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Current trends in violent conflict

William Robert Avis
University of Birmingham
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Question

Current trends in violent conflict - Summarise the key findings in terms of drivers, responses and themes, and how and why these are changing over time.

Contents

1. Overview

This rapid literature review presents the key literature that discusses current trends in violent conflict. The focus is upon recent ideas that are prevalent in literature from post-2015. The literature review draws on both academic and grey literature. The review includes both quantitative analyses of conflict data sets (Szayna et al, 2017; 2018; Watts, 2017) and qualitative analyses (Von Einsiedel, et al., 2017; Krause; 2016). The first section provides a summary of trends in conflict and the second provides an annotated bibliography highlighting some of the key papers and their findings.

It is important to note that there is no single, agreed-upon definition of what constitutes violent conflict. The term may refer to civil war, ethnic war, and interstate war at high and low intensities as well as violence that falls short of war, such as militarised disputes, terrorism, and riots or strikes (Szayna et al., 2017). It is also important to note that trends and drivers of conflict will intersect in complex ways (Kett, & Rowson, 2007). Indeed, whilst the terms imply the dynamic nature of the factors and processes that contribute to violent conflict, there is a great deal of debate about reducing conflict to one cause. Finally, there is a much debate amongst conflict studies scholars regarding the decline (PRIO, 2017; 2018; Szayna et al., 2017), or not (National Intelligence Council, 2012; World Bank & United Nations, 2018), of violent conflict, over the past two decades with some highlighting a sustained downward trajectory and others a more complicated picture.

Violent conflicts have also become more complex and protracted, involving more non-state groups and regional and international actors (World Bank & United Nations, 2018).. They are increasingly linked to global challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, cyber security and transnational organised crime (HM Government, 2015). There is also a need to explore, in more detail, the differences between interstate and intrastate conflict.

The United Kingdom Government (HM Government, 2015) identified the following factors as likely to exert an influence on the nature and extent of violent conflict:

- The increasing threat posed by terrorism, extremism and instability.
- The resurgence of state-based threats; and intensifying wider state competition.
- The impact of technology, especially cyber threats; and wider technological developments.
- The erosion of the rules-based international order, making it harder to build consensus and tackle global threats.

This review finds that the above broad trends are continuing to exert an influence on the nature and extent of conflict and, in many ways, have been exacerbated by the increasing complexity of the International arena. Other key findings include:

- This upsurge in violence occurs in a volatile global context where the balance of geopolitical power is in flux, and transnational factors like advances in information and communications technology, population movements, and climate change create risks and opportunities to be managed at multiple levels (World Bank & United Nations, 2018; Cilliers, 2018).
- Conflict today is fluid, spreading across borders to affect broader regions, a result of the greater interconnectivity of countries; the same networks that allow for increased trade

and information flow can be exploited by organised crime and conflict entrepreneurs to spread violence. The regional impact of conflict and the flow of refugees from conflict situations add another international dimension (World Bank & United Nations, 2018; Social Science Research Council, 2018).

- Violent conflicts in many contexts take place against a background of domestic grievances, particularly a breakdown in the prevailing social contract in these countries. These conflicts have been exploited by extremist groups, and have drawn in regional and global powers, who may influence or support, but rarely fully control, these (World Bank & United Nations, 2018; Watts, 2017).

- The internationalisation of many intrastate conflicts also aids the spread of violence (Szayna, et al., 2018; Von Einsiedel, et al., 2017; Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2018).

- The global balance of power is shifting, growing economic power for emerging economies, and the achievement by many countries of middle-income status, brings demand for redistribution of global political influence. Long-standing alliances, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), are increasingly being questioned and many countries seek a renegotiation of power sharing in multilateral fora. It is widely argued that a transition to a multipolar world is under way, with new centres of military and economic power emerging (HM Government, 2015; World Bank & United Nations, 2018).

- Violent conflict has regional dimensions, and there has been enhanced regional action in response. However, regional responses have been uneven in their ability to sustain peace. In some cases, regional competition fuels unilateral action, prolonging and aggravating conflicts and weakening the capacity of regional organisations to play a role in prevention of violent conflicts (HM Government, 2015; World Bank & United Nations, 2018; Szayna, et al., 2018; Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2018).

While some argue war in is on the decline, others point out that it merely has taken on new forms. Increasingly, conflict environments feature not only state armies but also non-state armed groups, criminal gangs, drug-traffickers and terrorists. These actors employ new communications and weapons technologies, and frequently operate across national borders and regions, even though local allegiances are a critical dynamic of violence. This greater complexity in the production of violence has hampered efforts to respond to violent conflict around the world. There is a growing recognition that the international community's conflict response toolbox, including expensive international interventions, is inadequate in the face of new empirical realities.

2. Trends in conflict

Today, conflicts have become more complex and protracted. About 2 billion people, circa a third of the world's population, currently live in countries affected by conflict. Conflict is often linked to global challenges from climate change to human trafficking and contemporary violent conflicts are no longer defined by national borders. Schafer (2018) notes that conflicts cost an estimated $13.6 trillion every year and pose a significant threat to the 2030 agenda (Schafer, 2018). It is thus clear that actors need to understand the trends and address the drivers of conflict, including the tipping points that push fragility to violence.

According to the Social Science Research Council (2018: 3) "conflicts and widespread violence have complex socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions that operate through power

networks which transcend conventional conceptual boundaries, e.g. public vs. private or local vs. national". They continue that the increasing complexity of violent conflict makes these conflicts particularly prolonged, deadly, and intractable, and that their nature also poses a challenge for those responding to conflict, as the international system remains ill-equipped to respond with adequate frames, analysis, and mandates across borders (SSRC, website)[1]. It is therefore necessary to interrogate trends in violent conflict and how, if at all, these change over time.

More broadly, it is important to note that there is no single, agreed-upon definition of what constitutes violent conflict. The term may refer to civil war, ethnic war, and interstate war at high and low intensities as well as violence that falls short of war, such as militarised disputes, terrorism, and riots or strikes. Szayna et al. (2017: 10) provide a typology of conflict highlighting its multifaceted forms (see table 1 below).

