Conflict Trends in Africa, 1989–2019

Africa has seen some of the deadliest conflicts in history. Since the early 2000s, however, battle-related deaths in the region have remained relatively low. This PRIO Paper takes a closer look at trends in conflicts in Africa between 1989 and 2019 and compares them to global trends, using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). In addition, the paper analyzes trends in ceasefires and peace agreements during the same period, as well as trends in peacekeeping operations from 1994 to 2018.

While the number of state-based conflicts in Africa reached a record high in 2019, these conflicts are mostly of a low intensity. Nevertheless, Africa exhibits an increasing trend in non-state conflicts and conflicts involving the Islamic State, as well as a rise in one-sided violence.

Despite these worrying developments, Africa saw the highest number of definitive ceasefires and peace agreements when compared with other world regions. Further, Africa also experienced a steady increase in peacekeeping operations between 1994 and 2018. These trends serve as important indicators of concerted efforts to solve conflicts within the region.

Júlia Palik
Siri Aas Rustad
Fredrik Methi
Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
Conflict Trends in Africa, 1989–2019

Júlia Palik
Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Siri Aas Rustad*
Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Fredrik Methi
Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

* Corresponding author:
  Siri Aas Rustad: sirir@prio.org
PRIO encourages its researchers and research affiliates to publish their work in peer-reviewed journals and book series, as well as in PRIO’s own Report, Paper and Policy Brief series. In editing these series, we undertake a basic quality control, but PRIO does not as such have any view on political issues. We encourage our researchers actively to take part in public debates and give them full freedom of opinion. The responsibility and credit for the hypotheses, theories, findings and views expressed in our publications thus rests with the authors themselves.

This work is licensed under CC BY 4.0. The contents can be shared and processed for free, provided that the author is credited correctly, indicating whether changes have been made, and without suggesting that the licensor endorses the use of the work.

ISBN: 978-82-343-0153-7 (print)
ISBN: 978-82-343-0154-4 (online)
## Contents

- Contents .......................................................... 3
- List of Figures ................................................... 4
- 1. Introduction .................................................... 5
- 2. Executive Summary .......................................... 7
- 3. State-Based Conflicts ........................................ 8
- 4. Geographical Spread of State-Based Conflict ........... 15
- 5. Ceasefires ...................................................... 17
- 6. Trends in Peace Agreements ............................... 20
- 8. One-Sided Violence .......................................... 26
- 9. Geographic Spread of Conflict ............................ 29
- 10. Peacekeeping Operations ................................ 31
- 11. Discussion and Conclusion ............................... 35
- 12. References .................................................. 37
List of Figures

1. Figure 1: Battle deaths and state-based armed conflicts in Africa, by conflict type, 1946–2019
2. Figure 2: Number of countries with state-based armed conflict, by region, 1946–2019
3. Figure 3: Conflict and battle deaths split between conflicts and wars in Africa, 1989–2019
4. Figure 4: Battle deaths in Africa in 2018 and 2019
5. Figure 5: Share of battle deaths globally in 2018 and 2019
6. Figure 6: Total absolute number of battle deaths by country, 1989–2019
7. Figure 7: Battle deaths as share of population by country, 1989–2019
8. Figure 8: Number of countries with conflicts vs number of conflicts, Africa 1989–2019
9. Figure 9: Number of civil conflicts with and without international involvement, Africa 1946–2019
10. Figure 10: Number of conflicts based on territorial or governmental incompatibilities (or a mixture of both) in Africa, 1946–2019
11. Figure 11: State-based conflict countries and conflict events in Africa in 2019
12. Figure 12: Geographical location of state-based conflict countries and conflict events (2019)
13. Figure 13: Ceasefires per year, per region, 1989–2018
14. Figure 14: Ceasefires by purpose, Africa, 1989–2018
15. Figure 15: Ceasefires by type, Africa, 1989–2018
16. Figure 16: Peace agreements by region, 1975–2018
17. Figure 17: Peace agreements and conflicts in Africa, 1975–2018
18. Figure 18: Total number of non-state conflicts, by region, 1989–2019
19. Figure 19: Non-state conflicts in Africa, by type of conflict, 1989–2019
20. Figure 20: Non-state conflicts, conflict countries and battle deaths in Africa, 1989–2019
21. Figure 21: Share of battle deaths in non-state conflict by region, 2018 and 2019
22. Figure 22: One-sided violence in Africa, by perpetrator, 1989–2019
23. Figure 23: Incidents of one-sided violence, by region, 1989–2018
24. Figure 24: Fatalities in one-sided violence in 2018 and 2019, by region and IS
25. Figure 25: State-based conflict, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence events in Africa, 2019
26. Figure 26: State-based conflict, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence events globally, 2019
27. Figure 27: Average number of troops per year and the total number of PKOs in Africa, 1994–2018
28. Figure 28: PKOs location and troop size in Africa, 1994–2018
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 and across continents, and the types of violence employed by various actors. We take the lead in this effort by providing an overview of both global and regional conflict trends. This approach enables us 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 trends in conflict and peace attempts in Africa, which we hope can help policy and decision makers, practitioners, and regional and country experts further understand the contexts they are working in.

This paper is part of a series of four PRIO Papers on Conflict Trends. In this paper, we provide data on and examine conflict trends in Africa, particularly since 1989, and compare them to global trends. 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 paper need not necessarily be read from cover to cover, but should rather be considered as a work of reference on peace and conflict trends in Africa.

