



CONFLICT BAROMETER | 2020

Heidelberg Institute for
International Conflict Research



disputes
non-violent crises
violent crises
limited wars
wars

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The HIIK evolved from the 1991 research project COSIMO (Conflict Simulation Model), led by Prof. Dr. Frank R. Pfetsch, University of Heidelberg, and financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

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HIK

Heidelberg Institute for
International Conflict Research

CONFLICT BAROMETER|2020

Analyzed Period: 01/01/20 – 12/31/20

PREFACE

With the 29th edition of the *Conflict Barometer*, the HIIK continues its annual series of reports covering political conflicts worldwide.

The global political conflict panorama in 2020 was marked by a rise in the number of wars and violent crises. The overall number of wars increased significantly from 15 to 21, while the number of limited wars decreased by two. The increase in wars was driven by developments in Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. In Europe, two conflicts escalated to full-scale wars, while in Sub-Saharan Africa six ongoing wars continued and another five violent conflicts escalated to the level of war, making it the region with the highest number of conflicts on war-level in 2020. DR Congo and Ethiopia alone accounted for five full-scale wars. Meanwhile, in Asia and Oceania, the Americas, as well as West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan (WANA), the number of wars remained constant or declined slightly. However, wars for example in Brazil, Libya, Syria, and Yemen continued. As in previous years, violent intrastate crises such as the opposition conflicts in Venezuela or Nicaragua continued to represent the most common conflict type and shaped the global conflict landscape. Finally, peace initiatives, for instance in Libya or in Afghanistan, aimed to pave the way for more peaceful future relations.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Spotlight section complements our descriptive approach to conflict dynamics with additional in-depth analysis. For instance, this year's spotlights analyze conflict dynamics in Belarus or telecommunications restrictions in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board of Directors would like to thank all editors, heads of regional working groups, and everyone else who contributed to this report for their outstanding efforts, especially during the final stages of editing. Without your commitment, a publication like this would be impossible. The Covid-19 pandemic did not only affect the global conflict landscape, but also our editing process, which we had to conduct completely online. When time resources seem to be more limited than ever, and time spent in front of the screen longer than ever, voluntary efforts spent on a project like this become even more extraordinary.

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Methodology

METHODOLOGY

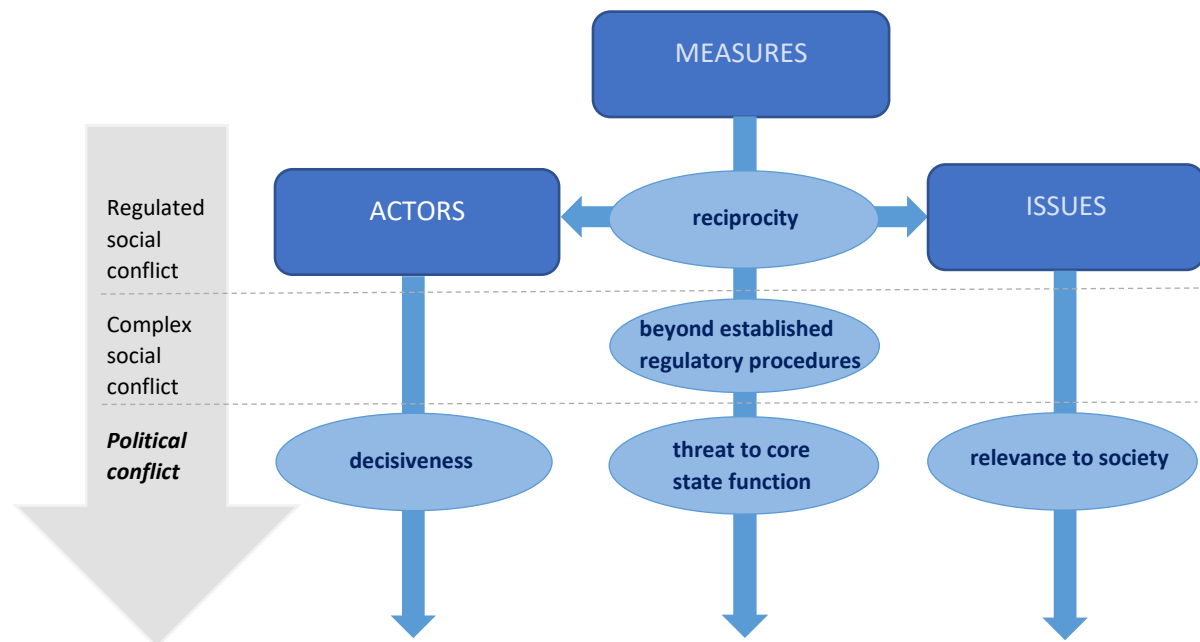
Since 1991, conflict research at HIIK has analyzed political conflicts by focusing on conflict processes rather than purely quantitative thresholds of casualties. Thus, HIIK's methodology is based on a set of specified actions and acts of communication between conflict parties. This process-oriented approach enriches the analysis of political conflicts with a broader and more detailed empirical foundation.

Located at Heidelberg University, HIIK has continuously taken steps to further elaborate its methodological approach. Notably, in 2011 the institute revised its definition of political conflicts and restructured its conflict intensity assessment. The latter now accounts for not only the intensity of a given conflict area in a given year, but also determines the intensity of a conflict for first-level subnational political units and per month. As such, it allows for a much more detailed measurement of conflict dynamics.

Furthermore, conflict actions and acts of communication can be operationalized with the help of qualitative and quantitative indicators of the means and consequences of violence. This allows for a more comprehensive overview of political dynamics and intensities.

Most recently, in 2017, HIIK introduced the concept of inactive conflicts to widen the span of observed cases and create space for dormant dynamics that may become active again within three years. These changes have further enhanced the accuracy, reliability, and reproducibility of the conflict information provided.

HIIK's Basic Concept of Political Conflict



According to HIIK's approach, a political conflict is an incompatibility of intentions between at least individual or collective actors. Such an incompatibility emerges in the form of observable and interrelated actions and acts of communication (measures) with regard to certain positional differences of values (issues) relevant to society and threatening (the continuity of) state functions or the international order. Actors, measures, and issues are the constitutive attributes of political conflict.

METHODOLOGY

CONFLICT ACTORS

Conflict actors are collective actors or individuals as part of a collective in direct pursuit of a conflict item, which are acknowledged by other conflict actors in their decision-making processes and are thus perceived to be relevant. Their actions must in turn provoke reaction; there must be reciprocity between actors to fulfill the definition. Collective actors such as states, international organizations, and non-state actors share a certain level of unitary conception, internal cohesion and a common structure of preferences. Actors may be considered as a coalition if their preferences are on the same side of a conflict dynamic and contrary to those of another actor or coalition. There may also be indirect actors involved: so-called supporters help a direct actor to claim or aspire to the conflict item, while so-called interveners wish to end the conflict without supporting either coalition in their actions regarding the item.

CONFLICT MEASURES

Conflict measures are actions and acts of communication carried out by a conflict actor in the context of a political conflict. They are constitutive for a conflict and its intensity if they occur outside established regulatory procedures and – possibly in conjunction with other measures – if they threaten the international order or a core function of the state or have the prospect to do so. Established regulatory procedures are defined as those mechanisms of conflict management that are accepted by all conflict actors in their respective context and performed without the use or threat of physical violence. Examples of conflict regulations include elections, court proceedings, public fora, round tables, or other forms of negotiations. Core state functions encompass the provision of security for a given population, as well as the guarantee of integrity of a given territory and of a specific political, socioeconomic, or cultural order. If, from a conflict actor's point of view, the fulfilment of state functions or the maintenance of the local or global order cannot be upheld, established procedures are threatened.

CONFLICT ISSUES

Conflict issues are material or immaterial goods pursued by conflict actors via conflict measures. They can become relevant for the entire society if they impact the coexistence of individuals or groups within a given polity or the relations between polities. Conflict issues are classified on the basis of ten items representing common objectives of conflict actors: (i) System/Ideology is encoded if a conflict actor aspires to change the ideological, religious, socioeconomic or judicial orientation of the political system or of the regime type itself. (ii) National Power refers to the power to govern a state, whereas (iii) Autonomy refers to attaining or extending the political self-rule of a population within a state or of a dependent territory without striving for independence. (iv) Secession refers to the aspired separation of a territory of a state aiming to establish a new state or to merge with another state. Furthermore, the goal of (v) Decolonization is the independence of a dependent territory. (vi) Subnational Predominance focuses on the attainment of the de-facto control by a government or a non-state actor over a territory or a population. The item (vii) Resources is encoded if the possession of raw materials, pasture, or the profits gained thereof, are pursued. (viii) Territory refers to a contested change of the delimitation of an international border. (ix)

International Power as an item describes an aspired shift in the power constellation in the international system or a regional system therein, through the change of military or institutional capabilities, related violent measures, or of an actor's political or economic influence. The item (x) Other is used as a residual category. Conflict actors can have multiple demands, and thus claim more than one item at the same time.

CONFLICT TYPES

IIK's methodology distinguishes between interstate, intrastate, substate, and transstate conflicts. While interstate conflicts only involve internationally recognized state actors, intrastate conflicts involve both state actors and non-state actors. Statehood is viewed as non-contested if the state is an official UN member state; states with limited recognition that are recognized by at least one other official UN member state are marked with a °. Substate conflicts are carried out solely among non-state actors. Transstate conflicts involve at least two sovereign states, both of which meet the criteria of a political conflict, and (at least) one non-state actor. This means that the actors are in conflict with each other and pursue their goals through conflict measures on the territory of at least two states.

CONFLICT START, INACTIVITY AND CLOSURE

When assessing levels of violence, IIK differentiates between violent and non-violent conflicts. A conflict is observed in the Conflict Barometer if it fulfills the minimum criteria defining a conflict. It may start at any level of intensity, therefore also at a non-violent level. As the start date, we define the day of the first recorded constitutive measure. Conflicts may be opened in retrospect.

Should the basic conflict criteria be fulfilled but no active measures can be observed at any specific time, a conflict's status can be set to inactive. An inactive conflict only comprises so-called persistent measures in which claims and goals are not renewed but implied without actions or statements, such as the tacit stipulation of a goal in a charter or effective declaration of the actor, dormant territorial demands or ongoing demobilization processes. The absence of reporting within this period is an indicator for continued inactivity. After 24 months of inactivity, a conflict is usually seen as passively closed at the end of the year, unless a re-occurrence of any violent or non-violent measures continues to be likely.

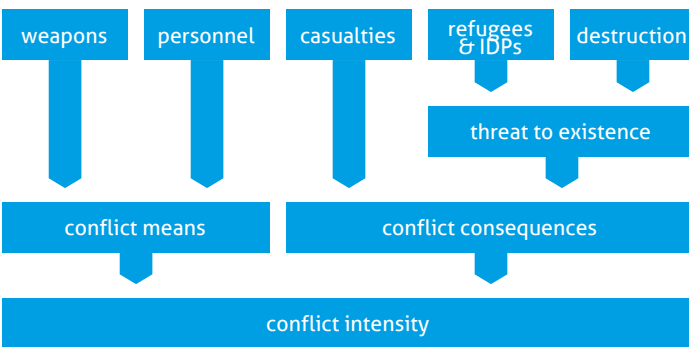
A conflict is actively closed if the basic conflict criteria are no longer fulfilled, with a set date of closure that justifies the decision. This may be the day a peace agreement is enforced between all conflict actors, for instance. Other forms of closure include the annihilation of a conflict actor, its dissolution, or unification with another.

ASSESSING THE INTENSITIES OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS

THE CONCEPT OF CONFLICT INTENSITY

intensity Level	terminology	level of violence	intensity class
1	dispute	non-violent conflicts	low intensity
2	non-violent crisis		
3	violent crisis	violent conflicts	medium intensity
4	limited war		high intensity
5	war		

In order to measure the three levels of violent conflict, five proxies are used to indicate their means and consequences. The dimension of means encompasses the use of weapons and deployment of personnel, the dimension of consequences, the number of casualties, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the level of destruction.



Each indicator is scored on a ternary scale. Aggregating the five individual scores results in the total regional monthly intensity (RMI). The regions are the first-level administrative units of a country.

		conflict means		
		0 points	1 point	2 points
conflict consequences	0 points	violent crisis	violent crisis	limited war
	1 point	violent crisis	limited war	war
	2 points	limited war	war	war

WEAPONS

		weapons employment	
		light	heavy
weapon type	light	0 points	
	heavy	1 point	2 points

The weapons indicator determines whether light or heavy arms are used (e.g. handguns or hand grenades vs. artillery or heavy bombs, respectively). Regarding the extent to which the fighting capacity of heavy arms is exploited, we differentiate between limited and extensive use. The former is characterized by a light exertion of violence compared to its actual capacity, the latter by a powerful exertion of violence.

PERSONNEL

low	medium	high
≤ 50	> 50 ≤ 400	> 400
0 points	1 point	2 points

The personnel indicator measures the highest number of participants in an individual measure. All persons are counted who, by their engagement in a concerted action, represent a conflict actor in the context of a violent measure. Low, medium, and high numbers of personnel are distinguished, based on two thresholds: 50 and 400 persons.

CASUALTIES

low	medium	high
≤ 20	> 20 ≤ 60	> 60
0 points	1 point	2 points

Third, the overall number of casualties in the conflict in a region per month is counted, comprising the number of deaths from violent measures or their direct consequences. They include combatants as well as civilians who were injured or killed. Persons dying due to indirect effects, e.g. starvation or disease, are not included. The thresholds employed for the indicator are 20 and 60 persons killed.

REFUGEES & IDPs

low	medium	high
≤ 1 000	> 1 000 ≤ 20 000	> 20 000
0 points	1 point	2 points

Fourth, the overall number of cross-border refugees and IDPs in a region per month is tallied. Displacement is defined as the migration of human beings provoked by conflict measures, e.g. by the creation of inhumane living conditions. Taken into account is flow, not stock data. The thresholds employed for the indicator are 1,000 and 20,000 refugees, respectively.

DESTRUCTION

low	medium	high
within 0 dimensions	within 1 - 2 dimensions	within 3 - 4 dimensions
0 points	1 point	2 points

Lastly, destruction resulting from the conflict in a region per month is determined by four dimensions that are considered essential for civilian populations: (civilian and military) infrastructure, habitation, economy/self-sufficiency, and identity-establishing goods. The level of destruction is classified as low, medium, or high, depending on the number of dimensions affected. Any form of destruction counted within this indicator has to be on a massive scale, i.e. the damaged object must be crucial for the functioning of the category in question.

UP- AND DOWNGRADING

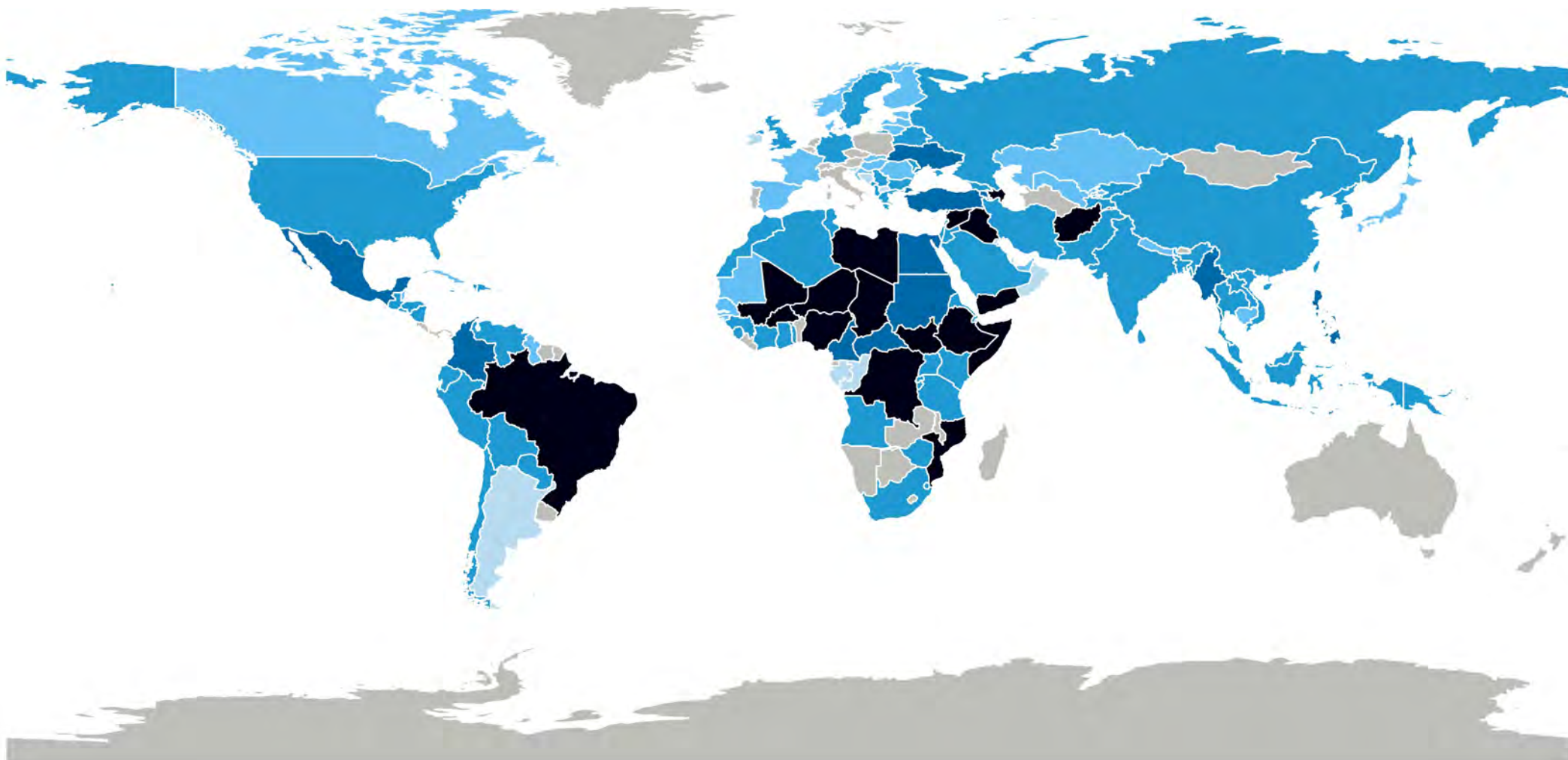
Regional monthly intensities (RMIs, see above) are the first pillar for determining the yearly conflict intensity of a specific conflict region (region/year intensity) as well as the overall yearly conflict area intensity (area/year intensity). A conflict area usually equals an internationally recognized country and is the sum of all subnational units affected by the respective conflict. Typically, the area/year intensity is equal to the highest RMI in a given area per year. As such, intensities of a certain spatiotemporal unit would directly translate to a corresponding yearly conflict intensity level. However, methodological issues such as a considerable variance in the size of administrative regions might threaten the comparability between different conflicts on the same intensity level. Thus, up- and downgrading becomes the determining factor when reassessing the given RMIs, if violence occurred. For instance, two conflicts might have an area/year intensity of a violent crisis according to the assessment based on the first pillar. The first conflict accounted for 30 casualties in three RMIs with ten fatalities each, while the second conflict accounted for more than 370 casualties in 37 RMIs. In this case, it might be disproportional to assign the same conflict intensity to both conflicts. Therefore, we apply up- and downgrading rules – the second pillar of our conflict intensity assessment –, which allows us to fine-tune conflict intensities to ensure comparability.

This decision is based on the conflicts' annual and area-wide numbers of refugees and IDPs, and casualties. A violent crisis must thereby be upgraded to the level of a limited war if more than 360 casualties or more than 18,000 refugees and IDPs were counted in the whole year in the conflict area. A limited war must be upgraded to the level of a war if more than 1,080 casualties or more than 360,000 refugees and IDPs were counted. In contrast, a limited war must be downgraded to the level of a violent crisis if less than 120 casualties and less than 6,000 refugees and IDPs were counted. Likewise, a war must be downgraded to the level of a limited war if less than 360 casualties and less than 120,000 refugees and IDPs were counted. In the Conflict Barometer, the area/year intensity is displayed above each conflict description and in the regional conflict overview.