See Table 1: Typology of conflict (**Szayna et al., 2018: 10)**

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1063/RAND_RR1063
.pdf

It is a commonly held view (Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 2018; Szayna et al., 2017; Krause, 2016) that the nature, intensity, and frequency of conflict have evolved in recent years, shifting from wars fought directly between states to various forms of "internal" or intrastate violence, including insurgencies, guerrilla wars, terrorism, organised and large-scale criminal violence, and protests. However, the timing, speed, and permanence of these shifts vary and are not uniform for all types of violent conflict. This shift in nature of conflict, corresponds with a long-term decline in traditional symmetrical conflicts (e.g. between armies), to increasing numbers of intrastate conflicts and asymmetric wars (e.g. between state and militia).

Indeed, whilst this review will highlight broad global trends in violent conflict, it is important to interrogate how these factors operate at national and subnational levels. As argued by Kett and Rowson (2007), it is difficult to define war or violent conflict, let alone gather accurate data on its possible causes. They conclude that, this does not make it any the less important to understand why violent conflict occurs, rather that conclusions must be caveated. It is also important to note that trends and drivers of conflict will intersect in complex ways. Indeed, whilst the terms imply the dynamic nature of the factors and processes that contribute to violent conflict, there is a great deal of debate about reducing conflict to one cause. Whilst some have traditionally focused on grievance-related drivers of conflict, such as poverty and inequality, others have suggested that the incidence of violent conflict is dependent on material interests.

Finally, there is much debate amongst conflict studies scholars regarding the decline, or not, of violent conflict, over the past two decades. Analysts and scholars who argue that a decline has been observed have proposed a number of hypotheses to explain the decline in the incidence of interstate conflict (Szayna et al., 2017):

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[1] https://www.ssrc.org/programs/view/understanding-violent-conflict/?_cldee=c3VwcG9ydEBzc3JjLm9yZw%3D%3D&recipientid=contact-f7ebf65bbbe5e71180ca005056ab0bd9-3775b21d27404f10a5923185e20a27fb&esid=0240122b-2902-e911-a968-000d3a34afa9

- The seizure and annexation of land is less rewarding for developed societies (with a predominantly industrial or post-industrial, rather than agricultural, economic base) in an open international economy.

- The military predominance of the United States (U.S.), a status quo power, means that a country considering an act of military aggression in a strategically important part of the world must anticipate the possibility of a U.S. response.

- The rise of nationalism, spread of "technologies" of violent resistance (such as guerrilla warfare), and the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons has made it more difficult to pacify populations of conquered territories.

- The rise of international consensus and norms against the forceful change of boundaries, accompanied by the commensurate rise of more effective international organisations that can enforce those norms, has made military aggression less attractive.

Commentators have also suggested a number of possible explanations for the decline in intrastate conflict (Szayna et al., 2017):

- The gradual strengthening of state institutions associated with both a global increase in wealth and with the consolidation of postcolonial political orders, has made states better able to provide services to their populations and to police non-state violence.

- Rising levels of wealth give a greater proportion of populations a stake in peace.

- The spread of democratic forms of government and associated practices provide institutionalised mechanisms for nonviolent conflict resolution.

- The rise of effective international conflict mediation mechanisms, coupled with a credible threat of external intervention (in particular, peace operations mandated by the United Nations (UN)), has provided both channels and incentives to defuse conflict before it escalates to the level of widespread violence.

A number of commentators have challenged the "declinist" thesis. Their criticisms state, either that the quantitative data have been misrepresented or misinterpreted, or that the apparent trends are only a temporary anomaly and are likely to be undone by a range of new dynamics that will fuel increases in conflict. Others suggest that even if the recent decline in violence is real, it is likely to be reversed by one or more of a number of future dynamics. Commentators such as Szayna et al. (2017) highlight the following:

- Globalisation may lead to a quick internationalisation of disruptions in one country, raising and magnifying what may be a local dispute to a systemic level.

- Population pressures may lead to greater scarcity and conflict.

- Climate change may induce disruptions and migrations that can overstress the capacity of states and lead to widespread unrest.

- Rapidly evolving technology makes it easier for non-state actors to organise, and it makes even small numbers of people potentially highly lethal.

What is clear from the above is that the complexity of the current international arena has led to both a change in the nature of violent conflict but also a shift in the drivers of conflict. It is acknowledged that the world is changing rapidly and fundamentally, driven by long-term shifts in the balance of global economic and military power, increasing competition between states, and the emergence of more powerful non-state actors (HM Government, 2015). The following section

provides an overview of papers that explore the nature of contemporary conflict and potential drivers. This starts with an overview of the United Kingdom's National Security Risk Assessment 2015, which provides a baseline against which to explore shifting dynamics.

3. Annotated bibliography

HM Government (2015). National Security Risk Assessment 2015. HM Government.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478936/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_PRINT_only.pdf

The National Security Risk Assessment 2015 undertaken by the United Kingdom Government highlighted a series of domestic and global security challenges which had increased in scale, diversity and complexity since 2010 (HM Government, 2015). Four particular challenges were considered likely to drive UK security priorities for the coming decade with both immediate and longer-term implications (these are listed in greater detail in table 2 below):

- The increasing threat posed by terrorism, extremism and instability.
- The resurgence of state-based threats; and intensifying wider state competition.
- The impact of technology, especially cyber threats; and wider technological developments.
- The erosion of the rules-based international order, making it harder to build consensus and tackle global threats.

Table 2: The changing national security context and future implications (HM Government, 2015: 15-22)

Domestic and global security challenges
Terrorism and Extremism A number of Islamist terrorist groups are active across the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, with increasing reach into Europe. The emergence of ISIL and its brand of violent extremism has significantly increased the threat. ISIL now operates over much of Syria and Iraq, and has affiliates in other countries. ISIL has recruited foreign fighters from most countries in Europe and across the Islamic world. Extremist and terrorist groups have exploited the internet and social media to distribute large online propaganda intended to radicalise and recruit.
Impact of instability The conflict in Syria and Iraq has shown how crises can trigger and accelerate instability across a region, and the challenges created by state failure or a lack of effective, publicly legitimate and accountable governance. Such challenges include regional instability, large-scale humanitarian need, mass migration and human trafficking, and exploitation of weak governments or ungoverned space by terrorist groups and criminals. Instability overseas also undermines affected countries' prospects for poverty reduction and economic growth. Many drivers of instability are likely to persist over the medium to long term, including social inequality and exclusion, demographic changes, rapid and unplanned urbanisation, climate change, and global economic and other shocks.
Migration Migration is a global challenge. Instability, extremism and conflict in the Middle East and Africa have displaced millions of people. Many have sought to travel to Europe, creating a humanitarian challenge and pressures across the EU. Longer-term trends, including increased access to information through mobile technology and social media, are adding to the drivers of migration, as are the activities of criminal networks.