**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 provide PRIO Papers on conflict trends in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as a global overview. We would like to note the limitations of these papers. We rely on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) data because it is the best available global dataset when it comes to armed violence, yet some caveats remain: First, we would like to emphasize that these papers present 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

---

To learn more about the UCDP’s data collection and coding procedure, see: [www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/faq/#How_are_UCDP_data_collected](www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/faq/#How_are_UCDP_data_collected)
insight. 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.\(^2\) 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.\(^3\) Coding is based on news reports as well as reports from human rights organizations and from the UN. 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.\(^4\) 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, as the data does not allow for this.\(^5\) We welcome comments and questions on any part of this PRIO Paper.

\(^2\) 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.

\(^3\) UCDP provides fatality estimates in three different categories (best, high, low estimates). The best figure should be viewed as a baseline.

\(^4\) For more information on UCDP’s one-sided violence dataset, see Sundberg, 2009.

\(^5\) For existing data on various topics related to gender, conflict, and peace, see publications from the PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security.
2. Executive Summary

2019 saw a record high in state-based conflicts in Africa: In 2019, 25 state-based conflicts were recorded, four more than in 2018. A record number of 13 conflicts were fought over territory. Internationalized civil wars are also at an all-time high. In 2019, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Somalia, and Burundi all saw external involvement in their domestic conflicts. Multiple state-based conflicts in Africa are related to the rise and expansion of the Islamic State (IS). In 2019, nine countries in Africa (Cameroon, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Libya, Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, and Mozambique) experienced conflicts with IS within their territories.

Excelling at working towards peace: In our regional comparison, Africa experienced the highest number of definitive ceasefires and peace agreements. The highest number of ceasefires was recorded in 2003, when 49 ceasefires were concluded in 10 different countries. There was a steady increase in the number of peace agreements from 1988 onwards and in 2003 and 2004, the number of peace agreements exceeded the number of conflicts. After 2008, we see fewer peace agreements, while the number of conflicts has risen. In 2018, four peace agreements were recorded. Africa also experienced a large number of peacekeeping operations (PKOs) between 1994 and 2018. Since 2002, there has been a steady increase in the number of PKOs and their troop sizes. Between 1999 and 2006, average troop size grew more than twenty-two-fold. Troop numbers reached a historic height in 2010, when almost 80,000 peacekeeping troops were deployed in Africa in eight missions.

Non-state conflicts decreased but remained one of the most serious threats: The number of battle-related deaths from non-state conflicts in 2019 (2,791) is the lowest recorded number in Africa since 2012. While most non-state conflicts in Africa are still communal conflicts, where incompatibilities are based on communal identity, the 27 recorded communal conflicts in 2019 represent the lowest number of this type of conflict since 2014. In many cases, state-based and non-state conflicts take place in the same areas; however, it is also clear that in some countries, such as Nigeria, South Sudan, and Eritrea, non-state are occurring throughout the country.

Rising one-sided violence: When compared to other regions, Africa accounts for the largest number of incidents of one-sided violence. Although the total number of one-sided violence events and the resulting battle-related deaths have decreased in Africa from 2018 to 2019, one-sided violence perpetrated by non-state actors increased from 2018 to 2019.
3. State-Based Conflicts

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 state-based conflict, there has to be a contested incompatibility that concerns the government (for example, the conflict between the government of Somalia and Al-Shabaab) and/or territory (for example, the conflict between the government of Cameroon and the Ambazonia insurgents over the territory of Ambazonia located in southwestern Cameroon) 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 or dyad that reaches at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a specific calendar year. This measurement does not account for a 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 shows the development of state-based conflicts in Africa between 1946 and 2019. We differentiate between the following types of state-based conflicts: colonial wars, civil wars, interstate wars, and internationalized civil wars. The highest number of civil wars was recorded in 1991 when 17 intrastate conflicts were fought in Africa, the majority of which were low-intensity conflicts. The total number of state-based conflicts increased from 21 in 2018 to 25 in 2019. The 25 state-based conflicts consist of 11 civil wars and 14 internationalized civil wars. Internationalized civil wars are at a record high level. 2019 saw four more such conflicts than in 2018. In 2019, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Somalia, and Burundi all saw external involvement in their domestic conflicts.6

Interstate war remains a rare event. Since 1990, there have been seven wars between states in total, the latest of which took place in 2016 between Ethiopia and Eritrea. No interstate wars were recorded in 2019. Although it has been claimed that the Islamic State (IS) has been defeated in the Middle East, the IS is very much present and active in Africa. Multiple state-based conflicts in Africa are related to the rise and expansion of the IS. In 2019, nine countries in Africa (Cameroon, Burundi received support from the Democratic Republic of Congo in its fight against the RED Tabara group."

---

6 In 2019, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Somalia fought against IS, whereas Burundi fought against RED Tabara rebel group. Cameroon was supported by Chad, Burkina Faso received support from France, and Somalia received support from the US in their fights against IS. Burundi received support from the Democratic Republic of Congo in its fight against the RED Tabara group.
Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Libya, Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, and Mozambique) experienced conflicts with IS within their territories.

Figure 1 also displays trends in battle-related deaths in state-based conflicts, as depicted by the black line. We can see a sharp decrease in battle-related deaths between 2014 and 2018 – from 10,132 in 2014 to 6,799 in 2018. However, this trend changed in 2019, when for the first time since 2014 there was an increase in battle-related deaths in state-based conflict: battle-related deaths increased from 6,799 in 2018 to 8,407 in 2019. This escalation is due to increased violence in Libya, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Mozambique, and Niger.

Figure 2: Number of countries with state-based armed conflict, by region, 1946–2019
Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)

To gain a more nuanced understanding of the relative share of state-based conflicts in the world, we present regional variation in state-based conflict trends between 1946 and 2019 in Figure 2. Since 1946, Africa has been the region which has experienced the highest number of unique state-based conflicts, (101), followed by Asia (77), Europe (48), the Middle East (38) and the Americas (26). While Asia and Africa represent the largest share of the conflicts, the Middle East has seen the largest relative increase in the past six years.