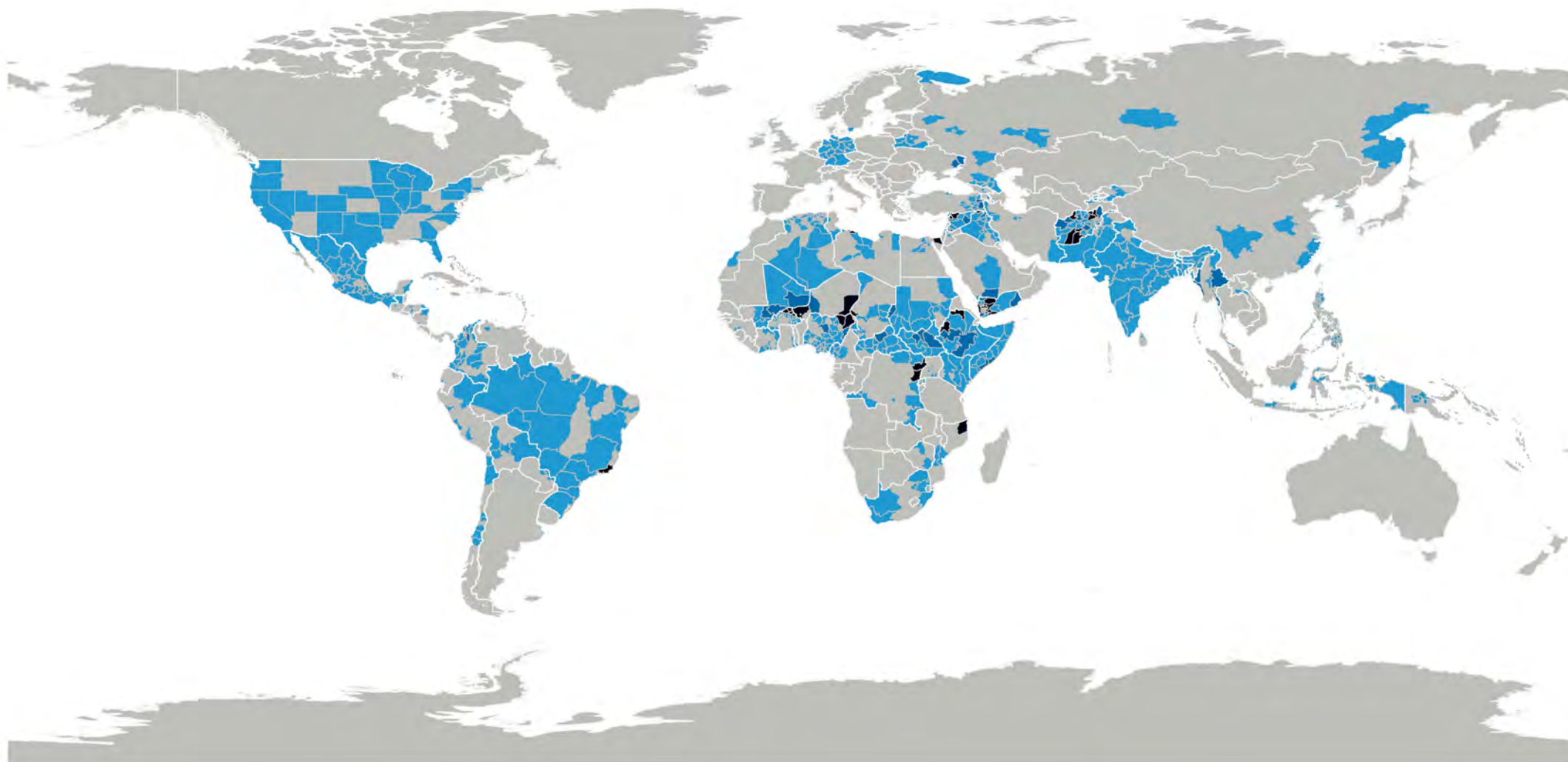
Katharina Valjak, Mostafa Bostani, Hannah Brandt, Nathalie Brügger

GLOBAL CONFLICT PANORAMA

CONFLICTS IN 2020 (NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL)



VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN 2020 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)



INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS

HIGHLY VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN 2020

LIMITED WARS (19)

WARS (21)

WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN

Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)

Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)
 Libya (opposition)
 Syria (opposition)
 Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)
 Turkey (PKK / TAK)
 Yemen (al-Hirak / Southern Yemen)
 Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry)
 Cameroon (English-speaking minority)
 Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka, ex-Séléka)
 Ethiopia (OLF / Oromia)
 Ethiopia (opposition)
 Mali (inter-communal rivalry / central Mali)
 Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)
 South Sudan (opposition)
 Sudan (Darfur)

DR Congo (ADF)
 DR Congo (Ituri militias)
 DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)
 Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)
 Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)
 Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.)
 Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)
 Mozambique (ASWJ)
 Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS-Boko Haram)
 Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)
 South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)

THE AMERICAS

Colombia (ELN)
 Colombia (inter-cartel violence, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)
 Mexico (drug cartels)
 Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)

Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)

ASIA AND OCEANIA

Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State)
 Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)
 Philippines (CPP, NPA)
 Philippines (Islamist militant groups)

EUROPE

Ukraine (Donbas)

Armenia – Azerbaijan
 Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2020, HIIK observed a total of 359 conflicts worldwide. About 60 percent, 220, were fought violently, while 139 were on a non-violent level. Compared to 2019, the overall number of full-scale wars increased from 15 to 21. The number of limited wars decreased from 23 to 19. HIIK opened five new conflicts in 2020 and eight retroactively. It ended the observation of three active conflicts and of 16 conflicts due to two or more years of inactivity. Additionally, two conflicts ended by being merged with other conflicts. Those 16 conflicts, the two merged conflicts, as well as another 16 currently inactive conflicts are not reflected in the above figures and following statistics.

WARS

In 2020, HIIK observed 21 wars, six more than in the previous year. On par with 2014, this was the highest number of wars ever recorded by HIIK. Three limited wars escalated to full-scale wars. All three of these were located in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, four violent crises escalated to wars. In addition, one new conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa erupted directly on the level of a war. Compared to the previous year, 13 ongoing wars continued globally, while three conflicts that had been fought on the level of war in 2019 de-escalated, continuing either as limited wars or violent crises. While the number of wars decreased in the Americas as well as in West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan, both Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa experienced a marked increase. As in previous years, no war was observed in Asia and Oceania. Compared to 2019, West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan lost its status as the region with the highest number of full-scale wars. While six ongoing wars continued, two conflicts that had previously been fought on the level of war de-escalated [→ Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula); Syria (Turkey – SDF / Northern Syria)]. However, the violent crisis over secession of Southern Yemen intensified, bringing the number of wars in the region to seven.

In Afghanistan, the war between the Taliban and various other Islamist militant groups on the one hand, and the Afghan government, supported by the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission and the USA, on the other, continued [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)]. While 8,820 civilian fatalities were reported in 2020, this nevertheless constituted the lowest number of civilian deaths since 2013. In February, the Taliban and the US government signed a bilateral peace agreement, initiating the phased withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan. Despite the start of an intra-Afghan dialog in September, the frequency of violent clashes between the Taliban and Afghan security forces rose throughout the year. In Libya, despite international diplomatic efforts in January, fighting between the rival parties in the opposition conflict continued, as the Government of National Accord launched a sustained counter-offensive early in the year [→ Libya (opposition)]. Conflict dynamics were characterized by the increasing involvement of international actors on both sides. However, in October, both parties agreed to demobilize various armed groups and on November 7, the two sides announced they would support national elections in 2021. Although the transnational conflict between the so-called Islamic State (IS) and several national governments as well as other militant groups continued on the level of war, conflict dynamics continued to move away from conventional warfare [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. While IS remained unable to conquer or hold any strategically important territory in both Syria

and Iraq, thus being forced to resort mainly to small-scale attacks, the conflict still resulted in at least 1,379 fatalities across Syria and more than 240 deaths in Iraq. IS militants also conducted decentralized attacks in other countries, i.a. Afghanistan, Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. Meanwhile, the Syrian government continued its advance on the remaining opposition-held strongholds, while also consolidating its hold over government-held areas. International actors, chiefly Russia and Turkey, continued to be heavily involved. From March, a ceasefire brokered by the two countries somewhat stabilized the situation [→ Syria (opposition)]. Beyond their involvement in Syria, the Turkish Armed Forces launched several military operations against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey and Iraq. For instance, as part of the two cross-border operations Claw-Tiger and Claw-Eagle Turkey conducted airstrikes on more than 700 targets. The PKK in turn staged several small-scale attacks in both countries, frequently deploying IEDs [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK)]. In Yemen, two conflicts were fought on the level of a war. The war between the al-Houthi forces and the internationally-recognized government continued [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)]. Despite ongoing talks between al-Houthi officials and Saudi Arabia, the Saudi-led coalition continued to conduct airstrikes on insurgent positions. Nevertheless, al-Houthi forces managed to capture al-Jawf governorate. In December, UNOCHA estimated the conflict's total death toll to have reached 230,000. Meanwhile, the violent crisis over secession of Southern Yemen escalated to a war [→ Yemen, Iraq et al. (al-Hirak / Southern Yemen)].

Sub-Saharan Africa was the region with the highest number of conflicts on war-level in 2020, with eleven active wars. Overall, six ongoing wars continued, while another five violent conflicts escalated to the level of war. Of these, one was located in the DR Congo [→ DR Congo (ADF)], one was fought in Mozambique [→ Mozambique (ASW)], and one took place in South Sudan [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. Ethiopia experienced two new war-level conflicts, one of which constituted a newly-erupted conflict [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray); Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)]. Other than in 2019, no war de-escalated.

Conflict dynamics in Sub-Saharan Africa were marked by continuity in terms of the region's ongoing wars involving various Islamist militant groups. Despite sustained international efforts to stabilize the Sahel zone, including MINUSMA and the French Operation Barkhane, the wars against the Al-Qaeda affiliated Islamist armed group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM) and the so-called Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP-GS), formerly known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, continued to challenge public securities in the region [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)]. Warfare remained concentrated in the tri-border area between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, with Islamist militants expanding their attacks to the south of Burkina Faso. Moreover, JNIM conducted an attack in Côte d'Ivoire, marking the first Islamist attacks in the Gulf of Guinea since 2016. Approx. 1.1 million people in the region were displaced as a result of ongoing violence. While communal self-defense forces continued to grow [→ Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry); Mali (inter-communal rivalry / central Mali)], intensifying inter-Islamist tensions also increasingly affected intricate conflict dynamics. Whereas JNIM reportedly sought to mediate inter-communal tensions, ISWAP-GS frequently attacked civilian targets, killing approx. 500 civilians in the Lake Chad Basin. The IS affiliated Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which emerged from a Boko Haram-split, continued to attack both military and

civilian targets, including convoys and strategic intersections. The group was born out of a Boko Haram partition. Although ISWAP established strongholds particularly in Nigeria's Borno State, where it collected taxes and provided healthcare, attacks were also frequently conducted in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Besides ISWAP, governments in the Lake Chad Basin continued to fight Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS), also known as Boko Haram [→ Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS-Boko Haram)]. In 2020, the war accounted for over 1,000 fatalities. Moreover, as a result of the continued violence involving both JAS and ISWAP, approx. 2.8 million people were displaced in the Lake Chad Basin. In its efforts to suppress both insurgencies, the Nigerian government and allied forces continued to rely heavily on airstrikes, mostly withdrawing ground troops from heavily contested areas. In the Horn of Africa, the war between the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab and the governments of Somalia and Kenya continued for the fifteenth consecutive year [→ Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)]. Al-Shabaab remained active in both rural and urban areas, on average conducting more than five attacks per month in the capital Mogadishu and frequently resorting to suicide bombings and IEDs. In May, the UN Security Council reauthorized a nine-month AMISOM deployment and US AFRICOM conducted airstrikes on al-Shabaab positions throughout the year. In Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, the limited war involving the Islamist militia Ahlu Sunna Wal Jammaa (ASWJ) escalated to a full-scale war [→ Mozambique (ASWJ)]. ASWJ stepped up its operations, increasingly targeting military forces and private security contractors in addition to civilians and extending its reach to major cities. Reflecting the conflict's growing intensity, several international actors, including the US and the EU, offered bilateral assistance to the Mozambican government. In the DR Congo (DRC), three conflicts were fought on war-level. The government's campaign against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) escalated to a war [→ DR Congo (ADF)]. This year, the conflict's dynamics centred in DRC, with no violent measure recorded in Uganda. Mostly based in North Kivu province, ADF was allegedly involved in 289 violent incidents, resulting in at least 1,483 fatalities. Several large-scale military operations throughout the year managed to occupy ADF's main bases. Nevertheless, the group mostly maintained its support and recruitment network. In Ituri province, several rival militias, including the Cooperative for the Development of Congo, continued to clash among themselves as well as with government forces [→ DR Congo (Ituri militias)]. The conflict experienced a marked escalation with over 1,000 conflict-related deaths recorded in 2020. Moreover, thousands of dwellings were destroyed in Ituri, leaving 660,000 people internally displaced in the first half of the year alone. A third, highly violent conflict continued in the provinces of North and South Kivu, Maniema, as well as Tanganyika. Competing militant groups such as the Mayi-Mayi factions, the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated, and other militias rooted in local communities continued to fight over territory and resources, also frequently clashing with the Congolese military [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. In Ethiopia, political tensions between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the government escalated in November, giving way to a new full-scale war [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)]. The Ethiopian National Defense Force launched a large-scale military offensive into Tigray and shut down the region's telecommunications. Eritrean military forces supported the Ethiopian government, allegedly targeting civilians and refugees from Ethiopia. However, both the Eritrean as well as the Ethiopian government de-

nied this. Despite limited information available, reportedly approx. 222,000 people were internally displaced, while 53,300 sought refuge in Sudan. The war between the TPLF and the government also intensified inter-communal rivalries [→ Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)]. For instance, on November 7, Tigrayan militants allegedly killed over 600 predominantly Amharan civilians. Clashes among ethnic groups also escalated in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. In neighboring South Sudan, violent confrontations among and within local communities, such as the Dinka, Nuer, and Murle increased significantly, resulting in at least 1,847 fatalities [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. Control over cattle remained a central issue of contention, with more than 100,000 heads of cattle looted over the year.

In the Americas, the number of wars decreased from two to one, as the conflict between drug cartels, vigilante groups, and the government in Mexico de-escalated to a limited war [→ Mexico (drug cartels)]. However, in Brazil, the war between various drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs), militias and the government continued [→ Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)]. DTOs remained particularly active in the city of Rio de Janeiro, eponymous state, as well as in Amazonas state, accounting for over 25,000 homicides in the first half of the year alone. Moreover, despite ongoing efforts by security forces to rein in DTOs, the latter frequently and successfully targeted political leaders.

In Europe, two interrelated conflicts escalated to war-level. The frozen conflict over the contested territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding regions escalated, as Azerbaijan sought to reclaim the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Armenia intervened to defend the mostly Armenian-inhabited region [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh); Armenia – Azerbaijan]. The rival parties engaged in conventional warfare, with Azerbaijan also deploying highly advanced weaponry, such as drones. Ultimately, at least 7,000 combatants on both sides were killed during the fighting.

LIMITED WARS

The total number of limited wars decreased by four from 23 in 2019 to 19 this year. Nine conflicts continued on the same level as in the previous year. Eight violent crises escalated to limited wars, while, at the same time, ten limited wars de-escalated to the level of a violent crisis. Three limited wars escalated to full-scale wars, while two conflicts de-escalated from war-level to limited war-level. One limited war was merged into another conflict [→ South Sudan (SPLM/A-IO)]. In Europe, the only limited war continued between the self-proclaimed Donetsk (DPR) and Luhansk (LPR) People's Republics, supported by Russia, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian government, supported by Western countries, on the other [→ Ukraine (Donbas)]. Over the course of the year, at least 55 Ukrainian soldiers and 34 militants were killed. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) recorded a total of 134,767 ceasefire violations, which constituted a 55 percent decrease compared to the previous year. While this year's civilian fatalities were the lowest since 2014, civilians continued to be affected by the limited war, with at least 24 dead. Talks of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), including representatives from Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE, were conducted on a regular basis. In Sub-Saharan Africa, nine limited wars were observed in 2020, a decrease by one compared to the previous year. Four limited wars were fought on the same level as in 2019. While five violent crises escalated to the level of a limited

war, two limited wars de-escalated to violent crises [→ Sudan (inter-communal rivalry); Sudan (opposition)]. Finally, three limited wars escalated to full-scale wars [→ DR Congo (ADF); Mozambique (ASWJ); South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. In Burkina Faso and Mali, surging Islamist attacks [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)] and the inability of the respective governments to provide security accelerated the formation of communal self-defense militias. Furthermore, tensions over resources and territory between various communities continued to increase. In Burkina Faso, the violent crisis between various ethnic groups on the one hand, the Fulani ethnic group, on the other hand, and Islamist groups as a third party, escalated to a limited war [→ Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry)]. For instance, on March 2, suspected Koglweogo burned down the Fulani villages of Dinguila-Peulh, Barga, and Ramdolla-Peulh, Nord region, killing at least 43 villagers and displacing many others. Similarly, in Mali, the limited war between the Dogon and Bambara ethnic communities, the Fulani ethnic community, and Islamist groups continued [→ Mali (inter-communal rivalry / central Mali)]. Over the course of the year, the rival parties were responsible for at least 700 deaths in at least 236 confirmed violent confrontations in the Mopti and Ségou regions. Furthermore, approx. 80,000 persons were internally displaced.

In Nigeria, the limited war between various farming communities and mainly Muslim Fulani pastoralists continued, resulting in more than 740 fatalities. The states most affected were Kaduna, Benue, Delta, Plateau, Kogi, Edo, and Ondo [→ Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)]. In Cameroon, the limited war between various groups of the English-speaking minority and the French-speaking Cameroonian government continued. While at least 9,000 people sought refuge in Nigeria, more than 80,000 were internally displaced [→ Cameroon (English-speaking minority)]. In the Central African Republic, the limited war between numerous ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka militias, on the one hand, and the government, supported by MINUSCA as well as Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group, on the other, continued. Due to numerous violent incidents affecting the local population, refugee and IDP numbers remained high. By the end of the year, approx. 30,000 were newly internally displaced [→ Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka, ex-Séléka)].

The violent crisis over autonomy of the Darfur region in western Sudan between the opposition alliance Sudan Revolutionary Front and the government escalated to a limited war. Having been fought on war-level for 15 years, the conflict had de-escalated to a violent crisis in 2019. The AU-UN hybrid operation UNAMID, formally approved in 2007 to stabilize the Darfur region, ended by the end of the year [→ Sudan (Darfur)]. In South Sudan, the violent crisis between various opposition groups on the one hand, and the government of President Salva Kiir as well as the former major opposition group Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition, on the other, escalated to a limited war. The UN extended their arms embargo on South Sudan and the mandate of UNMISS for another year [→ South Sudan (opposition)].

In Ethiopia, both the violent crises between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the government on the one hand, as well as between various opposition groups and the government on the other, escalated to limited wars [→ Ethiopia (OLF / Oromia); Ethiopia (opposition)]. On June 29, an unknown group killed the Oromo musician and activist Hachalu Hundessa in the capital Addis Ababa. The killing sparked extensive protests in Addis Ababa and Oromia region, resulting

in the death of 239 people and the displacement of around 10,000. Following the unrest, the government arrested more than 5,000 individuals.

In the Americas, the number of limited wars increased from three to four. While two limited wars continued on the same level as in 2019, one violent crisis escalated to a limited war. One war de-escalated to a limited war and one limited war de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)].

In Colombia, the limited war between armed organizations, drug cartels, splinter groups of the demobilized FARC-EP, and other guerrillas continued [→ Colombia (inter-cartel violence, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. Meanwhile, the violent crisis between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the government escalated to a limited war [→ Colombia (ELN)]. Throughout the year, the conflict resulted in at least 64 deaths. According to the National Registry of Victims, approx. 55,000 civilians were newly internally displaced due to armed conflict during the first eleven months of the year. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, ELN declared a unilateral ceasefire in April. In Mexico, the war between various drug cartels, vigilante groups, and the government de-escalated to a limited war [→ Mexico (drug cartels)]. However, the country's homicide rate remained high, declining by less than one percent compared to last year's record high. The government continued to deploy the army to fight against drug cartels, contributing to increased fragmentation of cartels and heavy clashes over local predominance [→ Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)].

In Asia and Oceania, four limited wars were observed this year, one fewer than in 2019. Two limited wars continued on the same level as in the previous year. Three limited wars de-escalated to violent crises [→ India – Pakistan; Indonesia (Papua); Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – government)], while two violent crises escalated to limited wars.

In Myanmar's Rakhine State, clashes between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Myanmar army (Tatmadaw) resulted in 130 deaths and approx. 55,000 IDPs [→ Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State)]. Meanwhile, in Kayah and Karen States, the conflict between the Karen National Union, its allies and the Tatmadaw escalated to a limited war [→ Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)].

In the Philippines, the limited war between various Islamist militant groups and the government continued. Over the year, at least 141 people were killed. Clashes between Abu Sayyaf and the Philippine Armed Forces (AFP) were concentrated mostly on the Bangasamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and to a lesser extent in Zamboanga Peninsula region [→ Philippines (Islamist militant groups)]. The violent crisis between the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, escalated to a limited war. Throughout the year, at least 247 people were killed. As in previous years, AFP and NPA members clashed continuously and throughout the Philippines. Due to Covid-19, President Rodrigo Duterte announced a unilateral ceasefire from March 19 to April 15, which the NPA extended until April 30. Both sides accused each other of violating the agreed ceasefire [→ Philippines (CPP, NPA)].

In West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan all four limited wars of the previous year de-escalated to violent crises [→ Iraq (opposition); Israel (Hamas et al.); Libya (inter-tribal rivalry); Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)].

The conflict in Egypt between the government and militant groups on the Sinai Peninsula, which de-escalated from a full-scale war, constituted the region's only limited war [→

Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)]. Over the course of the year, at least 22 soldiers and 202 militants died in clashes. As in previous years, most clashes occurred in the North Sinai Governorate. Between July 22 and August 30, security forces conducted consecutive “anti-terrorism” operations, which resulted in the killing of at least 77 suspected militants. Egyptian Armed Forces located more than 300 hideouts and destroyed at least ten vehicles loaded with weapons and ammunition.

COVID-19

Although this breaks with HIIK conventions, the Covid-19 pandemic is such an extraordinary event that to us, it seemed important to add this new section to the Global Development Text.

The Covid-19 pandemic has severely affected the lives of people all around the world. In this paragraph, we want to briefly sketch out how it has affected global conflict dynamics. The effects of the virus and related containment policies on conflicts worldwide are hard to assess, given their frequently diffuse, nonlinear, and indirect nature. Furthermore, we cannot engage in counterfactual conflict monitoring and estimate alternate realities, that is, what would have been if Covid-19 had never happened. This section neither provides definite answers or interpretations, nor does it seek to be exhaustive. It is an attempt to categorize the effects of Covid-19 on political conflicts, to summarize them, and to point to the respective conflict reports in the Conflict Barometer in which Covid-19 has played a role.

Overall, it is interesting to note that HIIK did not open any new conflicts due to Covid-19 or add pandemic-related items to existing conflicts. Grievances arising from the pandemic often shaped or exacerbated already existing ones [→ Bangladesh (opposition); Bolivia (opposition); Chile (social movements); Israel (opposition); Kenya (opposition); Peru (opposition); South Africa (xenophobes); Sri Lanka (Northern Province, Eastern Province); Thailand (opposition); USA (right-wing extremists)].

Demonstrations against Covid-19 related government measures took place in many more countries, but did not necessarily justify the opening of new conflicts. Public demonstrations are a legitimate means to express public discontent, and do not lie outside established regulatory procedures. The great majority of the observed Covid-19 related protests remained nonviolent in 2020.

In various conflicts, the number and extent of demonstrations at least temporarily decreased compared to the previous year, possibly in connection with Covid-19 or restrictive government policies [→ Algeria (opposition); Brazil (MST, MTST); China (Hong Kong); Chile (social movements); India (Nagalim); Indonesia (Papua); Iraq (opposition); Kenya (opposition); Lebanon (inner-palestinian tensions)]. In general, lockdown cycles structured the rhythms of civilian protest mobilization and in some occasions appeared to contribute to their nationwide and partly also to their transnational synchronization. For example in South East Asia, Thai and Philippine protest movements spiked during the summer and after pandemic restrictions were eased [→ Thailand (opposition)].

In other conflicts, protests took place within broader conflicts because of Covid-19 and related policies [→ Brazil (social protests); Bulgaria (opposition); Serbia (opposition)].

Finally, in other conflicts, large-scale protests took place in spite of Covid-19 and government-imposed restrictions on the freedom of assembly [→ Belarus (opposition); USA

(racial tensions); Kyrgyzstan (opposition); Russia (opposition); Thailand (opposition), Vietnam (socioeconomic protests)]. In various conflicts, we registered the declaration of cease-fires, unilateral or bilateral, in connection with the pandemic [→ Cameroon (English-speaking minority); Colombia (ELN); India (Naxalites); Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State); Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State); Myanmar (MNDA / Shan State); Philippines (CPP, NPA); Thailand (Islamist separatists / southern border provinces); Ukraine (Donbas); Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)].

