008, Svensson 2007, and Balch-Lindsay, Enterline & Joyce 2008). In the period between 2015 and 2018, a decline was recorded in the number of peace agreements from 13 in 2015 to 5 in 2018. This decrease however is not associated with a declining number of conflicts. In fact, the number of conflicts rose from 52 in 2015 to 54 in 2016, while the number of peace agreements declined from 13 in 2015 to 4 in 2016. One potential explanation for this decline is that this period saw the settlement of some long-standing conflicts. More specifically, while most peace agreements in 2015 were partial peace agreements (7 out 13), the period between 2016 and 2018 saw five full peace agreements that ended several long-standing conflicts, such as the conflict between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which started in the 1960s. Another example is the 2016 Kabul Agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and the Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan (Islamic Party of Afghanistan), which ended the conflict that started in the 1980s. In 2018, two peace agreements were recorded in an interstate conflict between the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The other three peace agreements were concluded in the following intrastate conflicts: between the government of Ethiopia and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), in Myanmar between the government and the New Mon State Party (NMSP), and in South Sudan between the government and the SPLM/A in Opposition. In the same year, 52 conflicts were recorded.

Figure 18 shows the different types of peace agreements between 1975 and 2018 and the number of conflicts (black line). As indicated in the first section on peace agreements, these agreements are not monolithic and different types of agreements (full, partial, and peace process) have different levels of comprehensiveness (or quality).

Most peace agreements between 1975 and 2018 were partial agreements. Amongst the total 355 peace agreements, 199 were partial, 78 were part of a peace process, and 78 were full peace agreements. It is important to note that partial peace agreements can be important first steps
towards a full peace agreement at a later point in time. The highest number of partial agreements was recorded in 1994 (18), the highest number of full agreements (6) was recorded in 1993, and the highest number of process agreements (12) was recorded in 1990. As was indicated earlier, full peace agreements settle the incompatibility between the conflict parties and are thus difficult to reach. This category represents the smallest share in the total number of peace agreements (78 out of the 355 peace agreements). The highest number of full peace agreements (6) was reached in 1993 when 43 conflicts were recorded. The number of conflicts rose between 2012 (from 33) and 2016 (to 54). This latest round of a rising number of conflicts was not matched by a similar rise in full agreements (both in 2012 and 2016, only 2 full agreements were recorded). The number of full peace agreements rose from one in 2017 to two in 2018. In 2018, both peace agreements were concluded in an interstate conflict, between the governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia. At the same time, it is important to note that full peace agreements sometimes do not result in sustainable peace. In Sudan for example, the 2015 full peace agreement between the government and the SPLM/A in Opposition lasted less than a year before fighting renewed.

Figure 19 shows all peace agreements across regions between 1975 and 2018.

Figure 19 shows that the total number of peace agreements peaked in 1994 when in total 24 peace agreements were recorded, nine of them in Africa. Over time, the highest number of peace agreements was concluded in Africa, in total 187 peace agreements between 1975 and 2018. Africa is followed by Asia (63), the Americas (62), the Middle East (24), and Europe (19). Compared to 2017, in 2018, three new peace agreements were concluded in Africa: between Eritrea and Ethiopia, between the government of Ethiopia and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and in South Sudan between the government and the SPLM/A in Opposition. In 2018, Asia also experienced a peace agreement in Myanmar between the government and the New Mon State Party (NMSP).

Although the Middle East is home to some of the deadliest conflicts, peace agreements are relatively rare in the region. The highest number of peace agreements (12) was seen in 1975, all of them between the government of Iran and Iraq. The last peace agreement in the region was concluded in 2014 in Yemen between the government, the Southern Movement, and Ansarallah. One possible explanation for the relatively low number of peace agreements in the region is that if
conflict parties’ demands are explicitly connected to religious reasons, then these demands are often perceived as indivisible, thus making it more difficult for belligerents to find a negotiated solution to their conflict (Svensson 207). Regional variation in the prevalence of peace agreements can be explained by different factors connected to the conflicts (type of incompatibility, number of actors involved, internationalization, etc.). Yet, it is also important to keep in mind that peace agreements are often mediated by third parties and that there is a high level of variation when it comes to the different levels of institutionalization of mediation activities across regions. In the past couple of decades, the African region has experienced a considerable improvement of mediation capacities. Regional organizations such as the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, and IGAD frequently mediate conflicts. No similar institutionalization has taken place in the Middle East. Lundgren (2017) finds that international organizations that are capable of deploying field missions, such as peacekeeping operations, are more likely to successfully mediate intrastate conflicts.