Figure 3: Conflict and battle deaths split between conflicts and wars in Africa, 1989–2019
Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database and UCDP Battle Death Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)
Figure 3 shows the number of battle-related deaths in state-based conflict in Africa by differentiating between wars (at least 1,000 battle-related deaths) and conflicts (25–999 battle-related deaths). The highest number of battle-related deaths took place in 1990, when almost 65,000 people were killed. In that year, the majority of battle-related deaths stemmed from five conflicts (almost 63,000 deaths), whereas eight wars that same year accounted for 1,840 deaths. The next peak took place in 2000, when six wars accounted for 6,770 deaths and nine conflicts accounted for more than 52,000 deaths, bringing the total number of battle-related deaths to 58,770. From 2000 onwards, we can see a sharp decrease in battle-related deaths both within conflicts and wars. The next peak took place in 2014, when 11 conflicts accounted for more than 7,600 deaths and three wars resulted in 2,532 deaths. These numbers show that the majority of battle-related deaths in Africa are taking place due to conflicts, thus indicating a large number of low intensity conflicts. In 2019, there was an increase in both conflicts and wars compared to 2018 (from 20 conflicts in 2018 to 22 in 2019 and from one war in 2018 to three in 2019). Battle-related deaths from wars decreased from 2018 to 2019, but deaths due to conflicts almost doubled.

Figure 4 compares battle-related deaths in Africa between 2018 and 2019. The figure reveals some noteworthy trends. From 2018 to 2019, there was a slight de-escalation in Somalia (from 2,208 battle-related deaths in 2018 to 1,945 in 2019), but a significant escalation in Libya. Libya experienced 44 battle-related deaths in 2018 and 1,695 in 2019. This increase is largely attributable to the government’s fight against the Forces of the House of Representatives (alternatively called the “Tobruk-based government” or, by the name of its major militia, the Libyan National Army/LNA). This conflict killed more than 1,600 people in 2019. We can also see a moderate escalation in Nigeria (largely due to the government’s fight against IS) and another significant
escalation in Burkina Faso (reflecting the government’s fights against IS and the Mali-based and al-Qaida-affiliated JNIM rebel group). In countries that experienced escalation – Libya, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mozambique, and Rwanda – external states were involved, and the majority of these countries that experienced spikes in battle-related deaths fought against IS and often against other non-state actors too.

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.

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, since relatively low numbers in absolute battle deaths can be substantial for a small country. Syria and Afghanistan are still topping the list.
1.6% of the population have been killed in conflict. The most notable difference from the list with absolute numbers is Bosnia-Herzegovina in third place, where almost 0.4% of the population were 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).

Figure 8 compares the number of conflict-affected countries with the total number of state-based conflicts in Africa between 1989 and 2019. Most of the time, these two numbers follow each other to a large degree. The UCDP data records not only the number of conflict-affected countries but also the number of conflicts. Thus, a country can have several ongoing conflicts at the same time. For example, in 2019 the government of Mali simultaneously fought against the Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) rebel group and IS. In the same year, the government of Somalia was also engaged in two different conflicts: one against IS and one against Al-Shabaab. 2019 saw a record number of conflicts, with 25 conflicts in 18 countries. This is an increase from 2018 when 17 conflict-affected countries and 21 state-based conflicts were recorded. This means that there is one new conflict-affected country in 2019 (Ethiopia against a military faction led by Asaminew Tsige) and four more conflicts. Mozambique experienced a new conflict with IS in 2019 and the continuation of its conflict with Ansar al-Sunnah.

Figure 9 displays conflicts with and without international involvement. UCDP defines an internationalized conflict as a conflict where the government, or the opposing side, or both sides receive support from external states that actively participate in the conflict. The deployment of peacekeeping forces could also fall into this category, but do not automatically make a conflict internationalized. It is important to note that the involvement of IS in a conflict is not counted as internationalization of conflict, despite it being an external third party interfering in the conflict.
(we elaborate further on the involvement of IS in conflicts in the associated PRIO Paper ‘Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2019’). Generally, external actors can complicate or help to resolve conflicts. Research has shown that internationalized conflicts tend to last longer and can often be more severe. At the same time, external actors can also prevent escalation rather than exacerbate violence. In short, the motivation and interest of the interveners in the conflict matters.

The number of internationalized conflicts in Africa largely followed an increasing pattern from 2007 onwards, and a rather sharp increase from 10 internationalized conflicts in 2018 to 14 in 2019. Such a high number has never before been recorded in the UCDP data beginning at 1946. For example, in its fight against Al-Shabaab, Somalia receives support from a total of 10 external states. At the same time, Somalia is fighting another conflict against IS. In this IS conflict, the government is supported by the US. The example of Somalia shows how the presence of multiple domestic actors (insurgent groups) and external actors (supporters of governments) can result in complicated conflict contexts.