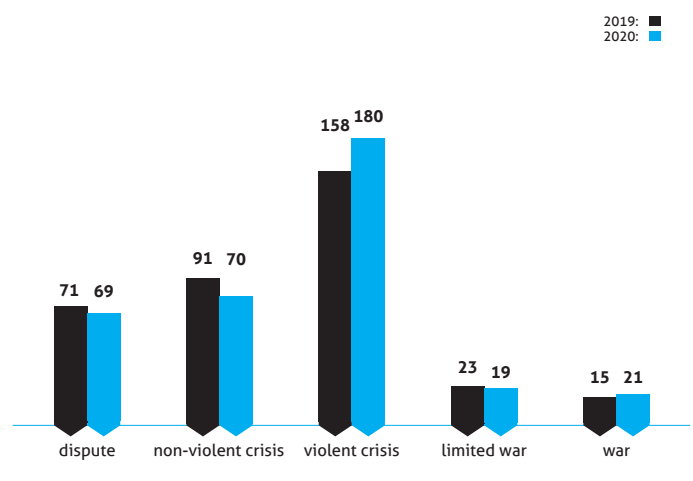
Both in the Americas as well as in Asia and Oceania, non-state conflict actors implemented lockdowns and other pandemic-related measures either unilaterally or in partial coordination with governments. For instance, in the Americas, organized crime groups implemented Covid-19 curfews on the civilian population [→ Brazil (DTOs); El Salvador (Maras); Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)]. In Myanmar, some ethnic rebel militias coordinated with the army to enforce nationwide travel bans or distribute medication [→ Myanmar (KNU, KNA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State); Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State)].

We observed several cases, where the global pandemic, directly or indirectly, contributed to the intensifications of interstate tensions and border disputes [→ Afghanistan – Pakistan; China – USA; Cyprus (Northern Cyprus^o); Dominican Republic – Haiti; Japan – South Korea; Moldova (Transnistria); Rwanda – Uganda].

Beyond these patterns, Covid-19 displayed additional effects on conflict-affected regions, for instance by hindering the distribution of relief aid or exacerbating already fragile settings.

MAXIMILIAN BRIEN, GIACOMO KÖHLER

GLOBAL CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019

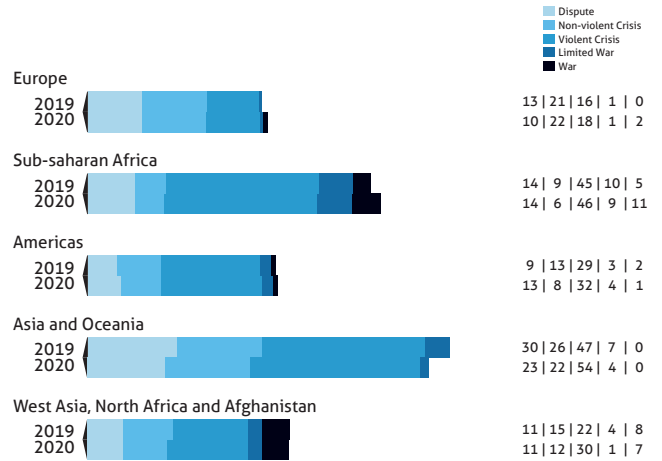


GLOBAL CONFLICT PANORAMA

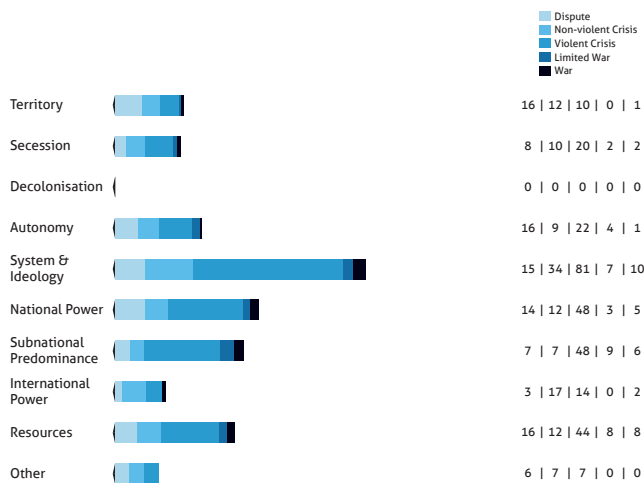
FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN 2019 AND 2020



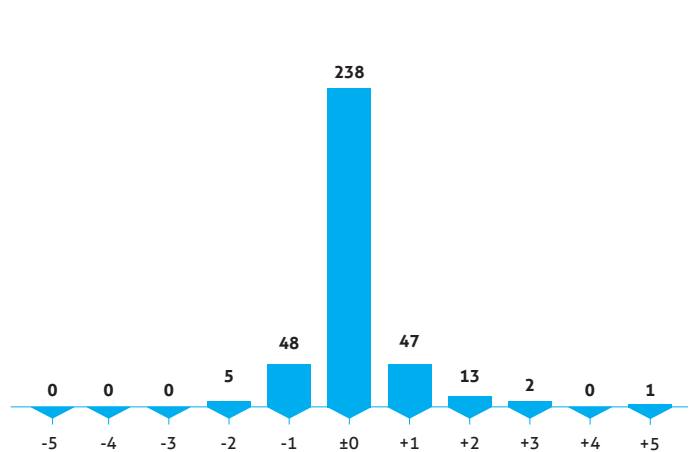
FREQUENCY OF REGIONAL CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN 2020 AND 2019



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN 2020



GLOBAL CONFLICT INTENSITY CHANGES IN 2020



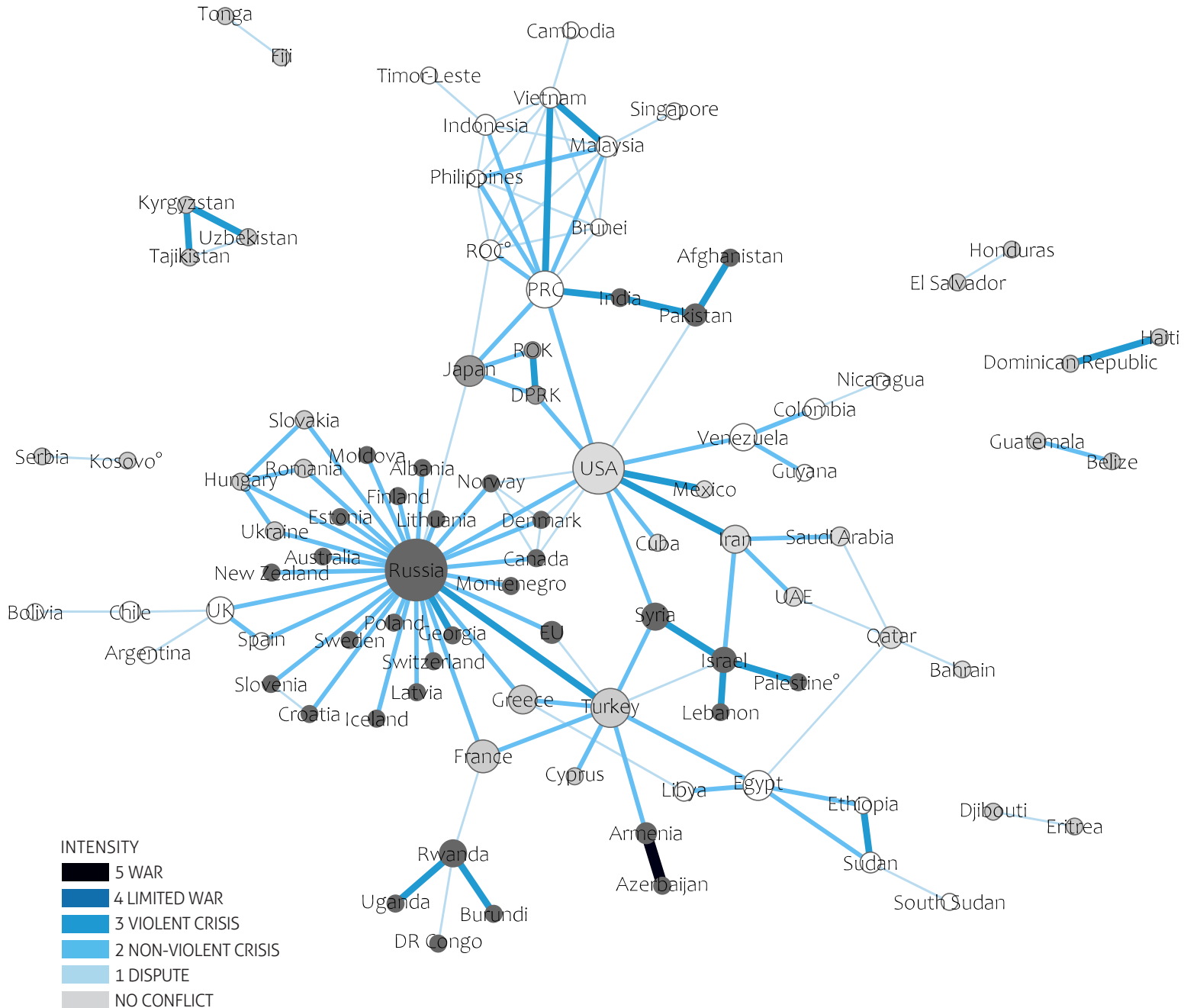
GLOBAL INTERSTATE CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN 2020: RISING VIOLENCE AND LINKAGE

In 2020, HIIK identified 64 incompatibilities between states that met the criteria of its basic concept of political conflict. They involved 124 direct conflict relationships among 92 actors, consisting of 88 sovereign states, the three state-like entities of Kosovo, Palestine, and the Republic of China (ROC), and the supranational actor of the European Union (EU). Ten states partook in interstate conflicts indirectly through their membership in the EU, which lost a member for the first time in its history with the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) on January 31.

Mapped as a network with edges representing dyadic conflict relationships and nodes representing state actors, 77 nodes were connected in a single component involving states from all regions. Indicative to a node's importance is the number of its conflict relationships (degree), its centrality in the overall network, and its position as a connector between different clusters of the network. As in previous years, the states with the highest numbers of conflictive relationships and highest centrality continued to be Russia (30 relationships), the United States (12), and the People's Republic of China (PRC) (9), now equaled by Turkey (9). This ordering also remains when states are ranked by weighted degree, i.e. by the number of relationships as weighted by conflict intensity. In general, conflict relationships between nodes with higher degrees and more central positions can be expected to have greater repercussions on the rest of the network. By contrast, the conflict relationships between the 15 nodes detached from the main component, who form seven independent components (six dyads and one triplet), can be expected to have little effect on the global interstate conflict landscape. However, the network does not include the various indirect conflict relationships constituted by actors' supportive or intervening roles in conflicts, such as the role of the US in the conflicts in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, where it conducted 23 "freedom of navigation operations" in 2020. But in many cases, these relationships are implicitly reflected in direct conflict relationships [→ China – USA]. They can be discerned if the nodes are viewed in triplets of neighbors of neighbors (or "enemies of enemies"), which are likely to be friends/allies. For example, the network suggests that Greece and Egypt, which are both neighboring nodes of Turkey, are allied with each other, and by extension also to more distant nodes like Armenia or the UAE. The same goes for Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Qatar. This principle is subverted if nodes are connected in "closed triplets"/full triangles, indicating unbalanced and unstable relationships. In such cases, the relative intensity of the relationships is indicative of the direction in which the triangle is balanced. One example would be the triangle between Syria, Turkey, and Israel, which is balanced against Syria. Other examples are the triangles between the Arctic states, which are heavily balanced against Russia, or the independent component of the Central Asian conflict triangle, which is balanced against Kyrgyzstan. As the geographical projection of the interstate conflict network shows, the balancing of closed triangles often correlates with geographic proximity. Of course proximity also correlates with the occurrence of conflict itself. While geographic variables were not considered in the generation of the network, its structure displays the predominantly regional character of most conflict relationships. Among the few states that engaged in cross-continental conflictive relationships, the US continued to figure most prominently, followed by the UK and France.

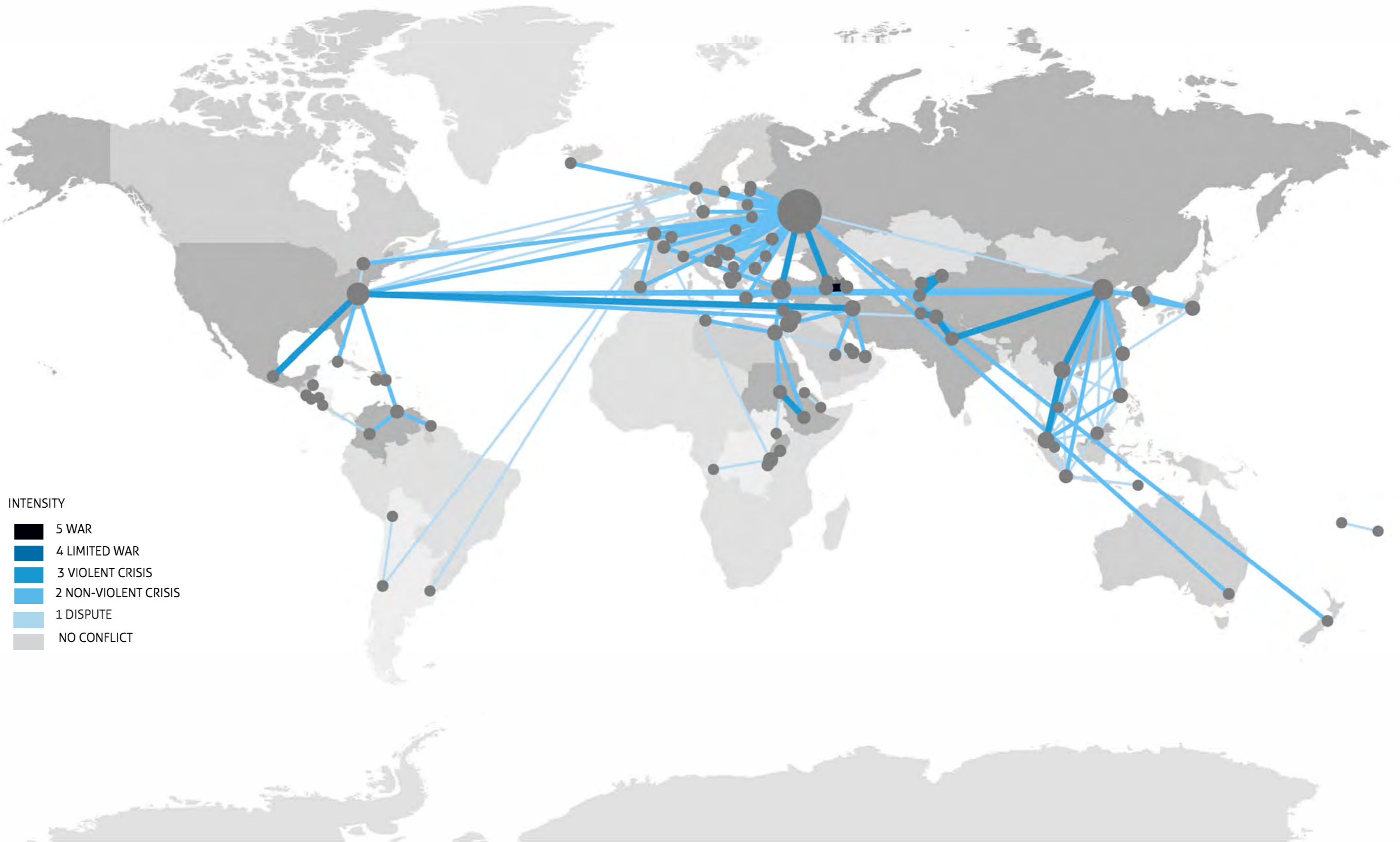
A key structuring force in the global conflict network are multi-party interstate conflicts, the number of which increased from ten to eleven in 2020. A new multiparty conflict was observed between Turkey and its neighbors in the Eastern Mediterranean, revolving around international power, resources, and the conception of maritime rights [→ Cyprus, Greece et al. - Turkey (Eastern Mediterranean)]. Of the eleven multi-party conflicts, four saw the participating actors divided into more than two coalitions. Most prominent among them remained the multi-party conflicts over international power, territory, and resources in the Arctic and in the South China Sea. In the Arctic, Norway, the US, and Denmark, joined by the UK, conducted their first maritime security operation in the Russian exclusive economic zone (EEZ) since 1991 [→ Norway et al. – Russia (Arctic)]. Conflict triangles were thus strongly balanced against Russia, in conformity with the larger conflict between Russia, on the one side, and the US, the EU, NATO, and several allied states, on the other side [→ EU, USA et al. – Russia]. In the South China Sea, violent clashes between maritime security forces and fishermen occurred between Vietnam and the PRC as well as between Vietnam and Malaysia [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. Such conflicts contribute significantly to the density of the network, which is defined by the proportion of actual ties between the nodes relative to the number of possible ties. In networks that map conflict relationships, a higher density (i.e., a higher number of unbalanced, closed triplets), indicates a more ambiguous alliance structure, which gives prevalence to hedging behavior. In the conflicts clusters between the North and South East Asian states, which are connected in multiple closed triangles, this figures most prominently. In North East Asia, the conflict between Japan and South Korea continued to run counter to both states' alliance with the US against North Korea [→ Japan, South Korea, USA – North Korea], but saw an easing of tensions in 2020 [→ Japan – South Korea]. In South East Asia, conflicts between Malaysia and its neighbors Vietnam and the Philippines featured the same intensity as the latter two's conflicts with China [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. Other examples for such triangular structures are the conflicts at the Horn of Africa [→ Egypt – Ethiopia, Sudan (GERD), Egypt – Sudan], in Eastern Europe, and between the EU, Russia, and Turkey, which have intensified along with their different positions in the intra- and transstate wars in Libya and Syria. Overall, the density of the network has increased since 2019, with the number of closed triplets increasing from 41 to 49 and the average clustering coefficient increasing from 0.44 to 0.49. To contextualize the conflict dyads and triangles within broader conflict systems, nodes in the main component were grouped into twelve non-overlapping communities, calculated with the Louvain modularity algorithm on the basis of weighted degrees. Next to the three largest communities forming around the gravity centers of Russia, China, and Turkey, this exploratory data analysis identified relatively independent conflict systems in Eastern Europe, Middle America, and Northeast Asia, as well as in the Levante and South Asia. The US and its isolated conflicts with Mexico and Cuba were located in one community with Iran and the Gulf region, mirroring the intensification of the US-Iranian conflict relationship with the US drone strike on Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani on January 3 [→ Iran – USA]. On January 8, Iran shot down a Ukrainian airliner that it mistook for a US cruise missile, leading to 176 fatalities. In the peripheries, conflict systems were identified in the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes, and South America, the latter two linked to the main component

INTERSTATE CONFLICT CONSTELLATIONS 2020



This network maps all conflictive bilateral relationships monitored in 2020. It comprises 94 nodes (representing state and state-like conflict actors) and 124 undirected edges (representing conflict relationships). Node size is determined by weighted degree, i.e. the number and intensity of the conflict relationships the actor was involved in. Edges are sized and colored by conflict intensity. The shading of the nodes indicates their community affiliation, calculated on the basis of weighted degrees using the Louvain modularity algorithm. The layout is force determined. Independent components are placed near their regional affiliates. State-like entities with contested international status are marked with a degree symbol (°). The EU is treated as an independent actor.

INTERSTATE CONFLICTS 2020
(MAP PROJECTION)



This chart shows the network of conflictive interstate relationships in 2020 on a world map in the Miller cylindrical projection, with state actors being located at the coordinates of national capitals. Node size is determined by weighted degree, edges size and color is determined by conflict intensity. The graphic was created with Gephi, using the GeoLayout package. Countries are shaded according to the most intense interstate conflict they were involved in.

GLOBAL CONFLICT PANORAMA

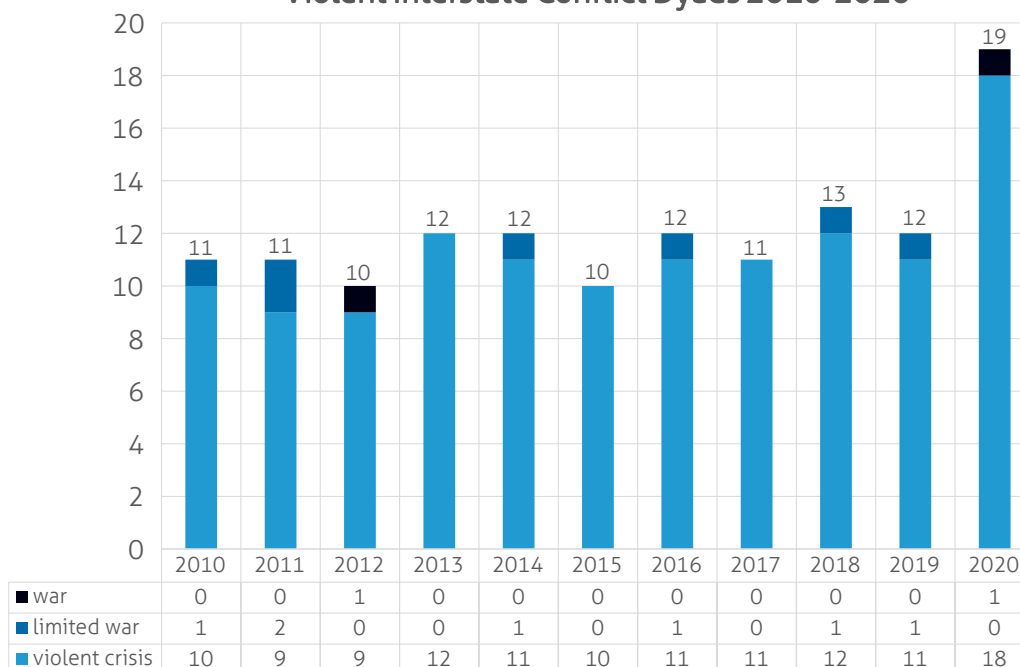
through the transcontinental conflicts with France [→ France – Rwanda] and the United Kingdom [→ Argentina – United Kingdom (Falkland Islands / Islas Malvinas); Chile – United Kingdom (Antarctica)].

As in previous years, the subsystems in the Levante and South Asia distinguished themselves from neighboring communities by the fact that all conflict dyads between their members saw the use of violence. Connecting in open triplets, both subsystems continued to feature clear-cut alliance structures: in the Levante, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria all had violent conflicts with their common neighbor Israel, featuring no cross-cutting conflicts among themselves [→ Israel – State of Palestine^o (PNA), Israel – Lebanon, Israel – Syria]. In South Asia, on the other hand, the chessboard pattern between India and Afghanistan, on the one hand, and their common neighbors Pakistan and the PRC, on the other hand, remained stable. Aside from the single-dyad system in the Caucasus, South Asia marked the only interstate conflict subsystem, where all conflict relationships saw the direct, mutual, and repeated use of military force. While the Indo-Pakistan conflict de-escalated to a violent crisis in 2020 after reaching the intensity of a limited war for two consecutive years, it still remained the second deadliest interstate conflict globally with at least 84 casualties [→ India – Pakistan]. By contrast, the Sino-Indian conflict escalated by two levels from a dispute to a violent crisis, featuring the first lethal clashes between Chinese and Indian soldiers for 45 years [→ China – India].