Figure 20 shows all full peace agreements across different regions between 1975 and 2018. The black line shows the number of conflicts in the same period.

Figure 20 shows that the highest number of full peace agreements was concluded in Africa (54), followed by Asia (13), Europe (5), the Americas (5), and the Middle East (1). Africa experienced the highest number of full peace agreements in a given year across all regions, when in 2003, five full agreements were concluded. The same year saw 33 active conflicts all over the world. The highest number of peace agreements in a given year was recorded in 1993, when six full agreements were concluded, amongst which three took place in Africa, two in Asia, and one in Europe. The same year experienced 43 conflicts across all regions. The last full peace agreement in Europe was the Ohrid Agreement, concluded in 2001 between the government of Macedonia and the National Liberation Army (UCK). Strikingly, in the period 1975–2018, the Middle East experienced only one full peace agreement in 1990 between the Government of South Yemen and the Government of North Yemen, which eventually resulted in the unification of Yemen. In Asia, the last full peace agreement (Kabul Agreement) was recorded in 2016 between the government of Afghanistan and the Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan. Two full agreements were recorded in Africa in 2018, both in an
interstate conflict between the government of Eritrea and Ethiopia. The last full peace agreement in the Americas was recorded in 2016 between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Conflicts do not have to involve the government of a state to cause considerable human suffering. In fact, a large amount of contemporary violence takes place between groups that are not linked to the government. UCDP defines non-state conflicts as the use of armed force between organized groups, neither of which is the government of a state, resulting in at least 25 annual battle-related deaths. Organized groups come in multiple forms: (i) formally organized groups are defined as any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force against another similarly formally organized group, (ii) informally organized groups refers to any group without an announced name, but which uses armed force against another similarly organized group and (iii) Informally organized identity groups are defined as groups which have a common identity along religious, ethnic, national, tribal or clan lines. This category includes conflicts defined as communal, where incompatibilities are based on communal identity.

Figure 21 shows an increase in non-state conflicts over the past 10 years. In 2019, there were a total of 67 non-state conflicts in the world. This is a slight decrease from 2017 and 2018, with respectively 85 and 80 non-state conflicts. Nonetheless, it seems that the number of non-state conflicts has stabilized at a considerably higher level than we saw a decade ago. We can see that the number of non-state conflicts between formally organized groups has substantially increased. The level of communal conflicts seems to be quite stable over time.

Figure 22 shows variation in the number of non-state conflicts across regions in the 1989–2019 period. Although the Middle East experienced the largest relative increase in this type of conflict, Africa is still the most severely affected by non-state conflicts. While Africa and the Middle East both feature high levels of non-state conflict, the two regions are characterized by different modes of conflict between non-state groups. The Middle East is characterized by fighting between highly organized actors, while in Africa we see a higher number of communal conflicts (for more information, see the regional conflict trends PRIO Papers).
While there is relatively little research on non-state conflicts, a few explanations for why we see this type of conflict can be identified. First, many of these conflicts occur in the periphery and could be a sign of lack of control or lack of interest by the state, and thus it signals a loss of state monopoly of violence (Wahlert 2007). Second, many of the non-state conflicts happen during civil conflict, when the state is either weakened or has directed resources towards the civil conflict. Third, non-state conflicts are often related to organized crime (Kalyvas 2015). The most obvious example is the drug cartels in Mexico, but also other rebel groups engaging in for example extraction and smuggling of natural resources. Finally, splintering of rebel groups, such as for example in the Philippines, also often leads to an increase in non-state conflicts (Pearlman and Cunningham 2012).
Figure 23 shows the share of battle deaths across different types of non-state conflicts. In total, almost 19,600 people were killed in non-state conflicts in 2019. While it’s a decrease from 2018, this number is still amongst the top three highest since 1989. The main increase in battle-related deaths is related to formally organized groups. The number of people being killed in communal violence is quite stable and was slightly higher in the 1990s than today.