What are the conflicts in Africa fought over? Following UCDP, we differentiate between two types of incompatibilities: conflicts over government, and/or over territory. Conflicts over government concern the type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition. Conflict over territory include conflict over the status of a territory, secession or autonomy. Figure 10 depicts the number of conflicts in Africa between 1946 and 2019 and disaggregates conflict types into territorial or governmental incompatibilities, or a mixture of these two categories. In general, more conflicts were fought over government than over territory. The highest number of conflicts fought over governmental incompatibilities took place in 1991, with 13 recorded governmental conflicts (and five conflicts over territorial incompatibilities). The highest number of territorial conflicts took place in 2019, when 13 conflicts were fought over territory (and 12 over government). Between 1946 and 2019, no conflicts were recorded that experienced a mixture of both governmental and territorial incompatibilities. The rise in territorial conflicts from eight in 2018 to 13 in 2019 is largely attributable to conflicts involving IS in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Somalia.
Figure 9: Number of civil conflicts with and without international involvement, Africa 1946–2019
Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database and UCDP Battle Death Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)

Figure 10: Number of conflicts based on territorial or governmental incompatibilities (or a mixture of both) in Africa, 1946–2019
Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database and UCDP Battle Death Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)
4. Geographical Spread of State-Based Conflict

At the global level, many countries experienced state-based conflicts in 2019. However, this does not necessarily mean that entire countries are engulfed by conflict. In fact, conflicts are very often limited to smaller geographical areas within countries, with a few exceptions. In this section, we examine the geographical location of state-based conflict within countries in Africa and use the latest 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 geographical distribution of the latter two types of conflict will be presented in later sections of this paper.

The map in Figure 11 shows state-based conflict countries in blue, and conflict events with orange dots in Africa as of 2019. We can see a large variation between conflict countries in terms of how spread out the conflict is. Furthermore, there is also variation within each country regarding the location of conflict. There are only a few African countries where the entire country is affected by conflict (see conflict events). However, there are a few hotspots: The Lake Chad region (Northeast Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger) and the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo have been conflict-ridden for years. At the same time, we can also see new hotspots that have become much more violent over the past year, such as the border region between Mali and Burkina Faso, as well as the Ambazonia region in Cameroon, which is located at the southern border of Nigeria. This conflict originates from the 2016 protests, which were led by lawyers,
students and teachers against the marginalization of Cameroon’s Anglophone minority. As protests were violently put down by the government, the protesters begun to demand independence for Ambazonia, the name given to the region by the separatists.

Figure 12 shows the location of all 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-affected 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.
5. Ceasefires

Stopping violence is one critical aim of any peace effort. Yet, violence can be halted during the lifecycle of a conflict by the parties agreeing to a ceasefire. A ceasefire however does not necessarily mean that the underlying incompatibility between the belligerents has been addressed. Ceasefires are commonplace in many armed conflicts, 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.”

In this section, our analyses build on the ETH/PRIO Civil War 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 distinguishes ceasefires by their purpose, timing, and type. Gaining a better understanding of the role and effect of ceasefires is important, because ceasefires can have different results. While ceasefires can be critical in peace processes and can provide humanitarian access to conflict-affected populations, conflict parties can also utilize ceasefires for more malign tactical reasons such as rearmament, relocation, or to improve their military position (Toft, 2010; Kolås, 2011).

Figure 13 shows all ceasefires between 1989 and 2018 across regions. 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 onwards, most ceasefires were agreed in conflicts in Asia and Africa. This development in part reflects the geographical shift regarding the location of conflicts, analysed in the previous section. The Middle East experienced the highest numbers of ceasefires in 2014 (45) and in 2016 (48), with all registered ceasefires concluded in four conflict countries: Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Israel. The highest number of ceasefires (49) for one year in one region was recorded in 2003 in Africa, with ceasefires in the following countries: Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Burundi, Somalia, and Sudan.

Figure 13: Ceasefires per year, per region, 1989–2018
Source: ETH/PRIO civil conflict CeaseFire dataset
Figure 14 shows all ceasefires between 1989 and 2018 in Africa by differentiating between the different purposes of ceasefires. The figure shows whether a ceasefire had a humanitarian-, peace process-, holiday-, election-, or other-related purpose. The figure shows that the number of ceasefires increased from 1989 to 1994, where it then remained at almost the same level before a sharp increase between 2001 and 2003. After 2003, we can observe a decline in the number of ceasefires, particularly when it comes to humanitarian ceasefires, which were virtually nonexistent between 2004 and 2011. The highest number of ceasefires was recorded in 2003, when 49 ceasefires were concluded in 10 different countries. When it comes to the purpose of ceasefires, Africa largely resembles global trends: peace process-related ceasefires are by far the most common (478), followed by humanitarian (94), other (39), election (6), and holiday (9) categories. In 2010, all peace process-related ceasefires were recorded in four different countries (in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola, and Sudan). In 2016, all peace process-related ceasefires were recorded in three countries (Nigeria, Sudan, and South Sudan). Africa also resembles other regions when it comes to election-related ceasefires. 2015 was the last time an election-related ceasefire was declared in the Central African Republic.

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 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 15 depicts ceasefires by class in Africa between 1989 and 2018. Cessation of Hostilities are the most frequent types of ceasefires concluded between conflict actors (in total 406), followed by Cessation of Hostilities including compliances (123) and Definitive Ceasefires (97). At the same time, there are some differences when it comes to the relative share of each ceasefire type within all ceasefires. When compared to other regions, Africa saw the largest number (97) of Definitive Ceasefires between 1989 and 2018. For the sake of comparison, only four Definitive Ceasefires
were recorded in the Middle East and 26 in Asia during the same period. The highest number of Definitive Ceasefires (15) took place in 2003 in the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Chad, the Congo, Burundi and Somalia. In 2018, the total number of ceasefires increased to 18 from 13 in 2017. In 2018, all Definitive Ceasefires were concluded in South Sudan between the government and the SPLM/A: the first in June, the second in August, and the third in September 2018. Although three Definitive Ceasefires might sound surprising (theoretically, one definite ceasefire should halt violence), new sources indicate that these three ceasefires were linked and the second and third extension took place because the previous ones were violated by the parties. This example shows that while ceasefires often break down, political willingness to extend/renew them can send a signal of good faith to the other party.