As in previous years, the great majority of interstate conflicts continued to be conducted non-violently. 44 of the bilateral conflict relationships remained on the level of a dispute, while 58 reached the level of a non-violent crisis. However, the number of conflict relationships witnessing the use of violence increased significantly in 2020. While the number has fluctuated over the past decade between 10 and 13 violent dyads, this year saw a peak of 19 violent dyads, including the first, full-scale interstate war since the war between Sudan and South Sudan in 2012 [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan]. As interstate conflicts can have a huge structuring impact on lower level intrastate and often also on substate conflicts, this represents a much more significant development than is suggested by the overall small numbers.

In most cases, the observed violent clashes did not occur directly between state security forces, but between the security force of one state (usually border or coast guards) and civilians of another (most often fishermen, migrants, or smugglers), and sometimes between civilians on both sides. These may move on government orders, as exemplified by the Turkish bussing of refugees to the Greek border in February [→ Greece – Turkey], or pursue nonpolitical agendas, as appeared to be the case in the immigration conflicts between the US and Mexico, or Rwanda and Uganda [→ Mexico – USA (border security); Rwanda – Uganda]. In some cases, civilian actors attempted to push their governments towards a confrontation course, exemplified by the role of anti-North Korea activists in the conflicts on the Korean Peninsula [→ North Korea – South Korea]. But in all cases, these incidents are registered by the states as part of an international conflict. Incidents with non-state actors can easily trigger military confrontations, as exemplified by this year's escalation of the conflict between Rwanda and Burundi [→ Burundi – Rwanda]. As in previous years, a shared characteristic of many interstate conflict dyads reaching violent or non-violent crisis level was their linkage to intra- or transstate conflicts, in which the states took opposing sides. Being an almost ubiquitous phenomenon in Middle Eastern and South Asian interstate conflicts, it figured also prominently in the conflicts between Venezuela and Colombia and Russia and Ukraine [→ Colombia – Venezuela (border security); Russia – Ukraine]. In the case of the Russo-Georgian and Turkish-Cypriot conflicts, interstate conflicts continued to involve the maintenance of internationally unrecognized states [→ Russia – Georgia, Cyprus (TRNC / Northern Cyprus)]. A look at the network shows that many of the violent relationships are located in the peripheries, such as the conflicts between Ethiopia and Sudan, or between Rwanda and its neighbors. Some are disconnected from the main component altogether, as in the cases of the violent border community conflicts in Central Asia [→ Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan – Uzbekistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)], or the immigration conflict on Hispaniola [→ Dominican Republic – Haiti]. Their potential repercussions on the broader conflict landscape through shifts in the alliance and opportunity structures thus appear limited.

Violent Interstate Conflict Dyads 2010-2020



This applies also to the relatively isolated war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, connected only via Armenia's conflict with Turkey, the intensity of which increased from dispute to nonviolent crisis level [→ Armenia – Turkey]. The war's broader impact on the neighboring conflict systems around Turkey and Russia was relatively limited. The network structure shows that Russia and Turkey are themselves connected through multiple, closed triangles (with the EU, Greece, and France), which indicate instability but also flexibility and even resilience, as shocks from neighboring conflicts reach them via different connections, flattening their impact and suggesting multiple response options. This paradoxical resilience is also apparent from the bilateral conflict between Russia and Turkey themselves. Despite their adversarial positions in the wars in Libya and especially in Syria, where a Russian air strike in Balyun, Idlib Governorate, killed at least 34 Turkish soldiers, Turkey proceeded with its purchase of the Russian S-400 missile system in defiance of US opposition [→ Russia – Turkey]. In December, the US responded with targeted, economic sanctions on the Turkish defense industry. Across the second half of the year, it had increasingly weighed in on the side of Cyprus and Greece in their conflicts with Turkey [→ Cyprus – Turkey, Greece – Turkey].

After a widening rift in 2019, conflict relationships of the US, EU, UK, France and other allied countries vis-à-vis Russia and Turkey became more aligned, despite divisions over issues such as Nord Stream 2, missile defense, and arms control. The US, the EU, and the UK extended their sanctions against Russia that had been imposed over its annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and imposed new ones in response to Russian cyberattacks and the poisoning of opposition activist Alexei Navalny [→ EU, USA et al. – Russia]. In addition to joining EU travel bans and asset freezes against Russian individuals, the UK stepped up its presence in the Arctic conflict. The EU also became a reserved but direct actor in the conflicts of its member states with Turkey, gradually shifting towards the position of Cyprus, France, and Greece [→ Turkey – Cyprus, Greece et al. (Eastern Mediterranean)] while trying to preserve the 2016 refugee arrangement. In February 2020, the EU imposed sanctions against two Turkish nationals in response to Turkey's drilling operations in areas claimed by Cyprus. In December, it announced further sanctions in response to similar Turkish operations in areas claimed by Greece. The EU also opposed Turkey's engagement in the wars in the Caucasus, Syria, and especially Libya, where Turkish weapons shipments subverted the UN arms embargo that had been negotiated at the Berlin conference in January. The contested launch of a separate EU maritime security operation to enforce the embargo, next to the established NATO operation Sea Guardian, as well as France's decision to withdraw from the latter after a tense maritime encounter with co-NATO member Turkey were both manifestations of the growing divergence between EU and NATO over the conflicts with Turkey and Russia. While the UK joined the EU in the imposition of asset freezes against Russian individuals and adopted a more assertive stance vis-à-vis Russia in the Arctic conflict [→ Russia – Norway et al. (Arctic)], it conducted joint aerial exercises with Turkey and concluded also a bilateral free trade agreement. Also within the EU, differences among member states over common foreign policies vis-à-vis Russia and Turkey remained high and became further linked. In the case of the escalating Belarussian crisis [→ Belarus (opposition)], a joint EU sanctioning response did not materialize after Cyprus made its agreement conditional on the imposition of stronger sanctions on Turkey. Internally,

the EU witnessed the continuation of the minority conflict between Hungary, Romania and Slovakia and the maritime boundary conflict between Slovenia and Croatia. Witnessing the centenary of the Treaty of Trianon, ethnonationalist tensions between Hungary and Romania ran high after the latter vehemently opposed a bill for the autonomy of the Székely Land [→ Hungary – Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine (Hungarian minorities)]. In the Adriatic boundary conflict, Croatia continued to reject the accord of the Permanent Court of Arbitration but joined Slovenia and Italy in a trilateral plan to clarify their exclusive economic zones [→ Croatia – Slovenia (border)]. In the former intra-EU conflict between the UK and Spain over Gibraltar, both sides were able to manage the Brexit through a preliminary, bilateral border agreement that keeps Gibraltar in the Schengen area [→ Spain – United Kingdom (Gibraltar)].

The network was generated in ignorance of the number and types of conflict issues involved in the different conflict relationships. The number of issues varied substantially among the 124 dyads: 43 were concerned with a single issue, 47 with two, 29 with three issues, and five relationships with four issues. Interdependence between issues varied substantially (e.g. issues such as territory and resources are usually tightly linked together) and their number shows no correlation with the intensity level. By type of issue, 80 conflict dyads concerned international power interests, 68 involved claims over territory, and 37 concerned system/ideology. Except the religious conflict between Iran and Saudi-Arabia [→ Iran – Saudi-Arabia], all interstate dyads with system conflicts were related to democratization and/or to maintenance or revisionism of the liberal international order. 48 dyads involved conflicts over resources, most frequently among them oil and/or gas (33), fish (23), and water (6). In five dyads, historic conceptions were a central issue.

In 2020, the most immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on interstate conflicts was observed in the 23 conflict cases that involved population issues. Eleven of these concerned migration and refugee issues, while twelve concerned the issue of cross-border national representation of ethno-linguistic minorities. Examples for conflicts where tensions were fueled by the tightening border restrictions and security measures imposed with reference to health concerns were the conflicts between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Rwanda and Uganda, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, Greece and Turkey, and Venezuela and Colombia.

JASON FRANZ

AUTHORITATIVE DECISIONS BY THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

In 2020, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered two judgments and ordered provisional measures on one occasion. 15 cases remain pending before the court. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the court began its public hearings virtually in June. On November 12, the UN General Assembly and UN Security Council re-elected four ICJ judges for another term of nine years and elected Georg Nolte from Germany as a new member to the court.

In 2019, the Gambia requested provisional measures against Myanmar in the contentious case between the two states concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention). In line with the request, in January the court ordered Myanmar to implement all measures in its power to prevent the commission of acts under Article II of the Genocide Convention against members of the Rohingya people. The court emphasized that the government of Myanmar should exert influence on the members of its armed forces to comply with these obligations and take effective measures against the destruction of evidence. In its reasoning, the court rejected Myanmar's argument that an applicant state under the convention must present a special affection. As the prevention of acts of genocide is in the interest of all state parties under the Genocide Convention, any state party is entitled to invoke the responsibility of another state party for breaches of the convention. The obligations thereunder have *erga omnes partes* character. Therefore, The Gambia retained standing. To assert its concern about the situation in Myanmar, the court relied heavily upon the 2019 report presented by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar established by the UN Human Rights Council. The court stated that there remains significant risk for genocidal behavior within Myanmar despite assurances by its government to initiate reconciliation with the Rohingya people. The court expects Myanmar to report on the situation every six months until the end of the proceedings before the ICJ. Myanmar submitted two such reports in 2020. The first oral hearings for the case are scheduled for 2021. The situation in Myanmar is also under investigation with the ICC's prosecutor. However, the ICC's prosecutor has not released results of the investigation.

On July 14, the ICJ rejected the appeals presented by Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against two orders of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO Council) in 2018 concerning their dispute with Qatar. The aforementioned states severed their diplomatic ties with Qatar in 2017 by, *inter alia*, closing their airspaces to Qatari air traffic. In response, Qatar filed an application to the ICAO Council claiming that the measures adopted by Bahrain et al. violated their obligations under the International Air Services Transit Agreement (IATA). In 2018, the ICAO Council held that it had jurisdiction on this matter. Bahrain et al. then submitted an appeal against this decision to the ICJ, in accordance with the IATA. They claimed a violation of their due process rights before the ICAO Council, especially the right to be heard. The ICJ dismissed these arguments with recourse to the court's jurisprudence concerning a similar case between Pakistan and India in 1972. The court thus confirmed that the ICAO Council dispute settlement procedure affords the necessary procedural guarantees. Moreover, it affirmed that the guarantees were met in this particular case between Qatar and Bahrain et al.

On December 11, the ICJ issued judgement on a dispute

between Equatorial Guinea and France. In 2011, French authorities seized a building in Paris owned by the son of Equatorial Guinea's President, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. French authorities argued that Obiang purchased the building with illegally obtained funds and justified their actions as compliant with the Palermo Convention against Transnational Crime. In reaction, in 2016 Equatorial Guinea instituted proceedings before the ICJ, asserting the inviolability of the premise due to its diplomatic status. Equatorial Guinea argued that the premises were part of its diplomatic mission and the residence of its representative to UNESCO, although it had not communicated this to France prior to the seizure. France rejected this argument, affirming that a sending state could not unilaterally determine whether a building in the host state acquired diplomatic protection. The court principally followed France's line of argument in its interpretation of Art. 22 of the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations (VCDR). The spirit of cooperation and mutual respect eschewed in the convention bars the unilateral declaration of buildings as diplomatic premises. The ICJ affirmed that France's rejection of the premise's diplomatic status was based on reasonable grounds. The court thus held that France had not violated its obligations under the VCDR by seizing Obiang's property in Paris.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The ICC heard three cases in 2020. Eleven defendants remained at large, wherefore their trials continued to rest, awaiting the defendants' transfer to ICC custody. Moreover, the Prosecutor of the ICC opened investigations into the situations in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Kenya, Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Georgia, Uganda, Myanmar and Burundi. Preliminary Examinations were conducted concerning the situations in Venezuela, Colombia, Guinea, Nigeria, Bolivia, Palestine, the Philippines, Ukraine, and possible war crimes committed by British Armed Forces in Iraq.

In July, the trial against Al-Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz started with the Prosecutor's opening statement. Al-Hassan is accused of orchestrating and committing crimes against humanity in the context of a widespread and systematic attack by armed groups Ansar Eddine / Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb region against the civilian population in Mali in 2012 and 2013.

In March, the ICC's Appeals Chamber confirmed an order by Pre-Trial Chamber I concerning the admissibility of the case against Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi, the son of Muammar Al-Gaddafi. Gaddafi had been convicted of crimes in absentia by a court in Tripoli. Therefore, the defense contended that a trial before the ICC would constitute a second trial on the same matter, which would constitute a violation of the *res judicata* rule. The Appeals Chamber denied the appeal, as the judgment of the Tripoli court was not final, meaning the ICC could still exercise its jurisdiction in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. Gaddafi remains at large. The trial will commence upon his transfer to the ICC.

The ICC's Appeals Chamber overturned a 2019 decision by Pre-Trial Chamber III that denied the Prosecutor's request to open an investigation into the situation in Afghanistan. Pre-Trial Chamber III held that opening an investigation into alleged crimes against humanity committed by US troops in Afghanistan after 2003 would not be in the "interest of justice", as the US would not cooperate with the investigations. The Appeals Chamber dismissed the criteria of "interest of justice" and held that the question of open-

ing an investigation is only to be measured by analyzing whether there is a reasonable basis to consider whether crimes have been committed within the ICC jurisdiction. The Pre-Trial Chamber had already affirmed that such a basis exists. Thus, the Appeals Chamber authorized the opening of an investigation. The US reacted by implementing economic sanctions including financial measures against the court itself and its members. In particular, Fatou Bensouda, the ICC's Prosecutor, was placed on the US sanctions list on September 2. The ICC and the Assembly of Parties to the Rome Statute rejected the sanctions. The sanctions significantly hamper the ICC Prosecutor's ability to conduct investigations.

ARBITRATION

In 2020, two arbitration panels issued judgments under the auspices of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Ukraine served a case against Russia under the dispute settlement provision of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on issues concerning the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov. Russia contested the arbitral panel's jurisdiction

as it would have had to judge upon the legality of the annexation of Crimea in 2014. On February 21, the arbitral tribunal affirmed that it could not judge upon the annexation. Nonetheless, the questions advanced by Ukraine would not require such judgment. Therefore the arbitral panel maintained its jurisdiction to judge on the matters of naval activities in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.

Another tribunal decided on the international legal implications of an incident in the Indian Ocean in 2012. Two Italian soldiers shot two Indian fishermen under contested circumstances. In response, Indian authorities stopped the Italian vessel "Enrica Lexie" and took the soldiers into custody. Italy held the opinion that this violated the immunity enjoyed by the soldiers that were officially tasked with guarding the "Enrica Lexie" against pirates in the Indian Ocean. This was confirmed by the arbitral tribunal. The tribunal declared that the soldiers acted in their official capacity, to which Italian state immunity extended. This, however, entails an obligation for Italy to afford compensation to India for the death of the fishermen.

FLORIAN KRIENER

SPOTLIGHTS

MEDIA ON LOCKDOWN: TELECOMMUNICATION RESTRICTIONS IN TIMES OF COVID-19

A Freedom House special report from October 2020 indicates the negative effect that the pandemic had on certain aspects of democracy worldwide: levels of democracy and political freedom decreased in 80 countries (Repucci/Slipowitz 2020). Among other abuses of state power, a significant indicator was the fact that 91 countries (47 percent of those evaluated) have experienced new or increased restrictions on independent news media in response to Covid-19. At the same time, marginalized groups such as ethnic and religious minorities became more vulnerable in many regions of the world; examples cited were Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica, residents of Asian descent in the USA and Europe, members of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and Muslims in Sri Lanka. While it is unclear whether there were planned or even intended political attempts to take advantage of the pandemic situation, the limitation of internet and other media freedom as well as existing repression intensified in several cases under these circumstances. Media restrictions are often deployed by the government as a tool for exerting control or repression on ethnic and religious minorities or against political opposition. For instance, throughout the year, the NGO NetBlocks has mapped internet restrictions in Iran due to ongoing protests against the government [→ Iran (opposition)] and in the Tigray region due to the outbreak of heavy fighting [Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)]. Discrimination against minorities due to pandemic-induced hostile sentiments and scapegoating could not be reliably reported. Raising awareness about the spread and dangers of Covid-19 was severely hindered in most cases where internet and mobile phone restrictions were in place.

Persecution, intimidation and harassment of journalists became globally more common in the past years and has reportedly continued more vigorously in several countries in 2020. Tanzania for instance, which has seen a decline in press freedom in recent years, enacted a most radical approach this year by prohibiting reporting on Covid-19 all together. As Freedom House argues, however, “press freedoms and freedom of expression are essential tools for exposing misconduct and assessing the effectiveness of the pandemic response”. Digital media freedom, particularly internet access, is also crucial for citizens to receive necessary information, especially in light of physical restrictions of a pandemic.

Governments are able to limit citizens’ access to the internet in several ways. They can block certain websites or social media sites, slow down the internet speed (throttling) or order service providers to shut down services completely. Those internet service providers often comply because in many countries, such as India, they depend on operating licenses from the same government. Commonly stated reasons for the partial or complete shutdown of the internet are national security and public safety, but also preventing the spread of disinformation and hate speech. In contrast to restricted forms of access, deliberate government disinformation or surveillance of internet activity, the complete shutdown of the internet leaves the role of informing and protecting citizens almost solely with the government. Fact checks and information sharing via and by non-state actors, such as social media and technology companies Facebook, Twitter and Google, are rendered impossible. Not only do internet shutdowns prevent reporting on potential crimes, discrimination and corruption, but they can make certain areas and groups of people dependent on state information

in all aspects of life. This severely affects their right to freely choose information and express an opinion, and moreover deepens existing inequalities. While a VPN connection can help evade the blockage of web pages, citizens have few, if any, possibilities in the case of complete internet shutdowns. According to a UN Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Responses to Conflict Situations (May 4, 2015), the filtering of content on the internet as well as the shutdown of entire parts of communication systems can never be justified under human rights law (Paragraph 4c.). In their annual report (#KeepItOn), the Access Now initiative ranks countries worldwide according to the frequency and duration of government-ordered internet shutdowns: In 2019, India was leading in frequency worldwide, while Myanmar had the longest internet shutdown in total. Chad had the longest continued intentional shutdown of social media in 2019, targeting mostly WhatsApp, and only briefly lifted it once in October.

Internet blackouts and restrictions have been used in China as a common tool of “political punishment” during political riots in Lhasa, Tibet, in 2008, and time and again in the Xinjiang Region since 2009 (Lam 2013). The Chinese government often justified these by arguing that, just as in India, regulations were necessary to “safeguard national security”. This is also in line with its argument, implemented in a national strategy since 2000 in the Golden Shield Project, that the “extension [. . .] into cyberspace” should be a “standard practice” and is an inherent right of any sovereign state (Qiu 2019).

In Myanmar, the internet was shut down in June 2019 in nearly half of all townships in the two federal states of Rakhine and Chin in response to regional instability [→ Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State) (2019/2020)]. The Myanmar Army, backed by the elected national government, requested the blackouts to aid its operations against militants of the Arakan Army, a government-declared terrorist organization demanding federal autonomy of the Rakhine people. The government acknowledged the threat of Covid-19 itself, but continued to justify the blackouts mostly as security measures. Combined with the ongoing conflict, the decision worsened the humanitarian crisis. In Rakhine State, civil populations were also continuously affected, among them the Rohingya Muslim minority, who already suffer discrimination due to their statelessness and who were subjugated to curfews and restrictions of their freedom of movement even before the pandemic. Information on disease prevention is nearly non-existent in the federal state (COAR 2020; Human Rights Watch 2020). Economic losses were recorded on top of the already severe levels of poverty, malnutrition, the weak healthcare system and prohibition of humanitarian aid to certain conflict-ridden townships (Crisis Group 2020). Despite several townships being reconnected to the internet and mobile network in February and May 2020, the shutdown remained in place for longer than a year in others. As a result, both campaigning and upholding of general elections in November were delayed indefinitely in the isolated townships, which also included parts of Kachin, Kayin, Mon, and Shan states and of Bago region, thus affecting several ethnic minorities. The Rakhine population and international human rights organizations criticized this as another infringement of political freedom since the winners of the election were announced regardless of Rakhine participation.

In 2019 just as in 2018, India is leading the world in the number of imposed internet shutdowns, a majority of them in Jammu and Kashmir. In 2019 alone, at least 121 incidents of internet shutdown were reported, including 175 consecutive

SPOTLIGHTS

days of central government ordered shutdown in Jammu and Kashmir. According to the #KeepItOn campaign, no other country has violated the right to information of its citizens as frequently as India, where the total number has only increased over the previous years. Venezuela was the second in the ranking with 12 internet shutdowns, among 33 countries in total that imposed shutdowns in 2019. Under certain conditions stated in the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, central and state governments are allowed to issue shutdown orders. However, Human Rights Watch argued that the rules' lack of precise language and adequate safeguards has led to repeated misuse by authorities. In 2019, many internet shutdowns in India were imposed in connection with sensitive political decisions, the most prominent ones dealing with the status of Muslims in India, the largest religious minority community in the country. On August 5, 2019, the Indian government revoked Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which had granted India's only Muslim majority state Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) a special autonomous status. [→ India (Kashmir) (2019)] Following this decision, a communication lockdown including cable TV, landlines, mobile phone networks and the internet was imposed in J&K, which lasted more than 175 days, with gradual restoration after that. While the government argued this was necessary to prevent unrest and violent protests, numerous human rights organizations stated that the internet shutdown also served to hide human rights violations by government forces in J&K. Internet shutdowns prevented journalists from collecting information, coordinating their coverage, verifying events and disseminating news. Amnesty International (2019) reported that the local media and independent reporting were severely constrained as local newspapers were reduced in size and only able to reproduce government information. Furthermore, journalists were arrested, intimidated and harassed (Majumder 2019). Internet shutdowns not only affect independent reporting, but also essential emergency and health services as well as activities such as online banking and commerce and transportation. In January 2020, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that indefinite communication shutdowns are unconstitutional as they infringe upon the right to freedom of expression and recommended that the existing Network Suspension Rules of 2017 be modified. Another government decision that sparked widespread protest in 2019 was the adoption of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), a law that states the provisions for Indian citizenship for non-Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Preventing further unrest was the official reasoning behind internet shutdowns in several regions such as Assam, Uttar Pradesh and the capital Delhi. In February 2020, in the context of enduring protests against the CAA, communal riots broke out in the capital New Delhi over a period of six days that led to at least 53 deaths and more than 500 injured (Amnesty International 2020) [→ India (Hindus – Muslims)] Internet shutdowns in such situations severely limit citizens' access to critical information to stay safe and hinder the documentation of human rights violations and other crimes. Amnesty International later reported several human rights violations committed by the Delhi police during the riots, including excessive force against protesters and torturing in custody, but also tolerating riot violence. Internet services were also suspended in Agra and Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh and parts of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh ahead of the Ayodhya verdict by the Supreme Court on November 9, 2019. The Court ruled that a contested religious site, over which communal riots with at least 2,000 dead

had erupted in 1992, be given to Hindus [→ India (Hindus – Muslims) (2019)]. While governments often state public safety or national security as reasons for internet shutdowns, prolonged internet shutdowns might also increase unrest and violence as they disable the coordination of peaceful protests and disrupt communicative environments. Furthermore, shutdowns often intend to limit citizens' access to information and their opportunities for expression and political participation. Shutting down the internet means controlling information and influencing public discourse. In parallel to the shutdown in J&K, national media coverage portrayed an image of near normalcy of the region, which differed significantly from international reports covering protests, while the local media remained paralyzed. Moreover, when Reporters Without Borders reported in April 2020 that the Indian government tried to control all aspects of available information about Covid-19, especially from the domestic media, it became evident that in times of a pandemic, the Indian government was moving further in the direction of information control. Internet shutdowns negatively affect not only human rights, but also the economy in India, as the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations has shown. In a recent report, they assessed the cost of internet shutdowns in India at around \$3.04 billion between 2012 and 2017 (Kathuria et al. 2018).