Serious and organised crime

Serious and organised crime has a direct impact on security, economy and reputation. The volume and severity of serious and organised crime threats are growing, as more services and transactions take place online, internet access expands across Africa and Asia, and technology develops.

Global health security

The risks to health security will continue to grow as the world becomes more physically interconnected through travel. Countries and regions with weak health services or where government ability to respond is poor are especially vulnerable. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is an example.

The resurgence of state-based threats

Russian behaviour

Russia has become more aggressive, authoritarian and nationalist, increasingly defining itself in opposition to the West. The illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and continuing support to separatists in eastern Ukraine through the use of deniable, hybrid tactics and media manipulation have shown Russia's willingness to undermine wider international standards of cooperation in order to secure its perceived interests.

Wider state competition

State competition can be a risk to stability. In the Middle East and North Africa, regional powers have been pursuing competing security interests, driven by growing military and economic capabilities. Both South Asia and South East Asia continue to grow in economic importance and political significance, but this has come with increased tensions, exacerbated by unresolved historical disputes.

The role of technology

Cyber

Growing numbers of states, with state-level resources, are developing advanced capabilities which are potentially deployable in conflicts, including against critical national infrastructure and government institutions. And non-state actors, including terrorists and cyber criminals can use easily available cyber tools and technology for destructive purposes.

Wider technological developments

Technology will also become available to more state and non-state actors, including terrorists, organised crime groups and cyber criminals. This could reduce Western states' technological advantage as controls on access to knowledge and materials become harder to maintain.

The rules-based international order

The context is changing, driven by developments such as the growing role of non-state actors, the impact of technology and longer-term shifts of economic wealth to the south and east of the world. The Chinese economy is expected to become larger than that of the US in the 2020s, while other emerging markets, in particular India and Brazil, have the potential to grow markedly in power and influence. While the U.S., Japan and Europe will remain global economic powers, they face a growing imperative to improve their economic dynamism and competitiveness if they are to stay at the cutting edge of the global economy.

Such changes create new challenges and opportunities. The rules-based international order has always relied for its effectiveness and legitimacy on the active participation and contribution of all states, in particular major states, and on the ability of institutions and relationships to adapt to reflect new opportunities and challenges. It will therefore be important to reflect the contribution of growing powers. We will continue to work with partners to adapt the rules-based international order to meet new challenges.

Some powerful states and non-state actors, however, are increasingly ignoring international norms that they believe run contrary to their interests, or favour the West. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, Assad's use of chemical weapons, and the challenges around non-state actors' compliance with international humanitarian law are examples of this.

Continuing risks

Major natural disasters overseas

Major natural disasters overseas can put at risk safety and security of British nationals, our CNI and the supply chains on which we rely, such as energy, food and technology.
Energy security
Global energy security can be affected by regional disputes, instability, terrorism and cyber threats, and more positively by technological developments.
The global economy
Advanced economies have made a slow though meaningful recovery from the global economic crisis. But progress has been uneven and vulnerabilities remain, particularly in the euro area and Japan. Recent downward revisions of long-term growth potential in both advanced and emerging economies are a concern, and should spur action to deliver structural reforms that can drive long-run productivity growth. Despite considerable progress, China still faces significant challenges in delivering the necessary reforms for a more sustainable growth model. Commodity exporters face difficult adjustments amid declining prices. The growing level of corporate debt in emerging markets increases risks, especially where it leads to greater foreign currency exposure. Russia's actions in Ukraine and continuing instability in the Middle East, North and West Africa illustrate the scope for political disputes adversely to affect global markets and regional growth prospects.
Climate change and resource scarcity
By 2030, the world could face demands for 50% more food and energy and 30% more water, while their availability becomes threatened by climate change. The Middle East and North Africa region will be particularly at risk, given existing high levels of water stress and high rates of population growth. Sub-Saharan Africa may suffer from climate change impacts on crop production in particular. Rising sea levels threaten coastal cities and small islands. More frequent extreme weather events are likely to disrupt populations, agriculture and supply chains, making political instability, conflict and migration more likely.

World Bank & United Nations (2018). Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict.
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28337/211162mm.pdf

This report highlights the main messages from the Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict study and is a result of an academic exercise by the staff of the World Bank and the UN. The study finds that since 2010, the number of major violent conflicts has tripled, and fighting in a growing number of lower intensity conflicts has escalated. In 2016, more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time in nearly 30 years. Much of this violence remains entrenched in low-income countries, yet some of today's deadliest conflicts are occurring in countries at higher income levels with stronger institutions. At the same time, more conflicts are internationalised, as countries intervene in support of a party or parties in another country's conflict. Other key findings include:

- This upsurge in violence occurs in a volatile global context where the balance of geopolitical power is in flux, and transnational factors like advances in information and communications technology, population movements, and climate change create risks and opportunities to be managed at multiple levels.

- Conflict today is fluid, spreading across borders to affect broader regions. In part, this is a deliberate strategy, but it is also a result of the greater interconnectivity of countries; the same networks that allow for increased trade and information flow can be exploited by organised crime and conflict entrepreneurs to spread violence. The regional impact of conflict and the flow of refugees from conflict add another international dimension

- Violent conflicts in many contexts in the Middle East and North Africa take place against a background of domestic grievances, particularly a breakdown in the prevailing social contract in these countries in which citizens had access to jobs in a large public sector,

free education and health care, and subsidised food and fuel, while experiencing limits on free expression and a certain degree of elite capture of the economy. These conflicts have been exploited by extremist groups, and have drawn in regional and global powers, who may "influence or support— but rarely fully control—those fighting on the ground."