Figure 15: Ceasefires by type, Africa, 1989–2018
Source: ETH/PRIO civil conflict CeaseFire dataset
6. Trends in Peace Agreements

Conflicts can end in three different ways: one side’s decisive victory, with a peace agreement, or with a cessation of violence (“other” category). Previous research has 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). This suggests that although the number of peace agreements increased significantly with the end of the Cold War, there are several challenges involved in negotiating – and sustainably implementing – a 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 it addresses 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 a plan or a set of procedures for addressing the core issues of the conflict (Pettersson, Högbladh, and Öberg 2019).

Figure 6 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 can be seen 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 between the South Sudanese government and the SPLM/A. In 2018, Asia also had one peace agreement, between the government of Myanmar 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 recorded 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 based on religious convictions then these demands are often perceived as indivisible, thus making it more difficult for belligerents to find a negotiated solution to their conflict (Svensson 2007). Regional variation in the prevalence of peace agreements can be explained by different factors connected to the conflicts, such as the type of incompatibility, the number of actors involved, and internationalization. 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 decades, the African region has experienced a considerable improvement in 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 17 displays all peace agreements in Africa during the 1975–2018 period and differentiates between the different types of peace agreements. The black line depicts the number of conflicts in Africa. Regarding trends in peace agreements, Africa saw the highest number of peace agreements compared with other regions. The graph shows that there was a steady increase in the number of peace agreements from 1988 onwards. Interestingly, both in 2003 and in 2004, the number of peace agreements exceeded the number of conflicts. Both 2003 and 2004 saw 13 peace agreements, but 2003 experienced 12 conflicts and 2004 saw 10 conflicts. The reason for this is that certain conflicts experienced a relatively high number of peace agreements. In 2005, UCDP records four peace agreements between the government of Burundi and the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), whereas in 2004, 10 agreements were concluded between the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A (all of which were partial peace agreements).

The highest number of peace agreements recorded in Africa during this period is 13, for the years 2003, 2004, and 2008. In 2003, these agreements took place in Burundi, Central African Republic,
Comoros, Congo, DR Congo, Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Sudan. In 2004, peace agreements were concluded in Burundi, Ivory Coast, and Senegal, while Sudan saw 10 agreements. In 2008, agreements were recorded in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Somalia, and Uganda. After 2008, we can see fewer peace agreements, while the number of conflicts has risen. The highest number of conflicts in Africa was recorded in 2016, when 22 conflicts took place in the region. The same year, however, experienced only one peace agreement, between the government of Sudan and Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). There was a rise in the number of peace agreements from 2017, when one agreement was recorded (between the government of the Central African Republic and the anti-Balaka group), to 2018, when four agreements were recorded (one agreement between the government of Ethiopia and the ONLF, one agreement between the government of South Sudan and the SPLM/A, and two interstate peace agreements between the government of Ethiopia and Eritrea).

When it comes to the different types of peace agreements, we can see that most peace agreements in Africa (96) were partial peace agreements, followed by full peace agreements (54), and peace process agreements (37). The first partial peace agreement was recorded in 1983 between the governments of Chad and Nigeria. There was a hiatus up until 1988 and most partial agreements were concluded in the period between 1991 and 2008, when a total of 81 partial agreements were concluded. The highest number of partial agreements was recorded in 2004, when 11 such agreements were reached between various conflict parties. In 2018, one partial peace agreement was recorded between the government of South Sudan and the SPLM/A.

The first full peace agreements (2) in the region were recorded in 1978, both of which were in Chad, between the government and the Armed Forces of the North (FAN). Most full agreements were concluded between 1998 and 2009, when in total 26 full agreements were reached. 2018 saw two full peace agreements between the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea (these agreements were the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the Agreement on Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation). There were, however, 15 full agreements (out of a total of 54 full agreements) that did not last. Five out of the 15 unsuccessful full agreements were recorded in Chad in the years 1978 (where two full agreements were coded as unsuccessful), 1979, 1993, and 2003. These agreements were concluded between the government, the Armed Forces of the North (FAN), the (People’s Armed Forces) FAP, the National Council for Recovery (CNR), and the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT). In all cases, fighting resumed a few months after the signing of a full peace agreement. The last full agreement that was not successfully sustained was recorded in 2015 between the Government of South Sudan and the SPLM/A. The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan was signed in Ethiopia on 17 August 2015 and lasted until 8 July 2016. The agreement broke down because in April 2016, Riek Machar (head of SPLM/A) was re-appointed as Vice-President. During peace talks between President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar on 8 July 2016, their bodyguards started to fight and violence spread over the capital where heavy clashes erupted. Both President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar called for a ceasefire on 11 July. However, Machar fled the capital and eventually the country. On 23 July 2016, President Kiir replaced Machar with his former chief negotiator Taban Deng (Pettersson, Högbladh, and Öberg 2019). The above example illustrates that not only are peace agreements difficult to reach, they are also challenging to implement and sustain.

Peace process agreements have been relatively rare in Africa compared with other regions. The highest number of peace process agreements was recorded in 1990 and in 1991, when five such agreements were recorded. After 1991, the number of peace process agreements in Africa has steadily declined. In 2018, there was one peace process agreement in the region, which was signed between the government of Ethiopia and the ONLF.

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 part of a state structure. 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, yet without a clear hierarchy of command or an organizational brand.

Figure 18 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 papers on the Middle East and Asia).