In neighboring Pakistan, internet shutdowns have also been ordered on a regular basis for reasons of national security – especially in parts of Balochistan and the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) – or related to sensitive political issues. Amid protests against the revocation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution, internet services were also shut down in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The communication blackout on both sides may increase the spread of misinformation about the situation in the conflict-affected region. Internet shutdowns in FATA were among the longest globally in the recent past. In times of often nationwide lockdowns due to the spread of Covid-19, citizens in areas affected by internet shutdowns are not only unable to receive important information about the current situation and government decisions, students and teaching staff are also unable to offer or participate in educational activities.

Internet shutdowns remain a problematic issue in light of the current pandemic as access to information, especially for marginalized communities, is crucial to take appropriate precautionary measures and enable access to medical services as well as resources for education and economic wellbeing. In the aforementioned cases, the loss of media freedom in exchange for more government control seems to result in increased inequality and unrest at levels that are yet to be examined. The #KeepItOn coalition and 64 other international human rights advocacy groups called upon the WHO on May 26 to urge the governments of India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and others to restore internet access throughout their countries.

RONJA GOTTSCHLING, KATHARINA VALJAK

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THE US 'MAXIMUM PRESSURE CAMPAIGN ON IRAN' AND TARGETED KILLING OF GENERAL SOLEIMANI: SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN INTER-STATE CONFLICTS

Consequential Developments

The US have taken unprecedented measures against Iran under its "maximum pressure campaign" to tackle Iran's nuclear and missile proliferation, as well as what it calls Iran's sponsoring of "terror" and "malign" regional activities. The campaign that started in 2018 and continued until the final days President Trump held office did not amount to any significant change of Iranian government behavior on these issues. However, it has put Iranian civil society and people's normal lives under huge pressure. According to US officials, the effectiveness of the sanctions as a foreign policy tool is based on the mechanism of inflicting "pain" on the receiver, in order to break the "resolve" to resist (Nephew 2018). Intending to compel Iranian citizens to demand their government to "change behavior", the crippling sanctions constitute a collective punishment that infringe on Iranians' right to health as well as economic rights.

Running alongside, the US targeted killing of an Iranian top military commander constitutes a violation of international law and establishes a consequential step under the US counter-terrorism discourse. In the absence of a comprehensive legal approach to the problem of terrorism under international law, the US has adopted a case-by-case strategy since the September 11 attacks to counter terrorism. It seems that with the recent measure, the US is extending the scope of its counter-terrorism measures from targeting non-state actors and individuals such as Al Qaeda and its leader to the state organizations and officials such as Islamic Republic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and one of its top commanders. Such a significant development of inter-state conflict blurs the established lines of international law between war and peace and potentially entails dire consequences for international peace and security.

The US Maximum Pressure Campaign on Iran

After twelve years and several international diplomatic initiatives, multilateral diplomacy finally succeeded in finding a diplomatic solution for the protracted international conflict over Iran's nuclear activity. As a result, in July 2015, Iran and the E3/EU+3 (France, Germany and UK/EU+US, Russia and China) confirmed agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA, commonly known as "Iran deal", provided for the peaceful resolution of all Iranian nuclear-related issues as well as the suspension of the US and the EU nuclear-related sanctions. The UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2231 endorsing the JCPOA and warranted the termination of its previous provisions (UNSC 2015). Yet Washington's policy towards Iran changed under the new administration. In spite of the 13 reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency confirming Iran's commitment, on 8 of May 2018, Donald Trump fulfilled his campaign promise to withdraw the US from the Iran deal. Over the next four months, the US government re-imposed all its nuclear-related economic sanctions to full effect, including "secondary sanctions" on non-US entities for conducting financial or commercial transactions with Iran, disregarding the EU and other parties to the deal.

As a result, major international companies stopped doing business with Iran to protect themselves against US sanc-

tions (Adebahr 2018).

Asserting that the JCPOA would increase “instability” in the region and was a bad agreement “for America, for Europe, for the Middle East, and indeed for the entire world”, the new administration announced a new Iran strategy in order to end “Iran’s nuclear ambitions” and its “quest for a regional hegemony”. The new US strategy “Maximum Pressure Campaign on Iran” was initially intended to “apply unprecedented financial pressure on the Iranian regime” and “end up being the strongest sanctions in history” to change Iran’s behavior on its nuclear and missile programs as well as its regional presence and support of the proxy groups. According to Secretary of State Pompeo, renegotiating the JCPOA was not an option anymore, however, negotiating a new deal would only be possible once Iran makes “a fundamental strategic shift” and fulfills the “twelve very basic requirements” including different aspects of Iranian foreign and security policy (DOS 2018). Iran rejected the request and called on the US and other parties to the deal to comply with its terms and conditions.

In consequence, in addition to all the sanctions which were removed as the result of the JCPOA, a full range of new ones consisting of almost all possible economic sanctions were increasingly applied until the very last days of the Trump administration. According to the US Department of State, 26 rounds of sanctions were applied to 970+ Iranian entities and individuals and 70+ Iran-linked financial institutions, only during the first year after withdrawing from the JCPOA before April 2019 (DOS 2019a). Among other results, 1.5 million barrels of Iran’s oil were removed from the market per day, which should have been compensated by an increased US oil export and commitments from other oil producing countries, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to increase their production (DOS 2019b).

Economic Sanctions, Humanitarian Aspects and Right to Health

In October 2018, in a provisional measure ruling, the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered the United States to ease sanctions and remove “any impediments” to the export of humanitarian goods, including food, medicine and aviation safety equipment to Iran. The binding decision of the ICJ was issued in response to Iran’s urgent request before the re-imposition of the US sanctions, arguing that the sanctions violated the 1955 Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights between Iran and the United States. Rejecting the ICJ jurisdiction over the case and announcing that the US had decided to terminate the Treaty of Amity, US Secretary of State Pompeo accused Iran of abusing the ICJ to its political ends. Nevertheless, he asserted that the US had already allowed Iran’s humanitarian-related transactions and would work to provide humanitarian assistance to the Iranian people (BBC 2018).

One year later, Human Rights Watch published the 47-page report “Maximum Pressure”: US Economic Sanctions Harm Iranians’ Right to Health, documenting how the extensive restrictions on Iran’s financial transactions capacity have drastically constrained the country’s ability to finance humanitarian imports, including vital medicines and medical equipment. The report finds that the redoubled US sanctions have “almost certainly contributed to documented shortages” of essential medicines that pose a serious threat to Iranians’ right to health. Despite the US government exemptions for humanitarian transactions, in practice, such exemptions have failed to normalize financing and trading of

the exempted humanitarian goods. Fearing the US secondary sanctions, major international companies, businesses, banks and financial institutions avoid conducting any business with Iran, including in the exempted humanitarian goods. The report reminds the US of its obligation under international law to monitor the impacts of the imposed sanctions on Iranians’ rights and address the violations arising from the sanctions (HRW 2019).

With the outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020, Iran rapidly became an epicenter of the virus in West Asia. Since then, there have been concerns about the possible effects of the maximum pressure campaign on the country’s ability to respond adequately to the pandemic. Targeting virtually every sector within the Iranian economy, the immediate effects of the broad array of US sanctions started to appear in the form of severe shortages in pharmaceutical and medical supplies from February. Numerous calls from third countries as well as some members of Congress to the US government to ease the sanctions temporarily during the pandemic remained unanswered. The administration actively sought to block Iran’s request for a \$5 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that Iran said it needed to respond to the Covid-19 outbreak (Katzman 2020). On March 24, Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner for human rights, asked the US government for the suspension or alleviation of sectoral sanctions on Iran, reminding that “in a context of global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us” (OHCHR 2020).

The Targeted Killing of General Soleimani and the Question of Legality

The new strategy of the Trump administration in imposing maximum pressure on Iran did not remain confined to economic sanctions and escalated to a violent conflict in 2020. Following incidents after a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base in Kirkuk killed a US military contractor and wounded four others in late December 2019, for which the US intelligence officials held Iran-backed Shiite militia groups responsible (Mertens 2019), on January 3, a US drone targeted a caravan of two vehicles near Baghdad International Airport, killing ten people including Major General Qasem Soleimani, Commander in Chief of Qods Force, and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, deputy chief of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Force (PMF). Iran called the “assassination” of the country’s top military commander an act of “state terrorism” and in what it called “measures in self-defense”, allegedly launched more than twenty ballistic missiles at two US military facilities located at airbases in Al Anbar in western Iraq and Erbil in northern Iraq. Iran also announced that it would abandon limits on its production of nuclear fuel as long as it did not benefit from the economic advantages of the JCPOA. Iraqi Parliament passed a resolution to cancel the request for assistance from the US-led international coalition in fighting against the Islamic State (IS) and Iraqi government asked the US to begin the process of withdrawing their troops from Iraq.

Following the US drone strike operation in Iraq, questions arose regarding the legality of this operation, from the perspective of both domestic US law and international law. The US officials justified the operation initially with the “self-defense” argument, as the Article 51 of the UN Charter allows states to exercise “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations”. Nonetheless, the administration later resorted to the argument of “imminence”, justifying the strike

as a preemptive measure against an imminent threat of attack on the American diplomats and military personnel from Iran, without backing it with the necessary proof. A majority of both houses of the US Congress expressed concerns about the unconstrained use of force against Iran without specific congressional authorization and the necessity of defending "against an imminent armed attack upon the United States" (AJIL 2020).

Later in June, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard, submitted her report to the Human Rights Council, addressing the issue of targeted killings using armed drones and the targeted killing of General Soleimani as a major case. The report calls the targeted killing of "a high level official of a foreign state on the territory of the third one" a "significant development and an escalation". The report concludes that "in light of the evidence that the US has provided to date, the targeting of General Soleimani and the deaths of those accompanying him constitute an arbitrary killing for which, under IHRL [International Human Rights Law], the US is responsible. The strike was in violation of Art. 2(4) of the UN Charter with insufficient evidence provided of an ongoing or imminent attack" (UNHRC 2020).

International Law on Terrorism and the US Discourse and Practice of Anti-Terrorism

From President Bush naming Iran a member of the "axis of evil" to the Trump administration calling Iran "the world's largest sponsor of terror", the US administrations have resorted to the discourse of "terrorism" as political warfare. Nonetheless, the international society has not yet agreed on a concrete legal definition of international terrorism in international law, despite different rounds of convention negotiations at the United Nations since 1970s. This lack of agreement in international society about the definition and governing rules of international terrorism does not merely reflect a specific "legal question" but also, and above all, is reflective of a "political problem" about the monopoly of the hegemonic power in the international sphere (Friedrichs 2006). With the lack of an international, mutually agreed legal definition of terrorism, it seems that the US has been following a case-by-case strategy of ascertaining and taking measures against acts of terrorism.

In a recent episode of this story, in April 2019, the US designated IRGC in its entirety - including the Qods Force - as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). This was the first time that the US formally added another state's military to its terrorist groups list, which led Iran to take similar action, designating the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), which is responsible for US military operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan as a terrorist organization, in turn. One could consider the US drone strike operation another consequential extension of the US "war on terror" to target terrorism globally after September 11. Following the addition of the IRGC to the FTO list, the new practice of targeted killing of high-ranked military commanders has brought the war on terror into a new inter-state realm. For the first time since 2001, the use of lethal force is implemented, targeting individuals with formal military positions in a country, with which the US is not in a state of war. This is a significant development in the US war on terror that can blur the established lines of international law between war and peace and potentially entails dire consequences for international security.

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A PREDICTABLE CALAMITY - SOME THOUGHTS ON THE SECOND NAGORNO-KARABAKH WAR

The 44 days of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (NKW II) HIIK covered in this edition of the Conflict Barometer [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)] marked the third conventionally fought one in 21st century Europe. They followed on the 2008 hostilities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia [→ Georgia (Abkhazia), Georgia (South Ossetia), Russia – Georgia], as well as the ongoing Donbas crisis [→ Ukraine (Donbas)]. Nagorno-Karabakh, a region with a long and conflict-ridden history, is located in the South Caucasus. As part of the broader Karabakh region, it comprises alpine mountains, arable valleys, forests, and steppes. In the Soviet-era, the predominantly Armenian-populated region formed an autonomous oblast within the then Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. The recent clashes were accompanied by severe war crimes and raised numerous questions. This spotlight addresses four of them.

Q1: Why was the fighting's resumption neither inevitable nor unexpected?

There was quite an amount of surprise in the West regarding the escalation and intensity of the fighting. Despite Armenian-Azerbaijani skirmishes preceding it in July [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan] and severe clashes in 2014 and 2016, many regarded the crisis as frozen, a mere legacy from the turmoil of the post-Soviet times. However, as HIIK's continuous reports have shown, the conflict has always been far from that state, rather resembling a coal-seam fire, smoldering under the surface of international attention. One specific tragedy of NKW II thereby lies in over two decades of failed peace and resolution efforts.

The First Nagorno Karabakh War (NKW I) had ended in 1994 with a staunch Azerbaijani defeat. Armenian forces and the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army (NKDA) not only controlled most of the former autonomous oblast, internationally recognized as Azerbaijan's territory, but also occupied as a buffer zone seven surrounding districts, displacing its Azerbaijani population. This strained the bilateral relations lastingly. Nevertheless, a negotiation process was established in the early 2000s under the aegis of the OSCE Minsk Group, culminating in the last update of the "Madrid Principles" in 2009. They included i.a. the occupied districts' return to Azerbaijan, a final discussion of the region's legal status, a secure transit link to Armenia, and a right to return for the displaced people. Additionally, international peacekeepers should monitor the implementation. However, rather than bringing the promised "peace, stability, and prosperity for Armenia and Azerbaijan and the broader region" (OSCE 2009), the principles' implementation was continuously undermined. This is illustrated by, for instance, Armenia's decision not to cede but settle the occupied districts, the renaming of the de-facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic into "Republic of Artsakh" in 2017, and Azerbaijan's tightened legal approach towards the region. A stronger engagement of the OSCE Minsk Group, might have prevented these developments. But the powers involved were distracted, incapable, or unwilling. Just as the terms were never fulfilled, the peacekeepers were never deployed. With a peace process stalling, the conflict's multiple causes untreated, and mistrust growing, the ceasefire became shakier over the last decade. In Azerbaijan, the 1994 defeat had remained a "Chosen Trauma" (Volkan 2018) and thus a constant source of agitation. Governmental promises to retake Nagorno-Karabakh fueled that sentiment, resulting

in nationalists and NKW I expellees constantly pressuring the government to keep the pledges. Meanwhile, Armenia's above mentioned uncompromising attitude and nationalist rhetoric sparked further outrage. So, with each year passing, public impatience mounted. Simultaneously, the Azerbaijani government modernized its military, making it clear that it would solve the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis by force if negotiations further stalled. Finally, economic and ecological stressors fueled the fire. For example, Azerbaijan heavily depends on waters running through Nagorno-Karabakh and the Armenian-occupied districts (Palazzo 2020). With a rising population and an agriculture facing climate change induced droughts, this situation became increasingly menacing from Baku's perspective. Therefore, during NKW II, neither the Armenian attacks on Azerbaijani water pipelines nor Azerbaijan's focus on the recovery of water-rich districts were surprising.

Q2: Was it a proxy war where Ankara caught Moscow by surprise?

Another narrative considered NKW II a proxy war between Russia and Turkey. Russia being a formal ally of Armenia, while Turkey had been Azerbaijan, this narrative seemed plausible, comparable with battle constellations in Libya and Syria.

However, one should remain skeptical of this thesis' substance. Despite often standing on opposing sides, the relations between both East European powers should be regarded way more pragmatic and balanced than many believe. Moreover, both sides' leaders maintain some kind of confidential partnership, with Russian President Vladimir Putin calling his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdoğan "a man who keeps his word" (TASS 2020a), and the latter returning the compliment by naming Putin "an honest man" (TASS 2020b). Facts underpin flattery. Since the 2016 coup d'état attempt in Turkey, which many Turkish officials still believe to have been a conspiracy by Western countries, economic and military cooperation between Moscow and Ankara has significantly deepened. Shared political perceptions also add their bits. Both regard themselves as being repeatedly turned down by Western capitals over the last decades. It now seems that Russia and Turkey have - against all odds - found their modus vivendi. When standing on opposing fields, they know where to draw their respective red lines.

But the catch is that calling Armenia a Russian proxy seems outright disputable. Even more, during much of NKW II, one could hardly believe they were in an alliance. Of course, Russia urged all sides to stop the fighting and also criticized Azerbaijan's and Turkey's role in the conflict. But in a moderate, outright reluctant manner. That is not the usual way a great power treats its proxies, let alone its allies. Comparing its 2020 behavior with that in the 2016 clashes, Russia back then downright rushed in, drawing both sides on the negotiation tables. That is why some commentators now assumed that Russia was caught flat-footed, with Turkey bolstering its influence in the South Caucasus. Far from it. For the Kremlin, which monitored the regional developments closely, the war's outbreak came hardly surprising, especially after the precedent July clashes and joint Turkish-Azerbaijani drills later the summer. Rather, keeping the cordial relations in mind, it seems likely that Ankara and Baku cabled Moscow their intentions beforehand - with the latter giving its acquiescence and restraining itself deliberately.

The reasons for Russia's passivity can be found in some major shifts of prior years. As its stance towards the region

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is defined by its geopolitical interests and the international orientation of the South Caucasian countries' governments, 2018 was a turning year. In the wake of the so-called Velvet Revolution, Nikol Pashinyan, who as an opposition politician, had endorsed a pro-Western course, became Armenian prime minister. In office, Pashinyan did not cut ties with Moscow, but he repeatedly disgruntled the Kremlin. Among other moves, he reduced security cooperation with Russia, replaced pro-Russian officials, and prosecuted the former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan, a friend of Putin. Simultaneously, Yerevan openly welcomed the presence of Western NGOs, Moscow's constant *bête noire*. Moreover, Pashinyan added further oil into the smoldering fire of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, for instance by calling for the region's unification with Armenia in 2019. Such moves not only infuriated Baku, a capital on good terms with Moscow, whose leader is another longtime friend of Putin. The Kremlin also regarded them a further undermining of the already stalled peace process.

Thus, from a Russian perspective, Pashinyan had crossed several red lines and resembled some kind of regional troublemaker who should be taught a lesson. During NKW II, the Kremlin withdrew to the standpoint that its treaty obligations would not be triggered, as the fighting took not place on Armenian soil. It sat tight and waited while Pashinyan was taught that lesson and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh forcibly moved towards the "Madrid Principles". Only at the war's final stage, with Armenian forces at the brink of complete dissolution, Russia intervened.

Q3: Which warfare differences could be observed in comparison to the clashes in Donbas?

Comparing the wars in Donbas and Nagorno-Karabakh seems appropriate, not only because both were Europe's most intense conflicts during the past decade, but also because they are secessionist ones. Furthermore, the affected regions are rich in natural resources, geopolitically important, and the respective separatists supported from abroad. Moreover, in both conflicts the militants had managed with the help of their foreign allies to create (internationally unrecognized) proto-states, claiming to liberate these regions from suppression.

For a short glimpse on warfare issues, this spotlight draws on an author, often-overlooked concerning military topics: Marxist theoretician Friedrich Engels. Besides his economic and philosophical work, he was an analyst of combat and guerilla tactics. Some of his recommendations considering the combatting of a superior adversary (Engels 1857 and 1858) included the following suggestions:

- (1) Avoid direct confrontation: resort to hit and run
- (2) Be mobile: use geography and climate to your advantage
- (3) Don't stand alone: gain support from external allied power(s)

(Engels 1857 and 1858)

Bringing these principles, which (counter-)insurgents adapted throughout the whole 20th century, now to the cases of Donbas and Nagorno-Karabakh:

In Donbas, the militants were highly mobile and frequently saved troops by avoiding direct confrontations with the stronger Ukrainian armed forces (ZSU) and its supporters, as illustrated in their retreat from the cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk in July 2014. In addition, the Donbas militants

know their terrain and its people well and were able to operate on interior lines, thereby heavily engaging ZSU and later encircling and defeating its units (Robinson 2016). Furthermore, the Donbas militias rapidly received allied assistance and supplies. First, via a network of Russian nationalists and oligarchs, which launched a support campaign, mobilizing weapons, fighters, and advisors, and later on by official, although covert, Russian armed forces which turned the fate of war twice in August 2014 and February 2015.

In contrast, NKDA in Nagorno-Karabakh lacked both, strategies and powerful allies. First, NKDA fought an adversary, qualitatively and quantitatively superior in terms of its armor and troops, on unfavorable grounds, that is, the steppe of the region's Southeast. Instead of relocating to the mountainous and forested terrain in time, it led itself being dragged into fierce but futile fighting in plain field, where its adversaries could play their trump cards, such as artillery and UAVs. In addition, a significant number of NKDA troops, which could have been transferred to hard-fought southern battlegrounds, remained seemingly inflexible on the relatively untouched northern frontline. So, counter-offensives as executed by Donbas' relocating militias were not undertaken, contributing to NKDA being swiftly pushed back. Furthermore, in contrast to the Azerbaijanis, who build on Western weapons and respective components, sold from countries like Germany and Israel (e.g. Lavallée 2020, Sulzbacher 2020), and Turkish assistance in form of flown in advisors, special forces, and battle-hardened Islamist mercenaries, NKDA only received support from Armenia, which was insufficient, with rotation and supply remaining limited. NKDA's subsequent defeat caused Armenian nationalists to blame the government of betraying Nagorno-Karabakh [→ Armenia (opposition)].