- Violent conflict in Africa has also increased against the backdrop of the continent's rapid economic and political changes. Poverty, and to some extent inequality, is decreasing and economic growth has enabled a number of countries to reach middle-income status. Many countries have adopted more open political systems, although with some reversals in 2015. In some countries, tensions have risen around competition for political power, sometimes deepening inter-group divisions and leading to an eruption of open violence

- Some of the most virulent extremist groups in the region have exploited divisions, connecting them to transnational ideologies. Localised conflicts have fed into regional conflict systems, facilitated by ethnic, linguistic, commercial, and cultural relationships.

- The internationalisation of many intrastate conflicts, in which an outside state intervenes on behalf of a party to the conflict, also aids the spread of violence. In 2015, more conflicts (20) were internationalised than in any year since 1946. Internationalised conflicts declined slightly, to 18, in 2016.

- The increased complexity and reach of today's violent conflict contribute to its intractability. While conflicts that ended in 1970 tended to last an average of 9.6 years, conflicts that ended in 2014 had lasted an average of 26 years, and those that ended in 2015 lasted 14.5 years.

- The global balance of power is shifting, growing economic power for emerging economies, and the achievement by many countries of middle-income status, brings demand for redistribution of global political influence. Long-standing alliances (e.g. the NATO and the EU) are increasingly questioned and many countries seek a renegotiation of power sharing in multilateral fora (e.g. the UN and international financial institutions). Some states are increasingly seeking to redraw normative boundaries in key areas, (such as human rights or the status of women). It is widely argued that a transition to a multipolar world is under way, with new centres of military and economic power emerging. In the face of such geopolitical fluidity, tensions inevitably arise and risks can be difficult to manage.

- Violent conflict has regional dimensions, and there has been enhanced regional action in response. However, regional responses have been uneven in their ability to sustain peace. In some cases, regional competition fuels unilateral action, prolonging and aggravating conflicts and weakening the capacity of regional organisations to play a role in prevention of violent conflicts.

Violent conflict is increasingly recognised as one of the big obstacles to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. The study concludes with eight key messages:

- Violent conflict is surging after decades of relative decline. Direct deaths in war, refugee numbers, military spending, and terrorist incidents, inter alia, have all reached historic highs in recent years. A rapidly evolving global context presents risks that transcend national borders and add to the complexity of conflict.

- The human and economic cost of conflicts around the world requires more collaborative work. Development actors need to provide more support to national and regional

prevention agendas, through targeted, flexible, and sustained engagement. Prevention agendas, in turn, should be integrated in development policies and efforts.

- The best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis is to ensure they are resilient through investment in inclusive and sustainable development. For all countries, addressing inequalities and exclusion, making institutions more inclusive, and ensuring that development strategies are risk-informed are central to preventing conflict.

- States are central to efforts to prevent conflict, but, in today's shifting global landscape, they are one actor among many.

- Exclusion from access to power, opportunity, and security creates fertile ground for mobilisation to violence, especially in areas with weak state capacity or legitimacy or contexts of human rights abuses.

- Preventing violence requires departing from traditional economic and social policies when risks are building up, or are high, and seeking inclusive solutions through dialogue, adapted macroeconomic policies, institutional reform in core state functions, and redistributive policies.

- Enhancing the meaningful participation of women and youth in decision-making, as well as long-term policies to address the economic, social, and political aspirations of women and young people are fundamental to sustaining peace.

- In order to achieve more effective prevention, new mechanisms need to be established that will allow the various tools and instruments of prevention, in particular diplomacy and mediation, security, and development, to work in much greater synergy.

See also this PPT presentation by Alexandre Marc (Chief Specialist, Fragility, Conflict and Violence World Bank Group) – **Conflict and Violence in the 21st Century: Current Trends as Observed in Empirical Research and Statistics** - https://www.un.org/pga/70/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/01/Conflict-and-violence-in-the-21st-century-Current-trends-as-observed-in-empirical-research-and-statistics-Mr.-Alexandre-Marc-Chief-Specialist-Fragility-Conflict-and-Violence-World-Bank-Group.pdf

Von Einsiedel, S. et al. (2017). Civil War Trends and the Changing Nature of Armed Conflict. UNU-CPR.
https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:6156/Civil_war_trends_UPDATED.pdf

This UNU-CPR Occasional Paper provides insights into major recent trends in violent conflict, and analyses the implications of these trends for international actors engaged in conflict prevention and management. It finds that:

- After declining for much of the 1990s, the number of major civil wars has almost tripled in the past decade. The number of minor civil wars have also risen in recent years, largely due to the expansion of the Islamic State and its affiliates.

- From 2011 to 2017, there has been a six-fold increase in battle deaths, with 2014 and 2015 being the deadliest years on the battlefield since the end of the Cold War.

- With a decline in civil wars ending in military victory, the conflict relapse rate has increased. 60% of conflicts in the early 2000s relapsed within five years.

- Some forms of violence against civilian populations in wartime are increasing, posing challenges to the protection of civilians. Among the key trends, we see is that: a larger share of today's mass atrocities takes place in the context of civil wars; rebel groups

have become increasingly responsible for the majority of civilian deaths; and the number of displaced people due to violence is at an all-time high.

- Conflicts are becoming more intractable and less conducive to traditional political settlements mainly due to three developments:
  - Organised crime has emerged as a major stress factor that exacerbates state fragility, undermines state legitimacy, and often lowers the incentives of armed groups to enter political settlements.
  - The internationalisation of civil wars tends to make them deadlier and longer;
  - The growing presence of jihadist groups in conflict settings complicates peace making and fosters a "hunker down and bunker up" mentality among international actors, especially UN peace operations, on the ground.

Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). (2018). Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946–2017. PRIO. https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=11181

The Conflict Trends project aims to answer questions relating to the causes, consequences and trends in conflict. The project contributes to new conflict analyses within areas of public interest, and works to produce thorough and quality-based analysis. Their annual report for 2017 comments that, 2017 was one of the most violent years since the end of the Cold War. While violence levels decreased slightly from the all-time high of 2016, non-state conflicts and internationalised intrastate conflicts continue to challenge the international community's ability to achieve global peace. The main findings were as follows:

- The number of state-based armed conflicts in the world declined slightly from 53 in 2016 to 49 in 2017, with the Islamic State active in 31% of them.

- The number of non-state conflicts increased from 62 in 2016 to 82 in 2017.