Figure 24 shows the share of battle-related deaths in non-state conflicts across regions in 2018 and 2019. This graph shows some noteworthy trends. Although the number of non-state conflicts in Latin America was less than in Africa and in the Middle East, Latin America experiences the deadliest violent non-state conflicts. Latin America’s relative share of battle-related deaths has also increased from 2018 to 2019. This is related to the high level of violence between drug cartels in Mexico. According to Shirk and Wallman (2015), criminal violence in the country since 2007 has resulted in an estimated 60,000–70,000 “additional” homicides. Furthermore, even though there are countries in the region that had higher homicide rates, Mexico experienced the largest increase in criminal violence over the last decade (Shirk and Wallman 2015: 1349). Furthermore, as the government ramped up efforts against criminal groups, these groups became better organized and acquired more sophisticated armaments and training, further enhancing insecurity (InSight Crime 2017). One of the most comprehensive studies on social violence in Latin America examined the period between 1980 and 2010 and found that the effect of drugs on violence depends on the nature of drug-related activity and that drug-producing and/or transit countries are not systematically related to violence, but major money-laundering states on average experience higher homicide rates (Rivera, 2015). Africa experienced the second highest number of deaths from non-state conflicts, followed by the Middle East, but in 2019 both continents experienced less deaths than in 2018.
8. One-Sided Violence

Civilians are often the hardest hit by violence in ongoing conflicts, regardless of whether it’s a state-based or a non-state conflict. UCDP defines one-sided violence as “the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths. Extrajudicial killings in custody are excluded.”

Figure 25 shows the number of groups that have perpetrated one-sided violence towards civilians leading to more than 25 battle deaths in a year. Overall, there has been a decrease in groups conducting one-sided violence since the mid-2000s. In contrast to the trends for conflict, we do not see an increase in the last 5–7 years. Figure 25 indicates that the biggest share of one-sided violence is perpetrated by non-state actors and we see a slight decrease in the number of governments perpetrating one-sided violence compared to 30 years ago. However, as the UCDP data do not include extrajudicial killings one-sided violence conducted by the state is likely to be under reported. Thus, the UCDP data on one-sided violence should be complemented by other data sources that specifically focus on violence perpetrated by governments against their own citizens. The Political Terror Scale (PTS) is the most widely used data source on extrajudicial killings. For country specific reports, see annual reports by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

It is difficult to detect a trend in the number of people being killed in one-sided violence. It seems that the total number often lies between 4,000 and 8,000 people each year, but that there are occasional spikes related to specific groups, such as the ethnic cleansing in Srebrenica in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995, Afghanistan under Taliban rule in 1998, various non-state actors in DR Congo in 2002, and IS in 2014 and 2015.

*Excluding the genocide in Rwanda due to the magnitude of the one-sided violence. The UCDP one-sided violence data has registered 522,600 fatalities in Rwanda in 1994 at the hands of the Rwandan Government.

Figure 26 shows the number of groups conducting one-sided violence between 1989 and 2019 across regions. We can see that, similarly to the number of non-state conflicts, Africa has the...
largest number of incidents of one-sided violence, followed by Asia, and the Middle East. Africa is the only region where we see an increase of non-state groups using one-sided violence.

Figure 27 shows the number of fatalities related to one-sided violence across regions. We include IS as a separate category, because much of the one-sided violence conducted by this organization is spread across many regions. Africa is also the region with the highest number of fatalities related to one-sided violence, with the exception of 2011 and 2012 where the Middle East had the highest number.
Figure 28 shows the number of fatalities due to one-sided violence in 2018 and 2019 across regions and includes a special transnational category. Territories under IS control cut across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Here again, Africa accounts for the highest number of deaths, followed by IS, Asia, and the Middle East. More worrying is that the number of fatalities due to one-sided violence has increased in all three continents. Fatalities from one-sided violence from IS however decreased.

Figure 29: State-based conflict, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence events globally (2019)
Source: UCDP Georeferenced Event Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)
The map in Figure 29 shows conflict events related to the three different types of conflict (state based, non-state, and one-sided violence). We can see that non-state conflicts are much more common in the Americas and Africa, compared to Asia and the Middle East. Mexico stands out quite clearly here, with a large number of non-state events, but no state-based violence. Non-state violence in Mexico is mainly related to the fighting between drug cartels. One-sided violence seems to be quite widespread in conflict areas in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, while in the two latter regions, one-sided violence is in most cases linked to the same geographical areas that experience state-based conflicts. In Africa, one-sided violence more often occurs in areas that do not experience state-based violence (for more information on each region, see the regional PRIO Papers on conflict trends).
9. Discussion and Conclusion

In this PRIO Paper, we have provided an overview of trends in state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts, and one-sided violence at the global level between 1989 and 2019. We have complemented the conflict perspective with data on conflict recurrence, ceasefires, peace agreements, and the geographic location of various types of conflicts. We have relied on data from UCDP, PRIO, and ETH for this paper. We have disaggregated global data to the regional level to gain a better understanding of today’s conflict patterns.