In the end, there are several factors explaining NKDA's and Armenia's loss. Apart from tactical failures, such as misperceptions concerning the situation in the northern theatre, strategic deficiencies play their part. Despite the fierce clashes in 2014 and 2016, which already showed Azerbaijani technological superiority, a thorough revision of battle plans and combat capabilities was omitted. Instead, many officials believed in the "invincibility myth" resulting from the victory of 1994. Ideological motives, such regarding the loss of any inch of soil as inexcusable, probably played a role, too, thereby forcing NKDA to a defense on all fronts. Furthermore, while Armenia was clearly not as powerful and resourceful a supporter as Russia, the Pashinyan government probably lacked a proper understanding of the region, as its members were not from Nagorno-Karabakh, which was the case of the Armenian government during NKW I. At the same time, its pro-Western course clearly did not pay out. It overestimated the possibility that Western powers would intervene on Yerevan's behalf, while non-expected Russian passivity. If Russian state-of-the-art jamming and air defense systems were deployed, Azerbaijan's campaign would have probably failed as did 2014 Ukraine's operations in Donbas.

Q4: Which developments should be watched?

The war's outcome intriguingly resembles a forcible implementation of the "Madrid Principles", seeing the contested districts returned, a corridor between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia established, and Russian peacekeepers on the ground. But the recent ceasefire did not solve the crisis. It would be dangerous to neglect the conflict's future developments and lessons. Several points should be paid attention to.

First, the domestic turmoil in Armenia. Public outcry and large

protests, following the defeat and the displacement of tens of thousands of Karabakh-Armenians, shook the country's political landscape. While Pashinyan's government became heavily pressured, the prime minister himself fought off his opponents for the time being. If he can keep his position, he may further steer the country to the West, building on growing anti-Russian sentiments after Russia's reluctance during the crisis. Otherwise, another turn, back towards Russia in a try to curb the nationalists, is conceivable. A nationalist upsurge with a new government under Vazgen Manukyan, aiming at a redrawing of the war's outcome, is also conceivable. It remains to be seen in which direction the tide will turn.

Interestingly, neither Azerbaijan nor Turkey came out as the war's ultimate winners, even with Baku retaking the bulk of Nagorno-Karabakh and the important city of Shusha. Other war aims, like complete conquest of the region by Azerbaijan or Ankara's hope to significantly enlarge Turkish influence did not materialize due to Russian intervention. In my opinion, at least for the moment, Moscow should be regarded as the war's main profiteer. The political turmoil in Armenia played into its hands, as it weakened Pashinyan's government and could also be used as a hint to other allies, which intended to change their international orientation. Additionally, following the 15th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade's deployment, Russian troops are now positioned in all three South Caucasian states for the first time since the end of the Cold War. Turkey and Iran perhaps will be allowed to bring their violins to the Caucasian orchestra in the newly proposed 3+3 format cooperation mechanism. But Russia remains the Kapellmeister.

Whether the South Caucasian crisis continues also depends on Western capitals' reactions. So far, they encouraged Pashinyan to move away from Russia. But in the face of battle left him out in the rain. NATO's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg even remarked that the organization would not be part of the conflict (NATO 2020), which sounded more than cynical given Turkey's heavy involvement on Azerbaijan's behalf. However, with Obama-era interventionists joining the Biden administration and Berlin's and Paris' increasingly confrontive stance towards Russia, more assertive signals may be cabled towards the South Caucasus.

Spillover effects to other (regional) conflicts should also be kept in mind. The case of Ukraine is thereby particularly interesting, as Kyiv maintains cordial relations with both Ankara and Baku, being ennobled as a strategic partner by the latter. As such, the three countries partake in comprehensive military cooperation. During the recent escalation, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky closed ranks with Ankara and Baku, backing Azerbaijan's stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh question. At the same time, his government becomes increasingly unpopular due to its failures in domestic politics and is confronted by mounting pressure from right-wing nationalists. With Kyiv's announcement to purchase Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones, a key element of Azerbaijani success in Nagorno-Karabakh, the future may also see the resurgence of fighting in Donbas.

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THE CONFRONTATION IN BELARUS: QUO VADIS?

Introduction

In the Republic of Belarus, presidential elections were held on August 9, 2020. The most influential competitors Sergei Tikhanovsky and Viktor Babaryka were barred from standing in the election, and, according to the national electoral commission, incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko, won with 80.23 percent of the votes. Western countries disputed the results. Immediately after the outcome's announcement, mainly protesters from urban areas took to the streets rallying against what they regarded as an "unfair and rigged election". Demonstrations repeatedly turned violent, with OSCE stating that security forces used violent measures (1). UN High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet shared reports of more than 27,000 arrests since 9 August, when protesters began contesting the result of presidential elections, over 900 people have reportedly been treated as suspects in criminal cases and since end-October, up to 2,000 complaints have been lodged of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in custody(2). A Human Rights Watch report stated that at least three protesters died in August as a result of police actions(3), with more than 100 protesters still missing(4). The competitor and emerged opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya fled to neighboring Lithuania and established the "Coordination Council" in the capital

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Minsk to coordinate the opposition. Since November, the number of protesters declined significantly. In addition, national security agencies such as the State Security Committee (KGB) changed their tactics – the brutality has become less severe on the streets. The dialogue between the opposition and Lukashenko remains rather limited and their standpoints irreconcilable. The opposition demands Lukashenko's unconditional resignation with the latter initiating a constitutional revision, which aimed to reduce presidential powers and competences, while reinforcing parliamentary ones. The security sector in general remains loyal to Lukashenko, however ongoing social turbulences and instabilities have the potential to lead the country into political and economic collapse.

Assessment of conflict stages in the light of the 2020 Presidential elections

There are three factors that need to be taken into account in assessing the stage of conflict(5). (1) the amplitude of protests, (2) authoritarian response from the security sector and (3) the absence of dialogue.

(1) The amplitude of protests was enormous. Large demonstrations emerged in Minsk and other cities(6). The number of peaceful protesters was very significant, reaching more than 100,000 every Sunday (unconfirmed by the governmental sources), in spite of governmental countermeasures, such as local transport's closing, restricting the Internet, police violence, and numerous arrests. In particular, on September 6, the so-called "March of Unity" took place in the capital and other cities; on September 13 the "March of Heroes", on September 20 the "March of Justice" and on September 27 "the People's Inauguration" followed, while on October 4 protesters staged a "liberation march" under the slogan "Release the political prisoners!" and on October 11 as "the march of pride". In addition, on Monday's pensioner groups rallied, for instance on October 12 "the protest of Your grandmothers". On Saturdays, peaceful marches of women took place(7). Admittedly, the number of protesters significantly dropped, evidenced with only hundreds of Belarusians that spent the last weekend of 2020 on the streets(8).

(2) Authoritarian response from the security sector.

Following the protests' outbreak, security forces arrested several thousand people across the country. For instance, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet stated more than 27,000 people were arrested since August 9. "Senior citizens have reportedly also been arrested during the pensioners' peaceful weekly marches", she added, pointing out that on November 30, some 20 had been arrested(9). In return, the government refused the accusations. For instance, Belarusian Permanent Representative to the UN, Yuri Ambrasevich, claimed that "most people were continuing with their "normal lives" and "the Government was functioning", as would be factories and offices(10). On September 17, seventeen Western member states, among them France, the UK, and the US, invoked the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism (it provides the option of sending missions of experts to assist participating States in the resolution of a particular question or problem relating to the human dimension), referring to ongoing human rights violations in the election's wake. By the release of the report on 29 October, the OSCE rapporteur received more than 700 submissions(11). While there were several deaths already reported in August by the opposition

media TUT.by(12), on November 12, a protester died in Minsk following injuries received by riot police(13).

(3) The Absence of dialogue between opposition and government.

The opposition boldly demanded Lukashenko's resignation, which the latter refused. The scope for direct dialogue between the antagonizing sides also remained limited. While Lukashenko announced a constitutional revision and stated to be open for negotiations, he at the same time did not consider opposition representatives like Tsikanovskaya reliable partners, calling them "traitors and terrorists" on November 16(14).

According to our analysis, the current Belarussian situation should be regarded as a confrontation. Why, in addition, it has the potential to escalate, we now analyze in the following chapter.

Conflict and Peace Promoting factors: Trend analysis

(1) Security

Belarus' domestic security situation remains highly volatile. On 1 September, several Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups at the United Nations(15) came together to urge Belarussian authorities to "stop torturing detainees" and bring to account those responsible for alleged human rights violations. The joint statement referred to five areas of concern: ill-treatment against and torture of political detainees, weak oversight and investigations into allegations of police violence, forced disappearances, and use of sexual violence against detainees(16). These concerns were based on 450 reports received by the UN on cases of torture and ill-treatment(17).

Several conflict-promoting factors are likely to influence the infringement of human rights by security forces. These include the limited reach and credibility of international organizations in Belarus, as a result of which thorough and impartial allegations of police brutality are difficult to conduct. Without such investigations, the international community is limited in its ability to pressure Belarussian authorities to refrain from the use of force against protestors, and to ensure those who do so are held to account. In addition, the Belarussian establishment remains concerned about foreign intervention into what it views as its domestic affairs. Accordingly, state authorities have accused Western countries of attempting to sow "chaos and anarchy" by "interfering in [its] internal affairs" (18). Such a stance may act to discredit the protest movement, while at the same time increasing the resolve of the government to resort to the use of force to quell it. Finally, weary of the political violence and unrest that occurred in Georgia and Ukraine, the Belarussian public is also fearful of the involvement of foreign powers in its domestic affairs.

These above-mentioned conflict-promoting factors are mitigated by several conflict-alleviating ones. These include the security forces' apparent unwillingness to large scale use of lethal weapons. While the number of protesters killed or unaccounted for is a cause for serious concern, early predictions of wide scale killings at the hands of security forces did not materialize. There are indications that the government restrained its security forces from using violence. This may in part be explained by the deal struck between Belarus and the Russian Federation, under which the latter agreed to provide military assistance if the "situation gets out of control" (19).

In addition, President Putin has called for restraint on the part of Belarussian authorities. Finally, the opposition has yet to resort to organized violence, although it should be noted that reports indicate that protestors have on occasions used violent means.

(2) Politics

Regarding the political sphere, the key areas of potential conflict include the security forces' lack of accountability and the unrepresentative nature of the political system. With protests and violence continuing and the government reluctant to institute broader scale reforms of the justice and security sector, in our opinion, the potential for further escalation exists.

However, two conflict-alleviating factors also exist; namely, official statements that all allegations of police brutality would be investigated by a specially established Investigation Committee, and limited defections of security forces. As regards the former, on October 2, the country's First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, announced prosecutions into alleged police violence. However, oppositional, and human rights groups, such as the National Anti-crisis Management, claimed that by November 9, no cases of alleged police brutality or forced disappearances had been investigated(20). In addition, the creation of the positions of assistants to the President, who are responsible for security at the district level, report directly to the President, and are able to mobilize military units, suggests that instead of meeting the demands of the protestors, security forces are instead being militarized in order to exert additional control at the district level. This, combined with the proposal of the President to create "national community units" composed of military servicemen and police officers suggests that the demands of the protestors for broader scale reforms of the security sector have not been met(21).

Regarding the latter, defections of security forces can act as a conflict-alleviating factor by giving credibility to demonstrator's allegations thus leading to increased pressure on national authorities. These defections include a small number of police officers and public officials(22), suggesting some sympathy for the demands of the protestors. Despite this, however, such defections have not reached the point where they threaten the government.

Strains, arising from the unrepresentative nature of Belarus political system constitutes another area of conflict as does the government's unwillingness to fully engage in negotiations with the opposition or to invite foreign intermediaries. Furthermore, the government purged public servants sympathizing with the opposition, thereby further restricting the scope of possible dialog.

On the other side, limited attempts to negotiate, with at least some conflict-mitigating potential, existed. This includes a meeting between representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other state bodies with the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Belarus, As mentioned above, Lukashenko declared his willingness to engage with opposition parties, and also noted the formation of a newly established one the Round Table of Democratic Forces(23). Finally, offers to amend the Constitution some level of governmental willingness for dialogue.

Nevertheless, these attempts do not appear systematic nor sincere, and therefore enough to decrease the level of tensions. For this reason, the authors deem the trend in this area increasing.

(3) Society

In the societal sphere, the key area of conflict continues to be divisions between anti-government and pro-government supporters. Therefore, the same conflict-promoting factors are present: namely, extensive use of violence against protestors and unwillingness to engage in direct dialogue. These interact with and influence the existing divisions in Belarussian society. The opposition was originally dominated by a well-educated urban middle class and youths but protest quickly spread to parts of the urban working-class and other societal groups. Protests also affected other regions of the country. During this period, several pro-government rallies were also held, for instance in Gomel, Grodno, Slutsk, and Minsk, in which reportedly 65,000 people attended(24). These protests reflect the deep divisions now visible in Belarussian society. Nevertheless, a key conflict-alleviating factor mitigates these divisions and explains why the authors contend the societal divisions will remain consistent, rather than decreasing or increasing. This factor is the general national solidarity felt in Belarus.

Most Belarussians shared a common religious and historical heritage: Orthodox Christianity and Soviet socialization. Since the Soviet Union's collapse, Russia and Belarus maintained close ties, both at the political and societal level. The opposition repeatedly announced its desire to maintain this close relationship. Thus, while the Belarussian society is divided concerning its president, thus far no broader demands for closer relations with the West have emerged.

Concluding Remarks

The article analyzed the conflict dynamics in Belarus. It evaluated the latest dynamics of the current confrontation between society and government and considered several peace and conflict promoting factors, and how these influence different sources of conflict. The article concluded that Belarus reached the stage of confrontation, with the trend analysis suggesting that the situation has the potential to further deteriorate. The following aspects have been taken into consideration:

The scope of the protests – involving a wide spectrum of the Belarussian society – and the government's inability to meet their political demands, indicates that Belarus has reached the stage of confrontation. This conclusion is supported by fact that security actors have resorted to violent means on several occasions, and that dialogue between government and opposition remained limited.

The assessment of peace and conflict promoting factors suggests that the confrontation has the potential to increase. The continued infringement of human rights, a lack of justice and oversight of security actors, the involvement of several foreign powers, the absence of dialogue, and the unrepresentative nature of the government support this analysis. In the meantime, the process of revising the constitution, the current retention of security forces regarding large scale use of violence, and possible influence by external mediators could provide a more conducive environment for reconciliation and national dialogue, and by extension, may serve to reduce tensions.

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RACE AND POLICING: AN ASSESSMENT OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM, POLICE BRUTALITY, AND THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT IN THE USA

Introduction

In 2020, the US experienced the biggest protest wave since the racial riots in the 1960s, when police brutality and indifference to black suffering led to the eruption of violence in more than 165 American cities. On May 25, a smartphone recording showing a police officer suffocating American citizen George Floyd by kneeling on his neck for approximately nine minutes while he lay face down handcuffed behind his back, brought renewed world attention to the excessive force by police officials against Black Americans. Subsequently, protests erupted across the whole US as well as internationally [--->(Germany (xenophobes); Sweden (xenophobes); South Africa (opposition); Brazil (social protests)], demanding an end to police brutality and all racially motivated violence against black people.

The following article assesses racially motivated police brutality in the US. First, it discusses the culture of racial injustice and police misconduct that led to the mass protests. Second, it looks at the context within which racial tensions escalated in 2020. While the death of Floyd caused widespread outrage, it was not the first time that the killing of a Black American by a police officer has been recorded by a civilian; since the videotaping of the brutal beating of Rodney King by police officers in 1991, a number of civilian-recorded videos of police brutality have surfaced. Later, we will evaluate the prospects for institutional reform in the US.

Anti-Black Racism and Police Brutality

Deaths caused by the excessive use of force by police officials are disproportionately high among Black Americans. According to Krieger et al. (2015), Black Americans made up 42.3 percent of deaths from security force and police interventions between 1960 and 2010, a percentage three to four times that for the White American population. This discrepancy in black vs. white mortality rate can be traced back to the anti-Black racism that has accompanied the US since its foundation. From 1620 to 1865, treating Black Bodies as a commodity allowed slave owners to justify the dehumanization and exploitation of African Americans (Davis, 2003). Even though slavery has officially been abolished, the mentality that promotes the disregard for Black Bodies continues to deeply permeate many parts of the US criminal justice system and law enforcement institutions (Davis, 2003). The Black Body is continuously considered as dangerous and the police as an actor to protect whiteness against this source of "threat".

Police are quicker to use excessive force against Black Americans, even when they are unarmed and pose no danger. For example, on June 2, a police officer in the city of Vallejo, California, fatally shot Sean Monterrosa, a black man, after he mistook a hammer in Monterrosa's pocket for a gun. By contrast, the White gunman who killed two people on August 25 during the unrest in the city of Kenosha, Wisconsin, was not stopped by police prior to the shooting despite walking down a street with a semi-automatic rifle, violating a curfew. Thus it is not surprising that the rate of fatal police shootings among Black Americans is much higher than for any other ethnicity; between 2015 and 2020, it stood at 34 per million of the population for Black Americans and at 14 per million of the

population for White Americans (Statista, 2020). In addition, police officers do not often face legal consequences when killing Black Americans. For instance, the police officers who shot Breonna Taylor during a "no-knock" police investigation on March 13 in the city of Louisville, Kentucky, were not indicted for murder by the Kentucky grand jury.

The ongoing use of excessive force by law enforcement officers against Black Americans in recent years has led to the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM), which was founded in 2013 after the acquittal of the police officer who fatally shot the unarmed black man Trayvon Martin. However, despite the availability of prior smartphone recordings equal to the one picturing Floyd's death, none of the protests between the movement's foundation and Floyd's death reached the magnitude of the 2020 uprising. For example, after video footage of a police officer killing the unarmed black man Michael Brown in 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, protests erupted in Ferguson and St. Louis, Missouri. However, they did not lead to nationwide mobilisation. The 2020 protests are the largest movement in the country's history with more than 23 million participants (Serwer 2020), although the police's apparent lack of appreciation for the Black Body had already been openly criticized when Black Americans such as Rodney King, Eric Garner, and Michael Brown were killed.

Circumstances of Mass Mobilisation

To understand why the 2020 BLM protests took place on a much larger scale than previous BLM protests, the context of mobilization needs to be understood. In 2020, the US was confronted by an economic downturn, the Covid-19 pandemic, and President Trump who encouraged anti-Black racism, exacerbating racial inequalities. While each crisis is a cause for despair on its own, combined, they can create overwhelming feelings of turmoil (McCoy, 2020). People of Colour were disproportionately affected by each phenomenon and faced with the threat that all gains they have so far accomplished could be taken from them; according to social movement theory, such a "probability that existing benefits will be taken away or new harms inflicted" can create large movements (Almeida, 2003, 347).

On May 26, the first protest by BLM protesters took place in Minneapolis, two months after the first Covid-19 restrictions had been imposed. By that time, 20.5 million Americans were unemployed, an increase by 14 million compared to February (Nakhaie and Nakhaie, 2020). Black Americans suffered record numbers of job losses while confronted with the government's failure to provide aid. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately affected racial and ethnic minority groups with death and case rates exceeding their population share due to poorer access to health care, the reliance on public transportation, employment in positions that increase exposure to Covid-19, and crowded housing conditions (CDC, 2020). This exacerbated pre-existing frustrations of Black Americans about inequities in health care and economic inequalities. With schools closed and many people unemployed at home, African Americans now had the time to air their grievances which had built up for decades. The murder of Floyd was only the catalyst.

To make matters worse, a president had taken office in 2016 who increased divisions by creating an extremely polarized climate, demarcating the White "self" from the Black "other". Already during the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump positioned himself explicitly against the BLM movement and pro-police, saying: "An attack on law enforcement is an attack

on all Americans. I have a message to every last person threatening the peace on our streets and the safety of our police: When I take the oath of office next year, I will restore law and order to our country" (quoted in Bacon, 2016). Over his presidency, the number of hate crimes increased (BBC 2020) and, with his failure to condemn White supremacists on numerous occasions, Trump signaled to the Black community that previous political gains were unprotected. Trump's bid for re-election in 2020, Floyd's death, and the uneven impacts of the pandemic mobilized the masses. In addition, Trump's reaction to the 2020 protests further fueled the fire. For example, Trump publicly protected the Kenosha gunman, suggesting he had acted in self-defense, while constantly accusing BLM protesters of being dangerous and ignoring the excessive use of police force against them and Black Americans in general (Wise, 2020). In addition, Trump repeatedly characterized the BLM protests as violent although evidence had suggested that nearly all demonstrations involved no serious harm to people or property (Beckett 2020).

Taken together, the exacerbated grievances and the opportunity to mobilize resulted in such a mass mobilization of African Americans. However, not only Blacks took to the streets. In contrast to the racial riots of the 1960s, Whites, Native Americans, Latin Americans, LGBTQI, health-care workers, basketball players, and others also participated in the protests, channeling their outrage into demonstration. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, national attention was even augmented due to the absence of major alternative events (Washington, 2020). Moreover, many Americans believed that the measures introduced after the killing of Michael Brown on 08/09/14 in the town of Ferguson, Missouri, such as diversity training, had fixed the system (Washington, 2020). Yet, the brutality of Floyd's murder, of being choked to death while telling the officer approx. 30 times that he was unable to breathe ("I can't breathe"), was a wake-up call that police brutality is a systemic problem that will require more comprehensive solutions (Washington, 2020). Last but not least, many people saw the BLM protests as a protest against Trump, allowing them to express their opposition to hostile racism and polarization under his presidency (Washington, 2020).

Prospects for Institutional Reform

After the shooting of Floyd, police reforms were introduced in some parts of the US. For example, the Minnesota legislature passed a police reform bill on July 20, restricting the use of chokeholds, banning training that encourages aggressive conduct, and requiring an officer to intervene when another is using excessive force (Cook, 2020). However, not all attempts to reform the police were successful. On June 8, the Democrats introduced the Justice in Policing Act, with the aim of increasing accountability for police misconduct, enhancing transparency and data collection, and eliminating discriminatory police practices. Yet, the Republican-dominated senate first blocked the bill because it banned certain police actions and eliminated qualified immunity for police officers, among others (Cochrane and Broadwater, 2020). This partisan divide constitutes the biggest obstacle to police reform in the US. With the election of Joe Biden and a Democratic majority in both chambers of Congress, the passing of nationwide police reforms has become more likely. However, only changing laws will not be sufficient. For decades, the US has been over-reliant on law enforcement institutions and focused on punishing crime rather than prevention. Better training and the banning of chokeholds does not

eradicate the systemic racism underlying police brutality. Biden's administration must stop the militarization of law enforcement organizations, reduce their responsibilities, and shift resources to social protection programs. Yet, to achieve fundamental change, reforms are needed that go beyond law enforcement institutions. Accountability and oversight mechanisms must be established, access to social services equalized, and economic justice guaranteed. For example, the new administration should support initiatives and legislation such as the "Ban the Box" policies, which require employers to remove the box on a job application that asks about criminal histories (Humans Right Watch, 2020). Only when the inequities creating conditions for police brutality are removed, the excessive use of force will diminish. However, such large-scale reforms are unlikely to happen overnight and will require continuous effort that goes beyond the term of the new administration.