- There was a decline in conflict casualties in 2017. 22% fewer people died in 2017 as a direct result of conflict, and 32% fewer than in 2014. Syria is still the deadliest conflict in the world accounting for one third of all casualties in state-based conflicts in 2017.

- Internationalised conflicts and non-state conflicts continue to represent major threats to reductions in violence.

PRIO. (2017). Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946–2016. PRIO.
https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=1373&type=publicationfile

The Conflict Trends project's annual report for 2016 comments that 2016 was the fifth most violent year in the world since the end of the Cold War. While violence levels were lower than in 2014 and 2015, ongoing conflicts with serious regional impacts were challenging the international community's ability to ensure global peace. The main findings were as follows:

- There was a decline in battle casualties in 2016. 14% fewer people died in 2016 as a direct result of conflict than in 2015, and 22% fewer than in 2014.

- The number of armed conflicts in the world declined slightly from 52 in 2015 to 49 in 2016.

- The internationalised conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan have the highest number of casualty levels globally.

- The trend in the increasing internationalisation of conflicts is concerning, as these conflicts, on average, last longer, are more violent, and are more difficult to solve.

Watts, S. (2017). Understanding Conflict Trends: a Review of the Social Science Literature on the Causes of Conflict. Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1063z1.html

This review presents the results of an extensive literature review undertaken by the Rand Corporation. The results are broken down into two major groupings: interstate conflicts and intrastate conflicts. The author notes that contemporary conflicts tend to be insurgencies or civil wars. In the past, a much greater share of conflicts occurred between states. Many explanations have been advanced to explain this phenomenon, including the evolution of the global economy, changing international norms of behaviour, and the pre-eminence of the U.S. in the international state system. While there are several competing explanations for this change in conflict patterns, the authors assert that the fact that the pattern has changed is clear.

The literature reviewed in this document suggests that a wide variety of factors might have important relationships with different types of conflict. These heterogeneous findings are reflective both of the depth of the literature and of the complexity of how and when armed conflict occurs. However, some of the factors reviewed are more strongly supported in the literature than others. The authors review identifies ten key factors as having the most clearly established relationship with armed conflict and the greatest potential to affect future conflict trends. They are listed below, with a short explanation for each:

- **The capacity of state institutions**. Institutional capacity affects a state's ability to provide public goods to their populations and to maintain effective and disciplined security services.

- **The prevalence of consolidated democracies**. Consolidated democracies are those that have successfully implemented a range of effective institutional rules and legal procedures constraining the executive, mandating popular election of political leaders, and ensuring civil, political, and minority rights.

- **The degree of ethnic and sectarian polarisation**. Societies become polarised along ethnic or sectarian lines as ethnicity, religion, or both become factors for group identification, forming the basis for political organisation and the lens through which grievances are framed.

- **The rate of economic growth**. High growth rates tend to ease distributional conflicts and provide resources for the state to regulate conflict.

- **The extent of economic interdependence**. Economic interdependence refers to how states' economies are interrelated with each other and with the global economy. There are two key characteristics of economic interdependence that influence countries' likelihood of conflict. First, countries' economic outcomes are affected by external conditions, such as demand in another country or a global economic shock. Second, economic interdependence tends to inhibit conflict insofar as disrupting a country's ties to the international economy would hurt its domestic economy.

- **The degree of U.S. pre-eminence**. The international state system is characterised by hierarchy in terms of power. U.S. pre-eminence is built on the U.S.' military power, its large share of the international economy, its central role in international governance, and its position as a supporter and enforcer of international norms.

- **The capabilities of international organisations**. International organisations can undertake key tasks in the international system, including developing solutions to cross border problems, mediating disputes, shaping and enforcing international norms, disseminating information, and generating shared interests and potentially aligning states' preferences. The capabilities of international organisations to undertake these tasks depend on the amount of authority and resources states delegate to them.

- **The strength of international norms**. Strong international norms are ones that are universally held and for which there is relatively universal consensus on the need for norm enforcement. Weaker norms might only be held by (or applied to) some states, or might be held more broadly but lack support for punishing states that violate the norm.

- **The diffusion of lethal technology**. Diffusion of lethal technology refers to greater access by states and non-state actors to the technologies necessary to build and deploy lethal weapons, including nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons; precision munitions; or disruptive cyber technology.

- **The extent of resource stress due to population pressures**. Resource stress arises from the scarcity of renewable resources to support the population living in the area. Resource scarcity increases environmental insecurity. The main sources of resource scarcity include: (1) supply-induced scarcity, in which resources are consumed at a faster rate than they can be regenerated; (2) demand-induced scarcity, in which previously stable resource consumption increases through a rise in population or consumption per capita; and (3) structural scarcity, in which the distribution of resources is uneven and some groups have limited access to resources.

Interstate Conflict - Implications for Global Trends and Future Conflict: Overall, this report suggest that interstate conflict is likely to continue to decline in the near future, or at least remain at historically low levels. Many of the factors that have been identified as important to the decline in such conflict appear to be relatively stable, particularly. However, this review should not be interpreted as confirming that this decline in interstate conflict is irreversible. The literature has noted a number of potential developments that could undermine or reverse the effects of peaceful trends. The factors that could reverse this trend are of particular interest and importance to policymakers, and they are therefore highlighted below.

- **Breakdown in Consensus**: Order rests on a broad consensus among powers on how order should operate in political, economic, and security affairs. This order has been extremely beneficial for most of the powerful states in the system, and their support for the existing order is therefore robust. However, Chinese acceptance of this order has thus far been conditional, joining such institutions as the WTO while opposing such global norms as those regarding foreign intervention. As China's relative power within the system increases, it might feel freer to challenge aspects of this order that do not align with its preferences. Such a challenge could, in the long term, threaten the post-1945 institutional and normative structure that undergirds many positive developments. Global economic and demographic trends will inexorably erode the traditional powers share of power within the international system.

- **Increase in Weak State Capacity**: Some states, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, might currently be inhibited from pursuing interstate conflicts because of their extremely low levels of institutional capacity. As such, economic and political development in those states might increase interstate conflict, even while high levels of development in other states continue to restrain it.

- **Messy Democratisation**: While mature democracies are highly pacific, the initial stages of democratisation are often accompanied by conflict. Countries that have not begun any sort of democratic transition, that do so could result in an increase in instability and interstate conflict.