Figure 19 shows the number of non-state conflicts by their different types. The first observation to note is that non-state conflicts are markedly on the rise in Africa. This is especially evident in the past 10 years. We can see from the graph that most non-state conflicts in Africa are communal conflicts. The highest number of battle-related deaths from non-state conflicts was recorded in 1993, when almost 10,000 people died in non-state conflicts. The total number of non-state conflicts has decreased from 49 in 2018 to 42 in 2019. 2019 saw 14 non-state conflicts between formally organized groups (a decrease from 19 in 2018), one conflict between informal groups (an increase from 0 in 2018) and 27 communal conflicts (a decrease from 30 in 2018). This decrease...
in the number of communal conflicts is the first recorded drop since 2014. Similarly, battle-related deaths decreased from 5,228 in 2018 to 2,791 in 2019. This number is the lowest number of battle-related deaths since 2012. In 2019, the following 12 countries experienced non-state conflicts in Africa: Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

Figure 19: Non-state conflicts in Africa, by type of conflict, 1989–2019
Source: UCDP Non-state conflict database. (Petterson & Öberg 2020)

Figure 20 shows trends in the number of non-state conflicts in Africa between 1989 and 2019. The number of countries affected by non-state conflict increased from 11 in 2018 to 12 in 2019. At the same time – as indicated in the previous section – the number of both non-state conflicts and battle-related deaths decreased in 2019 from 2018. Non-state conflicts are abundant in certain countries in Africa. In 2019, eight different non-state conflicts were recorded in both South Sudan and Nigeria, while the DR Congo experienced six different non-state conflicts, Somalia saw four, and Libya recorded three.

Figure 20: Non-state conflicts, conflict countries and battle deaths in Africa, 1989–2019
Source: UCDP Non-state conflict database. (Petterson & Öberg 2020)
Figure 21 shows the share of battle-related deaths in non-state conflicts across regions in 2018 and 2019. This graph displays 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 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 has, since 2007, 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). Moreover, 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 more prone to violence, but major money-laundering states on average experience higher homicide rates (Rivera, 2015). The Middle East experienced the second highest number of deaths from non-state conflicts, followed by the Africa, but in 2019 both continents experienced fewer deaths than in 2018.

Figure 21: Share of battle deaths in non-state conflict by region, 2018 and 2019
Source: UCDP Non-state conflict database. (Petterson & Öberg 2020)
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 22 shows trends in one-sided violence and the number of fatalities in Africa between 1989 and 2019, and differentiates between state and non-state violence. Most one-sided violence is perpetrated by non-state groups, and the majority of fatalities also stem from one-sided violence by non-state actors. The most lethal year of one-sided violence perpetrated by non-state actors took place in 2014, when more than 8,500 people were killed. The majority of these killings were perpetrated by Boko Haram in Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria. Since then, there has been a declining trend in non-state perpetrated violence. On the other hand, 1997 saw the largest number of people (8,740 fatalities) killed by government perpetrated one-sided violence. The majority of these deaths were perpetrated by the governments of DR Congo and Rwanda. In 2019, 2,675 people were killed by one-sided violence perpetrated by non-state actors, whereas one-sided violence perpetrated by the government accounted for 742 deaths. Both one-sided violence and the resulting battle-related deaths have decreased from 2018 to 2019. Here, it is important to recall the caveat expressed in the introduction regarding data on one-sided violence. It is reasonable to expect that UCDP cannot capture the extent of government perpetrated one-sided violence and thus the below numbers are likely to represent a fraction of the total incidents. For additional information on extrajudicial killings and human rights violations, we recommend consulting the annual world report of Human Rights Watch, specific country reports by Amnesty International, and the Political Terror Scale dataset.

Figure 23 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 in non-state groups using one-sided violence.
Figure 23: Incidents of one-sided violence, by region, 1989–2018
Source: UCDP One-sided violence database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)

Figure 24: Fatalities in one-sided violence in 2018 and 2019, by region and IS
Source: UCDP One-sided violence database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)

Figure 24 shows the number of fatalities related to one-sided violence across regions. We include IS as a separate category, because the organization is transnational in nature, and the violence it conducts is spread across many regions. Africa is also the region with the highest number of fatalities related to one-sided violence, with the exceptions of 2011 and 2012, where the Middle East had the highest number. An extremely worrying finding is that the number of fatalities due
to one-sided violence has increased in all three continents. Fatalities from one-sided violence by IS, however, have decreased.
9. Geographic Spread of Conflict

The map in Figure 25 shows conflict events related to the three different types of conflict (state based, non-state, and one-sided violence). As we have shown previously in this paper, non-state conflicts are quite prominent in Africa. In many cases, state-based and non-state conflicts take place in the same areas; however, it is also clear that in some countries, such as Nigeria, South Sudan, and Eritrea, non-state conflicts are less geographically concentrated. On the other hand, in Libya, non-state conflicts are mostly located in the central parts of the country where neither of the two Libyan governments have control. One-sided violence is also quite prevalent in the above-mentioned hotspots. But we also see that countries like the Central African Republic and Sudan have more one-sided violence events and conflict events. In the Central African Republic, this is mainly conducted by two rebel groups representing opposite sides in the conflict. In Sudan, on the other hand, one-sided violence was mainly conducted by the Sudanese government.

![Map of Africa showing conflict events](image)

**Type of conflict events**
- State-based violence
- Non-state violence
- One-sided violence

*Figure 25: State-based conflict, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence events in Africa, 2019*
*Source: UCDP Georeferenced Event Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)*

The map in Figure 26 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, in most cases, unfolds in 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.

Figure 26: State-based conflict, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence events globally, 2019
Source: UCDP Georeferenced Event Database (Petterson & Öberg 2020)
10. Peacekeeping Operations

Armed conflicts increasingly experience third-party interventions in the form of peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Research has shown that peacekeeping is effective in bringing armed conflicts to an end, preventing them from recurring, and protecting civilians (Hegre et al., 2015, Hultman et al., 2013). While we commonly talk about armed conflict on the national level, we also know that violence is in most cases geographically limited and only a fraction of a country experiences the conflict (see section on Geographic Spread of Conflict). But how does peacekeeping work at the subnational level and where are peacekeepers being deployed?