KATHRIN BAUMANN

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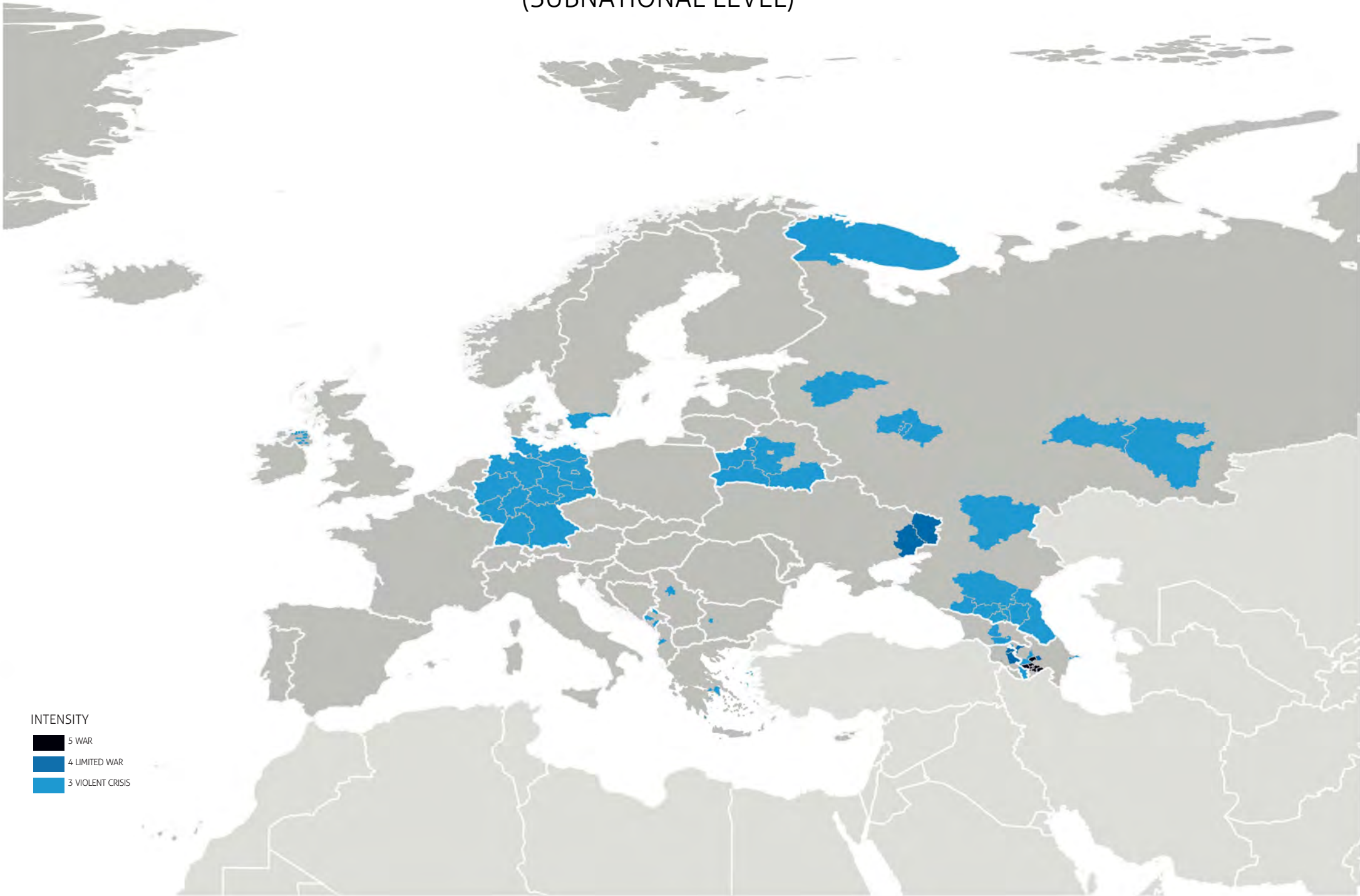
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EUROPE

VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN EUROPE IN 2020 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)



INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2020, HIIK observed 53 active conflicts in Europe. This constitutes an increase by two compared to the previous year. This year, 21 conflicts were on a violent level, an increase by four compared to 2019. In addition to the ongoing limited war in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, which was Europe's only highly violent conflict in the past two years, two interrelated wars erupted in the South Caucasus.

In Ukraine, the limited war between the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued [→ Ukraine (Donbas)]. However, a new ceasefire agreement came into effect on July 27, resulting in the lowest recorded number of ceasefire violations since the outbreak of the war in 2014. Despite this achievement, diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict mostly stagnated. Although the two prisoner exchanges in 2019 were followed by a third in 2020, an attempt to establish a new advisory board, which would have included militant representatives, sparked popular backlash in Ukraine and was quickly abandoned by the government. Among the protesters were right-wing groups, who also spread political propaganda on social media [→ Ukraine (right-wing / opposition)], accusing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of capitulating. Two additional checkpoints to cross the contact line were installed, but their opening was postponed indefinitely, first due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and later due to the conflict parties' failure to reach an agreement on operational details. Moreover, Russia further strengthened its position in Crimea by legal means and detained several Ukrainian citizens in or close to the Crimean Peninsula [→ Russia – Ukraine]. Both states held various military exercises in the Black Sea, demonstrating their continued military presence.

In the South Caucasus, the violent crisis over contested territories, particularly the Nagorno-Karabakh region, between Armenia and Azerbaijan escalated to a war [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan]. While the Nagorno-Karabakh region is mostly inhabited by ethnic Armenians, supported by Armenia, it is internationally recognized as a territory of Azerbaijan. The conflict's dynamics were closely related to the conflict over secession between the self-proclaimed government of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and the government of Azerbaijan [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh^o)]. In Armenia, the dispute over national power between opposition parties such as Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia, on the one hand, and the government of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of the My Step Alliance, on the other, escalated to a violent crisis, especially in the wake of the Armenian armed forces' defeat in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war [→ Armenia (opposition)].

The violent opposition conflict in Georgia [→ Georgia (opposition)] was predominantly marked by tensions and protests surrounding parliamentary elections in October. Furthermore, in Georgia's breakaway-region South Ossetia^o, violent confrontations and monthly detentions took place due to attempted crossings of the administrative boundary line. The so-called borderization process, the setting up of border fences along the administrative boundary line between Tbilisi-controlled territory and South Ossetia, continued [→ Georgia (South Ossetia^o)].

In Russia, the violent crisis between various opposition groups and the government continued [→ Russia (opposition)]. Between June 25 and July 1, a popular vote on several constitutional amendments was held. These included proposed legislation to enable President Putin to extend his rule until 2036. On August 20, Russian secret service officials allegedly poisoned opposition politician and activist Alexej Navalny with a Novichok-type nerve agent in Tomsk, eponymous Obast. Opposition protests took place on several occasions throughout the year. For instance, in Khabarovsk, eponymous Krai, people took to the streets starting on July 11 to protest their former governor's arrest, which they saw as politically motivated. In the North Caucasus, the violent crisis over ideology and secession between militant groups, most of them fighting under the umbrella of the so-called Islamic State Caucasus Province, and the government, continued [→ Russia – Islamist militants / Northern Caucasus]. Overall, more than 40 people were killed in security and law enforcement operations against Islamist militants, most of them being militants.

In Belarus, the non-violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition parties and movements and the government escalated to a violent crisis [→ Belarus (opposition)]. After the presidential elections in August, large-scale protests over allegations of electoral fraud erupted across the country. These continued until the end of the year, despite an intensifying violent crackdown by authorities. Several people died in connection with the protests, while hundreds more were injured. About 30,000 people were detained, and more than 1,000 cases of torture were documented by the Belarusian human rights organization Vyasna.

In Moldova, both the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between several opposition parties and the government [→ Moldova (opposition)] and the non-violent crisis over secession of Transnistria [→ Moldova – Transnistria] continued on the same intensity level as in the previous year.

The interrelated conflicts over international power, and in part territory, resources, and ideology between Russia on the one hand, and two Baltic states [→ Estonia – Russia; Latvia – Russia], Norway [→ Norway et al. – Russia (Arctic)], and the EU, the USA as well as several other states [→ EU, USA, et al. – Russia] on the other, continued. Both Estonia and Latvia accused Russia of espionage and vice versa. Estonia began constructing a fence covering a part of its border with Russia. In the EU and the US, public attention was drawn to alleged cyber attacks from both sides, the alleged poisoning of Nawalny in Tomsk, eponymous Obast, on August 20, and the US withdrawal from the Treaty on Open Skies, on November 26.

In the Balkans, conflicts between opposition movements and the respective governments continued. For instance, the conflicts in Albania and Serbia remained on a violent level [→ Albania (opposition); Serbia (opposition)]. In Bulgaria, a new violent crisis between the opposition and the government erupted [→ Bulgaria (opposition)]. During the second half of the year, various opposition groups staged protests, demanding the resignation of the government and of the prosecutor general, accusing them of corruption and cultivating ties to oligarchs. Violent clashes between protesters and security forces occurred on several occasions, with protesters throwing flares and various other projectiles, and the police deploying tear gas. The opposition's demands, however, remained unfulfilled. On the other hand, secession conflicts in the region de-escalated to disputes [→ Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska); Kosovo^o – Serbia]. Although Serbia refused to acknowledge Kosovo^o as a sovereign state, the two parties signed several agreements on the resumption of dialogue and the normalization of economic relations. In Greece, social protests and violence between radical leftist groups and security forces continued on

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a high level [→ Greece (social protests, left-wing militants)]. In Cyprus, the non-violent crisis over resources and secession of Northern Cyprus between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)^o and the Cypriot government continued [→ Cyprus (Northern Cyprus^o)]. Additionally, a new non-violent crisis over international power, oil and gas resources, and the conceptions of international law in the Eastern Mediterranean region between Turkey and Libya, on the one hand, and the EU members Greece, Cyprus, and France as well as Egypt, the UAE, and Israel, on the other, emerged. The conflict intertwined Turkey's long-standing territorial and resource conflicts with its neighbors Greece and Cyprus [→ Greece – Turkey; Cyprus – Turkey] with broader regional rivalries over international power and resources.

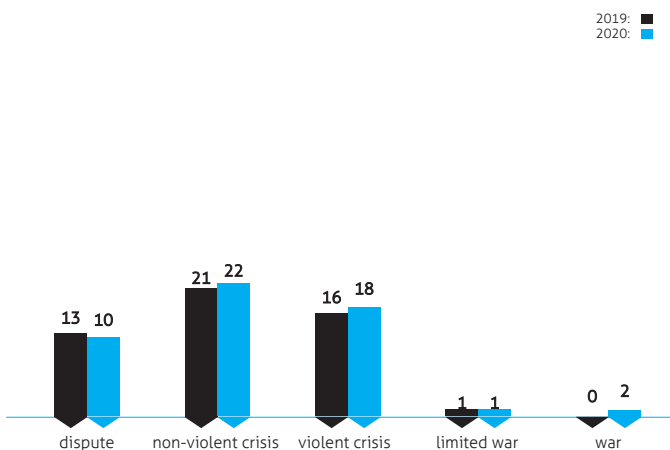
In Spain, the two conflicts over autonomy or secession continued. While the violent crisis over the secession of Catalonia de-escalated to a non-violent crisis [→ Spain (Catalan Nationalists / Catalonia)], the dispute in the Basque Country remained on the same level as in the previous year [→ Spain (Basque Provinces)]. Over the course of the year, Catalonia saw several judicial confrontations interwoven with protests. For instance, on January 23, the Supreme Court of Spain confirmed the removal of regional president Joaquim Torra from his position, leading to violent protests in Barcelona city, Catalonia Autonomous Community, on January 28.

In the Basque Autonomous Community, one of the main issues of contention remained the location of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna prisoners. On one occasion, on January 11, 65,000 people marched in Bilbao town, Basque Province, and thousands marched in Bayonne town, Nouvelle-Aquitaine department, France, demanding the extradition of ETA prisoners from France to Basque prisons. Another conflict, involving Spain, was the non-violent crisis between Spain and the UK over the territory of the Gibraltar peninsula [→ Spain – United Kingdom (Gibraltar)]. The legal status of Gibraltar after Brexit, future international border management, and artificial land enlargement projects on Gibraltar's side, as well as the intrusion of Spanish naval forces into British waters remained issues.

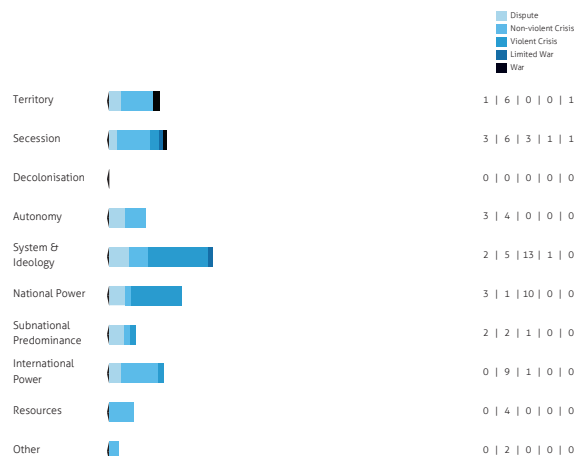
In France the non-violent crisis over autonomy or secession of Corsica continued [→ France (Corsican nationalists / Corsica)]. Furthermore, two secession conflicts continued in the UK, firstly the non-violent crisis over the secession of Scotland [→ United Kingdom (Scottish Nationalists / Scotland)], and secondly the violent crisis over the secession of Northern Ireland [→ United Kingdom (Nationalists / Northern Ireland)]. Both conflicts were rich in political symbolism, for instance, on January 11, the pro-independence organization All Under One Banner organized a march in which thousands participated in Glasgow city, eponymous lieutenancy.

Xenophobia and right-wing activism remained an issue throughout Europe. The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, specifically regarding the refugee and migration policies of the federal government in Germany continued [→ Germany (xenophobes)]. In Germany a xenophobic extremist killed nine people and injured another five in Hanau town, Hesse state, on February 19. The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system in Sweden continued [→ Sweden (xenophobes)]. In Hungary, the dispute over ideology and subnational predominance between minority groups, on the one hand, and right-wing parties and groups, on the other, escalated to a non-violent crisis. For instance, right-wing activists targeted the LGBTQI community and protested against programs devoted to the integration of Romani people.

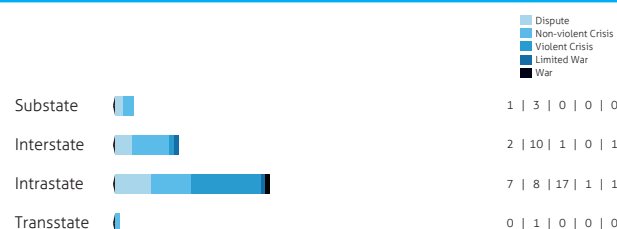
CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN EUROPE IN 2019 COMPARED TO 2020



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN EUROPE IN 2020



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN EUROPE IN 2020



Overview: Conflicts in Europe in 2020

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Albania (opposition)	LSI, opposition movement, PD, PDIU et al. vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2017	•	3
Armenia (opposition)	Bright Armenia, other opposition groups, Prosperous Armenia vs. government	national power	2003	↑	3
Armenia – Azerbaijan	Armenia vs. Azerbaijan	territory	1987	↑	5
Armenia – Turkey*	Armenia vs. Turkey	international power, other	1991	↗	2
Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Nagorno-Karabakh regional government vs. government	secession	1988	↑	5
Azerbaijan (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2003	↗	3
Belarus (opposition)	civil society activists, opposition movement, opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1994	↗	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska)	government of Republika Srpska vs. government, government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	secession	1995	↘	1
Bulgaria (opposition)	Democratic Bulgaria, opposition movement, The Poisonous Trio et al. vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2020	NEW	3
Croatia (Serb minority – ethnic Croatians)*	Serb minority vs. ethnic Croatians	subnational predominance	1991	↘	2
Croatia – Slovenia (border)	Croatia vs. Slovenia	territory	1991	•	1
Cyprus (Northern Cyprus ^o)	TRNC ^o vs. government	secession, resources	1963	•	2
Cyprus – Turkey*	Cyprus vs. Turkey	territory, international power	2005	•	2
Cyprus, Greece et al. - Turkey (Eastern Mediterranean)	Libya (GNA), Turkey vs. Cyprus, Egypt, EU, France, Greece, Israel, UAE	system/ideology, international power, resources	2020	NEW	2
Estonia (Russian-speaking minority)*	Russian-speaking minority vs. government	autonomy	1991	•	1
Estonia – Russia	Estonia vs. Russia	territory, international power	1994	↗	2
EU, USA et. al – Russia	Canada, Denmark, Estonia, EU, France, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA et al. vs. Russia	system/ideology, international power	2007	•	2
France (Corsican nationalists / Corsica)	Corsican regional government, FC, FLNC, nationalist activist groups vs. government	secession, autonomy	1975	•	2
Georgia (Abkhazia ^o)*	Republic of Abkhazia ^o vs. government	secession	1989	↘	2
Georgia (opposition)	UNM, various opposition groups vs. government	national power	2007	•	3
Georgia (South Ossetia ^o)	Republic of South Ossetia ^o vs. government	secession, subnational predominance	1989	•	3
Georgia – Russia*	Georgia vs. Russia	international power	1992	↗	3
Germany (xenophobes)	GIDA-movements, various right-wing groups, xenophobes et al. vs. government	system/ideology	2014	•	3
Greece (left-wing militants – right-wing militants)*	left-wing militants vs. Golden Dawn, right-wing militants	system/ideology	1976	•	2
Greece (right-wing militants)*	Golden Dawn, right-wing militants vs. government	system/ideology	1985	↗	3
Greece (social protests, left-wing militants)	left-wing militants, social groups, workers' unions vs. government	system/ideology	2010	•	3
Greece – Turkey*	Greece vs. Turkey	territory, other	1973	•	2
Hungary (right-wings – minorities)	Fidesz, Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom, Mi Hazánk Mozgalom vs. Jewish community, LGBT groups, Muslim community, refugees	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2008	↗	2
Hungary – Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine (Hungarian minorities)*	Hungarian minorities (Transylvania / southern Slovakia / Transcarpathia), Hungary vs. Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine	autonomy, international power	1989	•	2
Kosovo ^o (opposition)*	opposition groups, opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power, subnational predominance	2015	•	1
Kosovo ^o – Serbia	Kosovar government vs. Serbian government, Serbian minority (in Kosovo ^o)	secession	1989	↘	1

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Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Latvia (Russian-speaking minority)*	Russian-speaking minority vs. government	autonomy	1991	•	1
Latvia – Russia	Latvia vs. Russia	international power	1994	•	2
Moldova (opposition)	opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2009	•	3
Moldova (Transnistria)	Transnistrian regional government vs. government	secession	1989	•	2
Montenegro (opposition)*	opposition groups, opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2015	•	3
North Macedonia (Albanian minority – ethnic Macedonians)*	Albanian minority vs. ethnic Macedonians	subnational predominance	1991	↘	1
North Macedonia (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2014	•	1
Norway et al. – Russia (Arctic)	Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, USA vs. Russia	territory, international power, resources	2001	•	2
Romania (opposition)*	opposition movement vs. government	national power	2012	•	1
Russia (Islamist militants / North Caucasus)	IS Caucasus Province, other Islamist militant groups vs. government	secession, system/ideology	1991	•	3
Russia (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2001	•	3
Russia – Ukraine	Russia vs. Ukraine	territory, international power, resources	2003	•	2
Serbia (opposition)	Alliance for Serbia et al., opposition movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2018	•	3
Spain (Basque provinces)	EH-Bildu vs. government	secession, autonomy	1959	•	1
Spain (Catalan nationalists / Catalonia)	Catalan civil society groups, Catalan regional government vs. government, Spanish civil society groups	secession, autonomy	1979	↘	2
Spain – United Kingdom (Gibraltar)	Spain vs. United Kingdom	territory	1954	•	2
Sweden (xenophobes)	various right-wing groups, xenophobes vs. government	system/ideology	2015	•	3
Ukraine (Crimean Tatars)*	Crimean Tatars vs. Crimean regional government, pro-Russian activists, Russia	autonomy	1988	•	2
Ukraine (Donbas)	DPR, LPR vs. government	secession, system/ideology	2014	•	4
Ukraine (right-wing / opposition)	right-wing groups vs. civil-right groups, minorities, opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2013	↘	2
United Kingdom (nationalists / Northern Ireland)	32 County Sovereignty Movement, AAD, AnP, CIRA, IRM, RIRA, Saoradh, SDLP, SF vs. Alliance Party, DUP, government, UDA, UDA South East Antrim Brigade, UUP, UVF	secession	1968	•	3
United Kingdom (Scottish nationalists / Scotland)	AUOB et al., SNP vs. government	secession	2007	•	2

¹ Conflicts marked with * are without description

² Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

³ Change in intensity compared to the previous year: ↑ or ↗ escalation by one or more than one level of intensity; ↓ or ↘ deescalation by one or more than one level of intensity; • no change

⁴ Levels of intensity: 5 = war; 4 = limited war; 3 = violent crisis; 2 = non-violent crisis; 1 = dispute

⁵ HIIK considers statehood to be non-contested if the state is an official UN members state. Disputed statehood is marked with a * if a territory is recognized by at least one other official UN member state ("limited recognition")

ALBANIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2017**

Conflict parties: LSI, opposition movement, PD, PDIU et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition, led by the Democratic Party of Albania (PD), on the one hand, and the Socialist Party (PS) government of Prime Minister Edi Rama, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, citizens and opposition parties staged protests against the government, accusing it of corruption. On March 2, approx. 8,000 PD supporters protested in the capital Tirana against proposed legislative changes regarding judicial nominations. The opposition claimed the government was trying to exert undue control over the reformed judicial system. Moreover, President Ilir Meta addressed protesters and accused the government of acting against the constitution.

On May 17, a few hundred people protested in Tirana due to the start of the demolition of the National Theatre. Civil society groups and activists had been opposing the demolition plans for two years, accusing authorities of corruption. During the rally protesters clashed with police forces and threw firecrackers and other objects at them, while police responded with tear gas. At least one police officer and one protester were injured, and 37 were arrested.

In December, violent protests that lasted five days erupted in Tirana and other cities such as Durres, eponymous county, Shkoder, eponymous county, and Bulqize, Diber county, after a police officer shot one person dead for allegedly breaching the Covid-19 curfew, on December 8. One day later, hundreds of people rallied in Tirana, demanding the resignation of Rama and Interior Minister Sander Lleshaj. They threw stones and flares at police forces and damaged police cars. As a result of the encounter, nine police officers and at least two protesters were injured. On the next day, several hundred protesters again clashed with the police, throwing flares and firecrackers. The police responded with tear gas and water cannons. At least seven people were injured. Despite the resignation of the interior minister, violent protests continued on December 11. During the first three days of the protests, police arrested 87 people and 246 were charged with holding an illegal protest, arson, or other public order violation. One journalist was apprehended and later released. Rama accused the opposition and President Meta of orchestrating the violence, while opposition parties called for Rama to take responsibility for the lethal shooting. On December 12 and 13, clashes between protesters and law enforcement continued in Tirana, Shkoder, and other cities, with demonstrators calling for justice and demanding the resignation of the General Director of the Police. On December 14, a few hundred people marched peacefully in Tirana demanding police reforms and Rama's resignation.