- **Demographic Pressures:** As global population continues to increase, greater competition for finite resources could lead to an increase in interstate conflict. Although increases in international trade have thus far allowed for more efficient sharing of resources and have decreased conflict, this trend might not hold in the face of continuously increasing global population.

- **Environmental Pressures:** Climate change could reduce arable land, food, and water resources, combining with demographic pressures to increase competition and conflict. Interstate conflict over resources appears to be rare. Other studies have emphasised that resources can also be a source of cooperation. Cross-border water resources in appear to be more frequently a source of cooperative behaviours between states.

Intrastate Conflict: While the incidence of war between states has been declining, trends in intrastate violent conflict have been more ambiguous. High-intensity intrastate conflicts (those with 100,000 or more deaths caused directly by violence in a single year) have been rare since the end of the Cold War. Similarly, the number of medium- and low-intensity intrastate conflicts (those with 1,000–100,000 and fewer than 1,000 battle deaths, respectively) peaked during the late Cold War. After an abrupt decline following the end of bipolar rivalry, their overall incidence has crept back up in the past few years.

Implications for Global Trends and Future Conflict: This report identifies a number of factors that are particularly likely to shape the future of conflict and should be closely monitored:

- **The Rise of Non-state Actors**: There has been a shift in power between states and non-state actors. A variety of factors have contributed to this change, including the end of the Cold War, changing norms about political participation, and new mechanisms for political organisation. Perhaps most important of all has been the role of technological change in facilitating communication among non-state actors.

- **Good Governance**: Studies of intrastate conflict typically find that mature democracies are the most stable form of government, but that democratisation processes and intermediate regime types (such as "illiberal" or "quasi" democracies) are associated with higher levels of conflict. The world has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of at least partially democratic governments over the past few decades. If these democracies are able to consolidate themselves, it could significantly improve levels of intrastate conflict. Moreover, the literature suggests that democracies are better able to cooperate with one another at the international level; successful democratic consolidation might facilitate agreements among democracies, which in turn would have second- and third-order consequences for the incidence of intrastate conflict.

- **Economic Growth and Instability**: Economic development is strongly associated with stability. The general trend has been toward ever-higher income levels (as measured, for instance, in GDP per capita). This report highlights, however, that the global economic order that has endured since the end of the Second World War is coming under severe strain. If persistent economic crises prevail in the coming decades, then the incidence of violent intrastate conflict is likely to rise dramatically.

- **Proxy Conflicts**: Were the current general agreement on the "rules of the game" among the great powers to collapse, however, we might well see the return of patterns of intrastate conflict that predominated during the Cold War. As nuclear weapons and other high-end military capabilities proliferate, middle-rank powers might feel sufficiently secure against reprisals that they can afford to engage in proxy conflicts in regions of interest.

- **Technology**: Technology has an ambiguous relationship on the incidence of intrastate conflict. It can dramatically increase the lethality of conflict, however. The diffusion of increasingly lethal technologies, such as bioengineering and precision weaponry, could increase the costs of conflict, both globally and for the U.S. in particular.

- **Neo-Malthusian Crisis**: The literature has found that demographic pressures and resource scarcities can exacerbate existing problems, but the primary drivers of conflict lie elsewhere (for instance, in poor governance and weak economic performance). It is possible however, that climate change or other environmental dynamics might finally overtake humanity's ability to compensate through innovation. An intense and widespread neo-Malthusian crisis could spark an increase in intrastate conflict.

Szayna, T. et al. (2018). Conflict Trends and Conflict Drivers: an Empirical Assessment of Historical Conflict Patterns and Future Conflict Projections. Rand Corporation.
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1063/RAND_RR1063.pdf

This report provides an overview of conflict trends and conflict drivers. The project assessed the debate in three steps.

- The project gathered data on conflict trends from sources of aggregate conflict data. From these data sources, the researchers selected those data sets that used reliable sources of data and a transparent methodology for classifying and aggregating conflicts.

- The project undertook a review of the academic literature on the causes of conflict. This review served as the basis for developing ten "key factors" that drive violent conflict. Quantitative indicators of each of these factors were also derived.

- The project used the quantitative data on violent conflict and drivers of conflict to assess conflict trends up to 2040. The team assessed conflict trends using historical data on the recent incidence of conflict. The team then assessed how changes in the ten key factors might lead to changes in the future incidence of conflict. Lastly, the team developed a tool that allows readers of the report to "mix and match" assumptions to see how varying these assumptions should be expected to influence the future incidence of conflict.

Table 3 summarises the impact of the identified ten key drivers of change in future incidence of conflict relative to the baseline conflict projections. The first column lists the key factors. The second column identifies the expected effect of an increase in each factor on projections of interstate conflict. The third column captures the expected effect of a decline in each of the key factors on projections of interstate conflict. Columns 4 and 5 present the expected effect of increases and decreases in each factor on the incidence of intrastate conflict relative to baseline projections of conflict.

See: Table 3: Ten Key Drivers of Change in Conflict of Incidence (Szayna, et al., 2018: xix)
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1063/RAND_RR1063
.pdf

For interstate conflict, the key conflict drivers identified are the prevalence of consolidated democracies, the capabilities of international organisations, and the degree of U.S. pre-eminence.

For intrastate conflict, the key conflict drivers are the capacity of state institutions and the rate of economic growth. However, these factors are closely intertwined. Weak institutional capacity reduces countries' economic opportunities, while weak economic growth reduces governments' resources to increase governance. As a result, declines in these two factors would create vulnerabilities expected to increase intrastate conflict that would be difficult to mitigate.

Trends in interstate violence: Trends in interstate violence suggest a significant decrease in the incidence and intensity of armed conflict. This result is true regardless of the database considered, and appears to apply to violence at all intensities. The trend for disputes and crises that fall short of major war is somewhat more ambiguous. For these events, the downward trend is less definitive, but there is little evidence of an upward trend.

Trends in Intrastate Violence: Intrastate conflict includes all forms of violence that occur within a state, ranging from war to riots and anti-government demonstrations. Because it encompasses many different types of violence, intrastate conflict is measured by a large number of different data sets and incorporates many different trends. Aggregate trends in intrastate conflict appear to follow the same patterns observed for interstate violence, specifically a general decline in frequency of conflict and intensity of conflict since the end of the Cold War, although there has been an uptick in some types of intrastate armed conflict since 2012. This trend applies equally to civil and ethnic conflict, is most dramatic for high-intensity violence, and is once again consistent across data sets. However, trends in other forms of low to medium intrastate violence, particularly involving non-state and societal actors, including riots, protests, demonstrations, and terrorism, show more limited evidence of this consistent downward trend and in some cases have trended upward in recent years.