For this section, we use data from the Geocoded Peacekeeping Operations (Geo-PKO) dataset, which provides data on UN peacekeeping deployments in all intrastate armed conflicts in Africa between 1994 and 2018 at the subnational level (Cil et al. 2019). The dataset covers 27 missions in 15 countries in Africa. The dataset includes information on troop size, troop contributing countries, sector and main headquarters, and on the different types of units deployed to each location (troops, police, military observers). The Geo-PKO provides novel insights into the impact of local conditions on the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations.

Figure 27 shows the average numbers of peacekeeping troops (blue line) and the total number of peacekeeping missions (orange line) between 1994 and 2018. The two lines mostly follow each other (i.e. increased number of missions is associated with an increased number of troops), except for the period between 1996 and 2001, when the number of missions increased, but the number of troops declined. For example, in 1998 there were four missions in Africa (MINURCA in the Central African Republic, MINURSO in Algeria, Western Sahara, and Mauritania, MONUA in Angola, and UNOMSIL in Sierra Leone) with an average troop number of 2,636, whereas in 1999, there were six PKO missions and 2,348 troops deployed (the two new missions were MONUC, located in seven different countries, and UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, which replaced UNOMSIL

---

Figure 27: Average number of troops per year and the total number of PKOs in Africa, 1994–2018

Source: Geocoded Peacekeeping Operations (Geo-PKO) (Cil et al. 2019).

---

7 The Geo-PKO also includes a few special political and peacebuilding missions (BINUB, UNOSIL, UNIPSIL). These are not peacekeeping operations strictly speaking.
with a much larger peacekeeping operation). The orange line shows that since 2002, there has been a steady increase in the number of missions. While in 2002, there were three missions, between 2014 and 2017 there were nine missions in total. The first time nine missions were deployed was recorded in 2008. In 2018, eight PKO missions were recorded, a slight decrease from nine in 2017. In 2017, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which was launched in 2004, came to an end. When it comes to trends in troop size, the blue line shows that there has also been a steady increase in the number of deployed troops. This trend started in 1999, when the average number of troops was 2,348, and steadily increased up until 2006, when the average number of troops reached 52,283. This means that in seven years, the average troop number increased more than twenty-two-fold. Troop numbers reached a historic height in 2010, when almost 80,000 peacekeeping troops were deployed in Africa in eight missions. After a short period of decline in the number of troops, the period between 2013 and 2016 experienced a renewed increase, which corresponded with an increase in the number of missions. There was a decrease in the number of troops from 72,663 in 2017 to 69,569 in 2018.

Figure 28 presents six different maps displaying the location and troop size of PKOs in Africa between 1994 and 2018. The first four maps (A–D) show five-year long intervals, while the fifth map (E) shows a four-year interval (2014–2017), and the sixth map (F) shows data on PKOs in 2018. The maps show data from the last available month each year. Similarly to Figure 27, we can see that there has been a steady increase in troop size, especially since the early 2000s, but here we can also see spatial changes in terms of troop deployment.

On the first map (A), we can see that between 1994 and 1998 PKOs were deployed in 10 countries in Africa. When looking at the location of deployment we can see for example that the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) had troops in 24 locations within this five-year period, and troop size varied between 15 and 815. The MINURCA mission in the Central African Republic hosted troops only in one location in 1998. In this period, only Somalia hosted more than 5,000 troops, in Mogadishu.

In the map displaying the period 1999–2003 (B), 15 countries had PKO troops on their territories. The map shows that compared to the first period, although the number of missions increased, troop size decreased. In this five-year interval, no countries hosted more 3,400 troops. Sierra Leone and DR Congo hosted the largest number of troops (above 3,000). Troops were concentrated in Sierra Leone. Between 1999 and 2003 the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was present in 47 locations and the troop size varied between 150 and 3,400 (note that neighboring Liberia and Ivory Coast also hosted troops).

In the period 2004–2008 (C), troop size remained approximately the same as in the 1999–2003 period, but the number of missions decreased to 14 from 15. As the map shows, troops continued to be concentrated in Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Liberia, but the number of troops and their deployment locations have substantially increased in DR Congo: troops in this period were present in 51 locations, compared to the 1999–2003 period when troops were present in 14 locations. Three countries experienced more than 3,000 troops on their territories: Sierra Leone, DR Congo, and Chad.

The 2009–2013 (D) period saw approximately the same number of PKOs across 13 missions. In this period, Ivory Coast became the largest troop hosting country. At its peak, the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) deployed more than 3,900 troops to the city of Abidjan by 2013.
Figure 28: PKOs location and troop size in Africa, 1994–2018
Source: Geocoded Peacekeeping Operations (Geo-PKO) (Cil et al. 2019).
In the 2014–2017 (E) period, the number of troops increased to more than 4,000 and PKOs were deployed to 11 countries. Troops clustered in Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and DR Congo, but Mali, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and South Sudan also became home to large PKO missions. In 2017, for example, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) had more than 5,400 troops, from eight troop contributing countries, in the city of Gao.

In 2018 (F), there was an increase in the average number of troops. In that year, 10 African countries experienced PKOs. The most visible change compared to the previous periods is that the missions in Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast ended, thus that region ceased to be a hotspot for peacekeepers. In this sub-region, only UNMIL in Liberia was present with 150 troops. In 2018, MINUSMA in Mali continued to be the largest PKO. In December 2018, more than 5,600 troops were present in the city of Gao.
11. Discussion and Conclusion

In this PRIO Paper, we have presented an overview of conflict trends in Africa over time (1946 to 2019), across conflict types, and with a special focus on geographical location. We also provided important insights into trends in ceasefires, peace agreements, and peacekeeping missions. Although Africa remains one of the most violent regions in the world, it also excels in various conflict resolution attempts, often aided by regional African organizations.