What does the data tell us and what are the policy implications of conflict trends? While this paper do not touch much upon the causes of conflicts, nor the specific context of conflicts, it does give us an ide of what the trends look like. Through these trends we can learn more about how the global picture changes, and give some indications of what we can expect in the future. It can also point to where we need to dig more into mechanisms to better understand the trends that are going on.

We know that intrastate conflicts have replaced conflict between states. We also know that since 2014, the number of internationalized civil conflicts has substantially increased. We show that in 2019, 35 countries experienced a civil conflict in their territories and approximately 50,000 battle-related deaths were recorded in total. In 2019, Afghanistan and Syria accounted for most of the battle-related deaths. We also show that despite the alleged defeat of IS, the number of conflicts involving IS has increased from 12 in 2018 to 16 in 2019.

When it comes to halting violence or resolving conflict parties’ underlying incompatibilities, we can see that Asia and Africa experienced the highest number of ceasefires and peace agreements between 1946 and 2018. When it comes to the different types of ceasefires, we showed that peace process related ceasefires are the most common type, but since 2010 there is a growing number of humanitarian ceasefires, which is a potential indication of conflict severity.

We show that non-state conflicts are prevalent across all regions and that both the number of this type of conflict and non-state violence related battle deaths saw a decrease in 2019 compared to 2018. We also show that non-state conflicts reveal some important variations when it comes to the type of actors. The Middle East is characterized by fighting between highly organized actors, while in Africa we see a higher number of communal conflicts. Latin America experiences the deadliest violent non-state conflicts, most of which are related to the high level of violence between drug cartels in Mexico. Africa is the only region where we see an increase in groups using one-sided violence, a trend which is closely connected to the expansion of IS in the region.

There are several important policy implications of the data we have presented. First, conflicts and their resolution have to be closely monitored over time and space. But to do so, we need quality data which can provide empirical input for policy-makers when it comes to the prevention, monitoring, or resolution of conflicts. We need better data on one-sided violence, social violence, and more data on non-state conflicts. Second, given the record high number of state-based armed conflicts, there is an urgent need to increase investment in the development of effective early warning systems to prevent the eruption of new conflicts and to halt the spread of already existing ones. Third, recurrent conflicts are important indications of failure to settle underlying incompatibilities between conflict parties. This means that quality peace agreements and the effective implementation of agreements is an urgent task. This would also mean that policy-makers have to pay sustained attention to post-conflict societies even after an agreement was struck, and devote resources accordingly. Transitional Justice, reconciliation, and political power
sharing are areas that can promote long-term peace. Regional organizations with peacemaking experience who are located in these conflict hotspots are well positioned to lead these efforts in close cooperation with the UN. Fourth, while non-state conflicts are commonplace, we know little about their emergence, developments, or resolution. Relatedly, we caution against underestimating the threat IS poses across the world. Policy-makers need to employ out-of-the box thinking when it comes to non-state conflicts that endanger the achievement of sustainable development goals.
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Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2019

This PRIO Paper examines global trends in conflicts between 1989 and 2019 using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). In addition, it examines trends in conflict recurrence, ceasefires, and peace agreements in the same period. 2019 saw a record high number of state-based conflicts, with a total of 54. Many of these conflicts are related to the Islamic State (IS), which is, despite the crackdown in Syria, far from being defeated: In 2019 it reached Burkina Faso and Somalia.

In 2019, more than 50,000 people were killed in conflict-related events, most of them in Afghanistan and Syria. This was nonetheless a decrease from 2018. The international community is working hard to resolve conflicts across the world. The past 10 years saw an increase in the number of humanitarian ceasefires, especially in the Middle East. However, there has been a relative decrease in peace agreements in the past few years. While non-state conflicts declined from 2018 to 2019, they still remain high and are a persistent threat to security, especially in Africa and Latin America. In 2019, Africa was the only region to see an increase in one-sided violence. Promisingly, however, Africa has also experienced the highest number of peace agreements in this thirty-year period.

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