This review of various types of intrastate conflict that fall short of war suggests that unlike more intense forms of intrastate violence, these lower-intensity and nonviolent events do not seem to follow an unambiguous downward trend. Instead, while several have declined since their peak, these trends appear to fluctuate much more over time and in recent years seem to be increasing in frequency, as well as scope, in some cases. These forms of conflict may continue to be relevant security concerns, especially when they escalate or trigger instability elsewhere.

Szanya, T. et al. (2017). What are the Trends in Armed Conflicts and what do they mean for U.S. Defence Policy? Rand Corporation.
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1900/RR1904/RAND_RR1904
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This report provides an overview of trends in armed conflict and explores potential impacts on U.S. defence policy. The report highlights that the current global security environment is highly unpredictable, leading the U.S. to face simultaneous security challenges from traditional state actors and trans-regional networks of sub-state groups - all taking advantage of rapid technological change. These security challenges reflect a variety of factors, including a highly

interconnected and interdependent global economy, the unprecedented stress on the earth's resources created by population growth, the creation of new and highly fragile sovereign states, and the rapid rise of emerging powers outside the Euro-Atlantic sphere. It is asserted in this report that these security challenges have, in turn, increased the potential for armed conflicts to emerge, a potential that seems borne out by conflict in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Yemen, Libya, and elsewhere.

To better understand the drivers of armed conflict, the authors examined the literature on this subject, focusing on scholarly work that used rigorous empirical approaches. The research identified 12 key factors as the primary drivers of the incidence of conflict (see table 4).

Table 4: Primary drivers of the incidence of conflict (Szanya, et al., 2017:3)

Capacity of state institutions	Degree of ethnic and sectarian polarisation
Prevalence of consolidated democracies	Rate of economic growth
Extent of economic interdependence	Capabilities of international organisations
Degree of U.S. pre-eminence	Strength of international norms
Diffusion of lethal technology	Degree of resource stress because of population pressures
Degree of regional hegemony	Degree of territorial contestation

The authors suggest that a quick review of these factors suggests why conflict has declined over the past decades. The world has experienced a dramatic expansion in economic growth and international trade, which has elevated many out of poverty and has given them a stake in a stable environment conducive to further development and the accumulation of wealth. These trends have been accompanied by the development of many stronger and more-democratic states, allowing for conflict resolution mechanisms that defuse or resolve conflicts peacefully. As these factors have become more prevalent, the incidence of conflict has generally declined alongside them. However, these positive trends have not been evenly distributed, and many states or regions continue to be plagued by frequent armed conflict. Nevertheless, the long-term global trends in these key factors help to explain why conflicts have generally become less frequent, the wars of the past few years notwithstanding. Moreover, the potential for these trends to continue into the future supports the belief that the observed long-term decline in armed conflict may persist. The report provides projections for future conflict. The projections for both interstate and intrastate conflict slope downward going into the future. The authors conclude:

- Conflict trends do not follow straight lines. Even though armed conflict has on average declined over the past several decades, there are periodic spikes in levels of armed conflict followed by periods of relative peace. Just because conflict is projected to decline over the long term does not mean that it will do so year on year.
- Although levels of armed conflict are slowly declining globally, these trends differ among regions. The Middle East was shown to be likely to remain highly unstable over the coming generation. Alternative scenarios analysed show the potential for major war if

political relations in East Asia change dramatically in the coming decades, and recent Russian actions have raised questions about armed conflict in Europe.

- Even if armed conflict continues to decline, this does not necessarily indicate lower demand for military forces. In fact, even as armed conflict declined in the post-Cold War era, the frequency of deployments of land forces for military interventions rose.

- The U.S.' military preponderance may be a part of the explanation for the decline in armed conflict. This report assessed the role of U.S. forward military posture and nuclear capabilities, finding that both deterred some level of interstate conflict. U.S. pre-eminence may also have subtler effects, such as the creation and support of international institutions and norms that some rising powers are challenging.

To test these drivers/trends in conflict and what these mean for the U.S., the authors generated a number of scenarios to test assumptions.

Cilliers, J. (2018). Violence in Africa Trends, drivers and prospects to 2023. Institute for Security Studies.
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3254122

This report presents a big-picture analysis of recent conflict trends in Africa based on an analysis of the structural drivers of conflict with a time horizon to 2023. It first presents recent conflict trends including slowly declining fatality rates in several countries, noting Africa's large burden of non-state conflict and the increase in riots and protests. The report then turns to seven structural (or deep) drivers of violence, and how they are likely to impact Africa in future.

Cilliers reports that Africa will remain turbulent because it is poor, young and badly governed, but also because it is growing and dynamic. He suggests that unlike elsewhere, Africa is not experiencing a democratic regression and protest is more acceptable public behaviour in many countries since an increased number are electoral democracies. This is reflected in the changed nature of violence where the ballot, not the gun, is slowly becoming the main source of political contestation, accompanied by a shift in focus to instability in urban rather than rural areas. Key findings include:

- The launch in 2013 of the African Union's Agenda 2063 coincided with a strong upward trend in armed conflict to peak in 2015. The subsequent trend has been downward, with violence involving militant Islamist groups (and state responses) remaining most resilient.

- It is unlikely that Africa will be able to "silence the guns by 2020", or indeed by 2023. Yet progress in advancing peace, stability and growth is evident across the continent.

- Effective responses to violent Islamist extremism in key countries would rapidly reduce armed conflict in Africa.

- The countries likely to continue having high levels of armed violence are Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Sudan, Burundi, Libya, Cameroon, Angola and Chad.

- South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, Tunisia, Algeria, Kenya and Somalia will probably continue experiencing high levels of political protest and riots, but Ethiopia, Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Rwanda, Madagascar and Angola have higher per capita protest levels.

- In the long term only much more rapid, inclusive economic development combined with good governance and developmentally oriented leadership will make Africa less vulnerable to violence and instability.