2019 was the year of records for Africa. There have never been as many internationalized civil wars (14) and territorial conflicts (13) in Africa than in 2019. This trend is worrisome, especially in light of the expansion of IS in the region. In 2019, nine countries in Africa (Cameroon, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Libya, Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, and Mozambique) experienced conflicts with IS within their territories. This shows that even though it has been claimed that IS has been defeated in the Middle East, it is very much present and active in Africa. From 2018 to 2019, the number of both state-based conflicts and battle-related deaths increased in Africa. The total number of state-based conflicts increased from 21 in 2018 to 25 in 2019. This increase is attributable to four new internationalized civil conflicts in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Somalia, and Burundi.

Battle-related deaths increased in 2019 for the first time since 2014. In 2019, 8,407 fatalities were recorded. From 2018 to 2019, there was a slight de-escalation in Somalia, but at the same time there was a sharp escalation of violence in Libya, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Mozambique, and Niger. The largest escalation took place in Libya due to the government’s fight against the Libyan National Army (LNA).

In Africa, the majority of battle-related deaths in state-based conflicts result from conflicts, as opposed to wars. This is different from the conflict trends we are seeing at the global level, in which a few large wars account for the majority of battle-related deaths. In short, Africa has a lot of smaller wars that result in a considerable amount of deaths. Only a few African countries experience conflict throughout their entire territory. We identified new conflict hotspots in the border region between Mali and Burkina Faso, as well as the Ambazonia region in Cameroon. The last war between states took place in 2016 between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Several African governments are engaged in conflicts against multiple non-state groups in their territories. 2019 saw a record number: 25 conflicts in 18 countries. In 2019, one new conflict-affected country was recorded (Ethiopia against a military faction led by Asaminew Tsige) and four more conflicts. Mozambique, for example, experienced a new conflict with IS in 2019 and the continuation of its conflict with Ansar al-Sunnah. Most non-state conflicts in Africa are communal conflicts. The 27 recorded communal conflicts in 2019 is the first recorded drop since 2014. The recent decrease both in the number of non-state conflicts and battle-related deaths follows global patterns. In Nigeria, South Sudan, and Eritrea, non-state conflicts are less geographically concentrated, whereas in Libya, non-state conflicts are mostly located in the central parts of the country where neither of the two Libyan governments have control.

In 2019, 2,675 people were killed by one-sided violence perpetrated by non-state actors, whereas one-sided violence perpetrated by the government accounted for 742 deaths. In a regional comparison, 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.
Despite the high number of different types of conflict in Africa, when it comes to various ways of ending or halting fighting, Africa is excelling by regional comparison. Globally, the highest number of ceasefires was recorded in 2003 when 49 ceasefires were concluded in 10 different countries in Africa. In 2010, all peace process-related ceasefires were recorded in four different countries (in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola, and Sudan). In 2018, all Definitive Ceasefires were concluded in South Sudan between the government and the SPLM/A. Over time, the highest number of peace agreements were concluded in Africa – 187 peace agreements in total between 1975 and 2018. Africa has historically been home to a large number of peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Since 2002, there has been a steady increase in the number of PKOs and in the average troop size. In 2018, 10 African countries experienced PKOs in their territories. In 2018, the largest PKO mission was MINUSMA in Mali.

There are several policy implications of the trends reported in this paper. First, the continued institutionalization of African regional organizations’ peacemaking capabilities is important. During the past three decades, African peacemakers were able to resolve or put a halt to several conflicts across the region, but there is a need to ensure that agreements are implemented. For this to happen, organizations such as the AU, IGAD, and ECOWAS would need further capacity strengthening from the UN in the form of mediator training and funding. Second, the expansion of IS in the region is a worrisome development. Defeating the organization is difficult because a negotiated solution to IS-related conflicts is unviable. To prevent the further expansion of IS and IS-affiliated groups, the UN and regional organizations should continue to invest in early warning systems across the region. Third, communal conflicts between non-state groups and civil wars often coexist and fuel each other. Peacekeeping missions in the African continent have to be better trained in terms of communal conflict management. UN-led or facilitated conflict resolution practices should be undertaken for local disputes and complemented by customary peacebuilding efforts.
12. References

**Allansson, Marie** (2020) FAQ. Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Sweden. Uppsala University, Sweden. Available at: www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/faq/#The_Mexican_Drug_Wars..


**Jarland, Julie; Håvard Mokleiv Nygård; Scott Gates; Emilie Hermansen & Vilde Bergstad Larsen** (2020) How Should We Understand Patterns of Recurring Conflict? *Conflict Trends*, 3. Oslo: PRIO.


Africa has seen some of the deadliest conflicts in history. Since the early 2000s, however, battle-related deaths in the region have remained relatively low. This PRIO Paper takes a closer look at trends in conflicts in Africa between 1989 and 2019 and compares them to global trends, using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). In addition, the paper analyzes trends in ceasefires and peace agreements during the same period, as well as trends in peacekeeping operations from 1994 to 2018.

While the number of state-based conflicts in Africa reached a record high in 2019, these conflicts are mostly of a low intensity. Nevertheless, Africa exhibits an increasing trend in non-state conflicts and conflicts involving the Islamic State, as well as a rise in one-sided violence. Despite these worrying developments, Africa saw the highest number of definitive ceasefires and peace agreements when compared with other world regions. Further, Africa also experienced a steady increase in peacekeeping operations between 1994 and 2018. These trends serve as important indicators of concerted efforts to solve conflicts within the region.