Beyond external developments, such as a potential global economic downturn, broadly seven structural relationships explain violence in Africa and will largely determine future levels. These relate to poverty, democratisation, regime type, population age structure, repeat violence, the bad-neighbourhood effect and poor governance. The propensity towards violence emerges from the collective impact and interaction of some or all of these drivers. Even then, violence typically requires politicisation and triggering event(s).

- **High levels of poverty and exclusion**: Large portions of poor people in a country often correlates with weak state capacity since limited tax revenues accrue to the government which means that it has limited capacity and human resource capacity is generally low.

- **Democracy and democratisation:** As levels of income and education increase, countries transition from unrepresentative systems first to (thin) electoral democracy. Should general human development continue, states develop the institutions and norms that embed the rule of law ensuring respect for civil liberties, and constraints on the executive by the judiciary, as well as by the legislature – all characteristic of liberal (thick) democracy. These transitions seldom proceed smoothly or in a linear fashion.

- **Regime type and regime dissonance**: The nature of regimes (democratic or autocratic, thin/ electoral democracy or thick/liberal democracy) affects conflict vulnerability.

- **Youthful population**: Large youth bulges, are robustly associated with an increased risk of conflict and high rates of criminal violence in poor countries, particularly when young people lack opportunities in terms of education, training and employment and have no sense of voice and participation. However, youth bulges appear to be more closely related to low-intensity conflict than to civil war.

- **Repeat violence:** Once a country has experienced large-scale violence, the chances of recurring violence is strong. In recent years, the trend towards conflict recurrence has been more common than the onset of new conflicts on the continent.

- **Bad-neighbourhood effect**: Being situated in a conflict-ridden region is a major risk factor and these countries are more likely to experience the spill over effect of instability. According to the World Development Report 2011, a country making development advances, such as Tanzania, loses an estimated 0.7% of GDP every year for each neighbour in conflict.

- **Poor governance:** At low levels of income and development, the nature of the governing elite is more important for economic growth and the achievement of positive development outcomes than the extent to which countries are democratic or authoritarian. Hence, countries that are fortunate enough to produce a developmentally oriented governing elite grow much more rapidly, particularly if this is in the form of a cohesive governing party or coterie of leadership that is clear in its pursuit of development.

- **Climate change**: As climate change alters the nature of resource dependence, it may have consequential effects on states with large natural resource benefits. But eventually people fight based on the mobilisation of perceptions of exclusion and injustice. Africa will experience widely different effects from climate change in the coming decades that will strain the ability of the environment to support local populations under current developmental conditions. Some areas of the continent are likely to become warmer and drier, and thus experience more frequent and severe droughts close to major population centres (e.g. Cape Town). Other parts of the continent may experience widespread drought and potentially famine without proper government intervention, or experience more extreme rains, which could also adversely affect crops and food security.

While some argue war in is on the decline, others point out that it merely has taken on new forms. Increasingly, conflict environments feature not only state armies but also non-state armed groups, criminal gangs, drug-traffickers and terrorists. These actors employ new communications and weapons technologies, and frequently operate across national borders and regions, even though local allegiances are a critical dynamic of violence. This greater complexity in the production of violence has hampered efforts to respond to violent conflict around the world. There is a growing recognition that the international community's conflict response toolbox, including expensive international interventions, is inadequate in the face of new empirical realities.

Krause, K. (2016). From Armed Conflict to Political Violence: Mapping & Explaining Conflict Trends. Daedalus Volume 145, Issue 4. p.113-126. https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00416

This essay makes the case that adopting a broad understanding of political violence, including violence committed by the state and its agents, and nonphysical violence as the violation of basic rights, is essential to gain insight into the causes and consequences of, and to frame appropriate responses to, war and violence. Krause continues that most contemporary lethal violence does not occur in conflict zones, the majority of states most affected by lethal violence are not at war, and the levels of lethal violence in many non-conflict settings are higher than in war zones. Much of this non-war violence is organised, not random, and political in nature. A narrow focus on wars and formal armed conflicts thus obscures the high levels of everyday violence and insecurity around the world. Krause notes that there are four facts about contemporary violence

1) most lethal violence does not occur in conflict zones;
2) the majority of states most affected by lethal violence are not at war;
3) the levels of lethal violence in some non-conflict settings are higher than in war zones;
4) much of this violence is organised, non-random, and in some sense political.

More broadly, Krause contends that an exclusive focus on war means we know little about how we get from such things as state repression or group violence to civil war and what the consequences might be for international and regional order. Although scholars have moved away from a focus on large-scale organised violence to analyse such things as terrorism, non-state armed groups, the micro-dynamics of civil war, and subnational and transnational violence, the political dimension of violence itself remains under conceptualised.

He continues that if we wish to understand the links between different kinds of violence, processes of escalation, and social and political consequences, at least two kinds of neglected violence should be brought into the picture. The first is violence that has been "made legal"; the most widespread forms of legal violence being the use of force by authorised agents of the state, police, gendarmes, paramilitaries, and others, especially when this goes beyond what would be considered as the legitimate use of force by such agents. There is good reason to conclude that large-scale violence can escalate upward from a host of deeply entrenched and enduring micro level violent exchanges or struggles for power.

A second important generative consequence of violence is temporal, and can be seen in the relationship between conflict and post-conflict violence. Finally, seemingly disconnected forms of violence can be linked in complex ways. Sexual violence in and after conflicts, especially in parts of West Africa, is connected to broader conflict and violent dynamics, and the specific, often

exclusive, focus on sexual violence hampers understanding of the relationship between sexual violence and other 'ungendered' violence. These forms of violence are manifestations of the same systemic failures and mechanisms.

Krause concludes that even low-level but sustained violence can have long-term systemic and structural consequences that affect processes of state-building and decay, create cross-border sources of regional instability, and distribute power away from state institutions. The erosion of the state's practical monopoly over the use of violence, the steady proliferation of more powerful and sophisticated weapons to non-state armed actors, the relative ease with which "violence entrepreneurs" can operate in many parts of the world, and the weak and fragile nature of many state institutions intended to provide safety and security are all worrying trends.

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About this report

This report is based on seven days of desk-based research. The K4D research helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of a selection of recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to specific questions relating to international development. For any enquiries, contact helpdesk@k4d.info.

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