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ARMENIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: ↑ | Start: **2003**

Conflict parties: Bright Armenia, other opposition groups, Prosperous Armenia vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The dispute over national power between opposition parties such as Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia, on the one hand, and the government of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of the My Step Alliance, on the other, escalated to a violent crisis.

Last year's controversies over the judicial system continued. On February 6, the parliament decided to hold a referendum on constitutional changes which would lead to the replacement of seven of the nine Constitutional Court judges. Opposition parties as well as a campaign initiated by 61 lawyers criticized the decision harshly and questioned its legality. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the referendum was postponed and later canceled. Instead, on June 22, parliament approved the constitutional changes without the attendance of the opposition parties Bright Armenia and Prosperous Armenia that boycotted the readings. As a result, three judges were removed and their successors were appointed in a parliamentary session on September 15, which again was boycotted by the opposition parties.

On June 14, the National Security Service (NSS) searched the home of Gagik Tsarukyan, the head of Prosperous Armenia, as well as the homes of several other party members. Police detained more than 250 opposition supporters who protested against these searches in front of the NSS headquarters. On June 16, the Armenian parliament voted to lift the parliamentary immunity of Tsarukyan, which sparked further protests and led to the arrest of over 100 opposition supporters. Following a court decision, Tsarukyan was taken into custody on charges of bribery and corruption for two months on September 25, but was released on bail on October 22.

In the wake of the Armenian armed forces' defeat in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan; → Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)], the dispute between the opposition parties and the government escalated. On November 9, 17 opposition parties published a joint statement, calling for the resignation of Pashinyan and his government. When Pashinyan announced that he had signed the ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan on the same day, thousands of protesters gathered in the capital Yerevan in the early hours of November 10, again demanding his resignation. Protesters broke into the parliament building and government headquarters, where they vandalized offices and occupied the seats of the parliamentarians. The parliament speaker was injured in an attack by protesters on the street.

Up to the end of the year, protests and actions of civil disobedience continued almost daily, with several clashes between protesters and police forces, followed by arrests. On November 14, the NSS announced that it had prevented an assassination attempt on Pashinyan, but released the arrested suspects three days later. In reaction to the protests, Pashinyan announced a cabinet reshuffle and replaced three ministers on November 20. On December 5, the coalition of 17 opposition parties issued an ultimatum to Pashinyan to resign until December 8. After the prime minister ignored the deadline, a national strike took place on December 22

in which 25,000 protesters participated. In a statement released on December 25, Pashinyan indicated his openness to holding new elections without him resigning, which the opposition parties rejected.

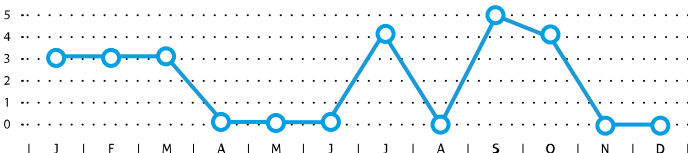
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ARMENIA – AZERBAIJAN

Intensity: **5** | Change: **↑** | Start: **1987**

Conflict parties: Armenia vs. Azerbaijan

Conflict items: territory



The violent crisis over contested territories, particularly the Nagorno-Karabakh region, between Armenia and Azerbaijan escalated to a war. The Nagorno-Karabakh region is mostly inhabited by ethnic Armenians and supported by Armenia, but is internationally recognized as a territory of Azerbaijan. The conflict's dynamic was closely related to the conflict over secession between the self-proclaimed government of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) and the government of Azerbaijan [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)].

In the first half of the year both sides repeatedly accused each other of violating the 1994 ceasefire agreement. Up to the end of March, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) of Azerbaijan reported fighting along the northern border at the Azerbaijani Qazakh and Tovuz Districts, which left four Armenian border guards dead. The Armenian MoD reported that three Armenian soldiers had been killed and four had been injured due to cross-border fire in the same period of time.

From early July, any form of negotiation between both countries ended, after Armenian and Azerbaijani military forces both held large-scale military exercises near the frontline. From July to September, tensions intensified and concentrated on the northern border at Tovuz District, Azerbaijan, and Tavush Province, Armenia. On July 12, Azerbaijan's MoD accused the Armenian armed forces of attacking its positions in Tovuz District with heavy artillery and stated that two Azerbaijani soldiers had been killed. The Armenian MoD denied this, publishing a statement that Azerbaijan itself had used artillery in an attack on Armenian positions. Up to July 16, cross-border fighting continued, including the extensive use of heavy weaponry such as UAVs and artillery systems. Both countries accused each other of shelling villages in the border region, with clashes also occurring along the border of Gegharkunik Province, Armenia, as well as Gadabay District and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan reported that eleven soldiers and one civilian were killed in four days of fighting, and Armenia reported four military fatalities. On September 16, Armenian officials announced that an Armenian soldier had been shot dead at the border of Tavush Province. In the following days, the tensions between both conflict parties increased as Azerbaijan's MoD claimed to have downed an Armenian surveillance UAV on September 20 and reported the killing of an Azerbaijani soldier by Armenian armed forces at the northern part of the shared border on September 21.

Beginning in late September, large-scale fighting broke out in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. On September 27, the Armenian MoD reported an attack of Azerbaijani armed forces

on civilian settlements in Nagorno-Karabakh, including the regional capital Stepanakert. Azerbaijan's MoD stated that its offensive was a response to a prior Armenian attack on Azerbaijani positions at the Line of Contact (LoC) between NKR and Azerbaijan. The same day, Armenia and NKR declared martial law and total military mobilization, while Azerbaijan imposed martial law and partial military mobilization on September 28 [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)]. Subsequently, Azerbaijan's MoD reported it had launched an offensive across the LoC. On September 30 and the following day, Armenian armed forces made some progress with a counter-offensive in the northern part of NKR. The fighting shifted to the districts south of NKR over the next few days and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev announced the capture of the town of Jabrayil, eponymous district, on October 4.

The clashes affected Armenian and Azerbaijan's territories beyond the Nagorno-Karabakh theatre. On September 29, Armenia blamed Azerbaijan for attacking Vardenis town, Gegharkunik Province, resulting in one civilian death and a bus set on fire. The same day, Azerbaijan accused Armenia of shelling parts of Dashkasan District. On October 4, Armenian forces shelled, among others, the International Airport in Ganja City, the second biggest city of Azerbaijan, and killed one civilian and injured 32, according to Azerbaijan's MoD. Armenia denied the allegations, while the leader of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic took responsibility for the attacks.

A ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia on October 10 lasted no longer than a few hours. The next day, Azerbaijan's MoD reported missile attacks on Ganja by Armenian forces, which left nine civilians dead and 34 injured. Armenian authorities denied the allegation. Human Rights Watch documented at least eleven incidents, in which Armenian forces used missiles and artillery in indiscriminate attacks against Azerbaijani civilian areas. In the next two weeks, Azerbaijan's armed forces advanced at the southern part of the LoC. On October 17, Aliyev declared that Azerbaijan's armed forces had captured the city of Fuzuli, eponymous district, and other strategically important villages. A second ceasefire agreement failed on October 19, after Azerbaijan's MoD had accused Armenian forces of shelling the districts of Goranboy, Terter, Aghjabedi, and Agdam. After Azerbaijan's armed forces announced the capture of wide parts of the Jabrayil district, they progressed north towards the Lachin Corridor, a strategic road which connects Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

On October 27, the Armenian MoD confirmed that Azerbaijan's armed forces had captured Qubadli, eponymous district, and was drawing closer to the Lachin Corridor. In the following days, Azerbaijan made territorial gains in the Shusha district, Azerbaijan. After heavy fighting near Shusha city, Aliyev announced the capture of the city on November 8. Meanwhile, on October 28, Armenian armed forces allegedly used cluster ammunition in three consecutive shelling and missile attacks in a residential neighborhood in Barda, eponymous district, Azerbaijan, reportedly leaving 21 civilians dead and 70 injured. This was denied by Armenian authorities.

On November 9, a ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia was signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to this agreement, Azerbaijan won control over parts of Nagorno-Karabakh that it had seized during the fighting, as well as another seven territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh that had previously been controlled by Armenia. Among other districts, Armenia had to return the strategically important Kalbajar district, and the districts of Lachin and Agdam. The

deal also included a clause for a Russian military presence to safeguard the Lachin Corridor, as well as Armenian control over Stepanakert. While the deal was celebrated by Azerbaijan, it triggered protests in Armenia, calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan who refused to step down [→ Armenia (opposition)]. On November 10, the Russian military deployed 1,960 personnel to the region of Nagorno-Karabakh to oversee compliance with the armistice. Three weeks later, on December 1, Azerbaijan's armed forces completed assuming control of the agreed territory. However, both sides accused each other of breaching the agreement. A first POW swap began on December 14, with 44 handed over to Armenia and twelve to Azerbaijan, respectively.

Approx. 65,000 Armenian and 80,000 Azerbaijani military personnel were employed in the course of the confrontations. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, at least 2,580 mercenaries from Syria fought on Azerbaijan's side. The UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries also investigated reports of alleged Armenian involvement in the deployment of foreign nationals in the war.

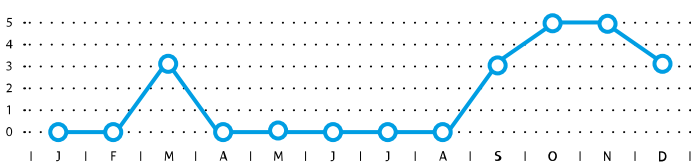
Both parties used heavy weaponry, including tanks, and artillery systems, as well as armed UAVs. According to Azerbaijan's MoD, approx. 2,800 military personnel were killed and around 50 were still missing on Azerbaijan's side, while 94 Azerbaijani civilians were killed. The Armenian Ministry of Health confirmed 3,300 military and 55 civilian fatalities on their side. NKR reported approx. 1,000 military fatalities. Around 90,000 ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh and 40,000 Azerbaijanis were displaced as a consequence of the conflict. Moreover, Armenia and Azerbaijan accused each other of using internationally banned weapons several times. For instance, Azerbaijan reportedly used white phosphorus in Shusha District in October. Similarly, Azerbaijan was reported to have used cluster munition on Stepanakert at the end of September, and Armenia was accused of utilizing Smerch rockets with cluster ammunition in Barda district in October. jmk

AZERBAIJAN (NAGORNO-KARABAKH)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **↑** | Start: **1988**

Conflict parties: Nagorno-Karabakh regional government vs. government

Conflict items: secession



The violent crisis over secession of the Nagorno-Karabakh region between the self-declared Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), also known as the Republic of Artsakh, and the government escalated to a war. The Nagorno-Karabakh region is mostly inhabited by ethnic Armenians and supported by Armenia, but is internationally recognized as a territory of Azerbaijan. The conflict parties accused each other of violating the 1994 ceasefire agreement since March, culminating in the escalation of the conflict in late September with increased use of heavy weapons. The conflict's dynamic was closely related to the conflict over territory between Armenia and Azerbaijan [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan].

During the first half of the year, the conflict continued on the level of a violent crisis. According to the Ministry of Defense

(MoD) of Azerbaijan, on March 23, Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army (NKDA) allegedly transgressed across the Line of Contact (LoC) into Goranboy district. Azerbaijan considered this a violation of the ceasefire, while NKR rejected these accusations and affirmed their adherence to the ceasefire.

On March 31 and April 14 respectively, NKR held general elections to form a new parliament and elect a president. The inauguration of the newly elected president, Arayik Vladimiri Harutyunyan, businessman and former prime minister of NKR, took place on May 21 and the ceremony was attended in person by Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

On May 2, Azerbaijan's Defense Minister announced an increase in combat operations, citing a higher number of recent provocations by NKDA. On May 4, the MoD of NKR also declared increased monitoring of the LoC in adherence with the ceasefire agreement.

In the second half of the year, the conflict escalated to a war. At least 2,800 Azerbaijani soldiers, 1,000 NKDA soldiers, and 3,300 Armenian soldiers, as well as 541 Syrian fighters were killed. The civilian death toll was estimated to be at least 94 on the Azerbaijani side and 45 on NKR side. Approx. 40,000 Azerbaijanis were internally displaced and 90,000 ethnic Armenians from NKR fled to Armenia. Official sources published overall casualty figures only. Independent reports were seldom made available. Therefore, it was not possible to assign specific casualty numbers to most of the attacks.

On September 27, Azerbaijan's armed forces transgressed the LoC, attacking the de facto capital of NKR, Stepanakert, and seizing control over the villages of Karakhanbeyli, Garvend, Horadiz, and Upper Abdulrahmanli in Fuzuli district, and Buyuk Marjanli and Nuzgar in Jabrayil district, which were previously Armenian-occupied. The same day, NKDA carried out retaliatory attacks in both districts. Furthermore, both NKR and its supporter Armenia declared martial law and full mobilization of manpower, while Turkey pledged their full support to Azerbaijan. A day later, on September 28, Azerbaijan declared martial law and partial manpower mobilization.

On September 30, Azerbaijan's armed forces launched a drone strike on Stepanakert. On October 3, Azerbaijan's armed forces attacked several villages in the northern and southern districts near the LoC and seized control over Magadiz village, Tartar district. Turkey sent Syrian mercenaries to the war zone to support Azerbaijan's armed forces.

In the following two weeks, Stepanakert, as well as the southern Armenian-occupied districts of Fuzuli and Jabrayil were heavily targeted by Azerbaijan's armed forces. Azerbaijan launched a drone strike near the southern LoC on October 9. Azerbaijan seized control over Jabrayil on the same day, as well as over Fuzuli on October 19.

On October 7, fighting intensified near Hadrut city, Khojavend district, in NKR. Two days later, Azerbaijan took control over Hadrut. Subsequently, 1,500 ethnic Armenians from this district fled to Armenia.

In the weeks after this, clashes spilled over into Qubadli district bordering Armenia. Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev stated on October 23 that Azerbaijan's armed forces had gained control of several villages in the district. Shortly after, Azerbaijan's armed forces launched an offensive north of Qubadli for the Lachin Corridor, eponymous district, a strategic road which connects Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

On October 28, Azerbaijan's armed forces shelled a hospital in Stepanakert and increased fighting in the Shusha district in NKR. NKDA also launched a rocket attack on Barda city, eponymous district, leaving 21 civilians dead and 70 injured. On October 31, NKR accused Azerbaijan's armed forces of

Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December



the use of white phosphorus, near Shusha district, which is prohibited by international law. Azerbaijan denied these accusations.

From November 2 to 4, Azerbaijan's armed forces seized control of additional villages in Qubadli and parts of the Lachin Corridor. On November 7, Azerbaijan's armed forces entered the city of Shusha, the second biggest city in NKR of high strategic and symbolic importance. On the following day, Aliyev stated that the armed forces controlled the city. 4,500 civilians were displaced. On November 9, NKR confirmed the loss of Shusha, and agreed to a Russian brokered ceasefire agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan], which entered into force on November 10. According to its terms, Azerbaijan kept control over territory seized during the fighting, while recovering the strategically important and water-rich districts of Agdam, Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Kalbajar, Lachin, Qubadli, and Zangilan, previously controlled by NKR and Armenian forces. The deal also included the deployment of 1,960 Russian military personnel to Nagorno-Karabakh, overseeing as safeguards along the Lachin Corridor and the LoC armistice, and confirmed NKR's control over Stepanakert and remaining parts of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In the following weeks, the situation remained tense. For instance, on December 11, Azerbaijan's armed forces attacked a military position of NKDA in Hadrut, leaving three NKDA soldiers and one Azerbaijani soldier injured. On December 27, Azerbaijan's MoD accused the NKDA of an attack on its armed forces near the village of Agdam, Khojavend district, killing one Azerbaijani soldier and injuring one. The MoD of NKR denied the accusations and claimed their adherence to the ceasefire agreement. [nie](#)

BELARUS (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1994**

Conflict parties: civil society activists, opposition movement, opposition parties vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The non-violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition parties and movements, on the one hand, and the government under President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, backed by Russia, on the other, escalated to a violent crisis. Following the presidential election on August 9, nationwide protests erupted over allegations of electoral fraud, which were violently suppressed by the authorities. Protests against the government continued until the end of the year.

In the run-up to the election, the Central Election Commission banned several opposition candidates from running in the election. Subsequently, actors of the opposition movement staged multiple protests. For instance, on May 24, more than 1,000 people demonstrated in the capital Minsk against a new term of Lukashenka. Two opposition candidates were arrested in June, and one fled the country.

The election results were heavily contested with state officials claiming victory for Lukashenka with over 80 percent of the votes, while the opposition under Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya claimed to have received the majority of the votes. The OSCE rapporteur concluded that the election did not meet basic requirements. On August 20, the EU stated that it did not recognize the election results and the

USA declared that the elections were neither free nor fair. Following the election, protests with tens of thousands of participants were staged every Sunday in the capital Minsk and other cities. The largest protests took place on August 16, on August 23, on September 27, as well as on October 25, with approx. 100,000 to 200,000 participants respectively. The authorities dispersed the protests violently. For example, on August 9, police used tear gas, stun grenades, and truncheons. According to official sources, over 50 protesters and 39 police officers were injured. Belarusian human rights organization Vyasna stated that over 3,000 people were arrested nationwide on that day. Two days later, opposition leader Tsikhanouskaya was forced into exile to Lithuania. On August 12, riot police used live rounds in clashes with protesters in Brest, eponymous oblast, injuring at least one. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), at least three people died in August in connection with the protests. On September 27 and October 25, police officers dispersed the protests with stun grenades and tear gas. On November 11, security forces arrested an artist who later died in hospital due to reported police ill-treatment.

Several people died in connection with the protests. Hundreds of people were injured, however, the exact number remained unclear. According to the independent Russian media outlet Mediazona, at least 1,406 people were injured by security forces during protests in August and September. According to Vyasna, about 30,000 persons were detained for participating in peaceful assemblies since the beginning of the election campaign in May, with most of them being sentenced to administrative detention and heavy fines.

The UN condemned the violent response to the protests by the authorities and criticized arbitrary arrests. Vyasna documented more than 1,000 torture victims by the end of the year. Allegations of torture were echoed by HRW, Amnesty International, and the World Organization Against Torture.

On October 2, the EU and the US agreed on sanctions against 40 Belarusian officials for electoral fraud and the violent response to the protests. On November 6, the EU added Lukashenka and 13 other officials to the list. [eeb](#)

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (REPUBLIKA SRPSKA)

Intensity: **1** | Change: **↘** | Start: **1995**

Conflict parties: government of Republika Srpska vs. government, government of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over the secession of Republika Srpska (RS) between the government of RS, on the one hand, and the central government as well as the government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other, de-escalated to a dispute.

On February 7, the Constitutional Court declared the RS's Law on Agricultural Land unconstitutional. In response, RS representatives boycotted the work of state-level institutions. Furthermore, Milorad Dodik, the Serbian member of the Bosnian tripartite presidency, demanded the suspension of the three international judges from the Court. On February 13, Dodik threatened a referendum on the status of RS, calling for a clear demarcation line between the entities. In September and October, Dodik voted against Bosnia's

recognition of Kosovo^o's independence [→ Kosovo^o – Serbia] and declared that US pressure to recognize Kosovo would automatically raise the question of RS's status.

In November and December, Valentin Inzko, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, accused Dodik of threatening Bosnia's unity through the denial of the Srebrenica genocide and the glorification of war criminals. Dodik in turn stated that if Inzko continued to implement decisions, he would consider starting the integration of RS into Serbia. jhb

BULGARIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **NEW** | Start: **2020**

Conflict parties: Democratic Bulgaria, opposition movement, The Poisonous Trio et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

A new violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system erupted between a broad opposition movement including various non-parliamentary opposition groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other. In the second half of the year, non-parliamentary opposition parties, civil society groups, and citizens staged continuous protests, demanding the resignation of the government of Prime Minister Boyko Borissov and that of Prosecutor General Ivan Geshev. Protesters accused them of corruption and links to oligarchs and called for judicial reforms, in particular reforms regarding the accountability of the prosecutor general. Protests broke out in July after a series of corruption scandals involving Borissov. In addition, on July 7, the leader of the oppositional Democratic Bulgaria coalition and party activists tried to reach a public beach in Rosenets, Burgas region, claiming it had been unlawfully occupied by another informal political leader. They were withheld by National Security Guards, which caused public outrage. President Rumen Radev, a critic of both the government and Geshev, insisted on an investigation into the National Security Guards' role. Subsequently, on July 9, prosecutors raided the Presidency Building in the capital Sofia. In response, thousands took to the streets in Sofia to protest the prosecutors' actions. They claimed the raids were an attack on Radev. The protest escalated on the next day when thousands again rallied in Sofia to demand resignations and clashed with police forces. At least three police officers and two protesters were injured, and there were numerous reports of police violence. Two days later, thousands marched peacefully in Sofia to protest the alleged excessive use of force during the earlier rally. From October to December, despite the resignations of several ministers, daily protests continued, with several thousand people marching in Sofia on most days. Smaller peaceful protests were also organized in other Bulgarian cities such as Plovdiv, Varna, Ruse, Blagoevgrad and others. Bigger rallies with tens of thousands protesting in Sofia took place on July 16, July 29, September 2, and September 10. Apart from the daily marches, protesters also blocked exits of national highways across the country and key intersections in Sofia, where they set up tents. Protests again turned violent on September 2, parliament's first day of work after the summer break. In the morning, protesters attempted to storm the parliament and clashed with police who used tear gas. Protesters threw projectiles at them, resulting in 38 protesters, 20 police personnel, and several journalists injured. 35 people were

arrested. The same evening, tens of thousands rallied again, with a group of people throwing self-made incendiary devices and firecrackers at the police. About 200 protesters and police personnel were injured during the clashes, while 126 were arrested, including at least one journalist who accused police of beating him. Up to the end of the year sporadic protests continued but in smaller numbers. dve

CROATIA – SLOVENIA (BORDER)

Intensity: **1** | Change: **•** | Start: **1991**

Conflict parties: Croatia vs. Slovenia

Conflict items: territory

The dispute over maritime and land borders between Croatia and Slovenia continued.

In the judgement in Slovenia versus Croatia, delivered on January 31, the ECJ announced that it lacked jurisdiction to rule on the border dispute between the two countries. In its final ruling, the court concluded that it was for the parties to take the steps necessary to implement the 2019 arbitration award of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). In April, Croatia stated that it would like the countries to engage in bilateral talks again. Slovenia, however, rejected this proposition and Slovenian Foreign Minister Anze Logar issued a statement that the PCA's decision was clear and that legal decisions of international tribunals must be respected.

After Croatia and Italy announced their plans to declare their exclusive economic zones in the Adriatic Sea on December 19, Logar together with his Croatian and Italian counterparts issued a joint statement expressing a shared vision about the future of the Adriatic. mtr

CYPRUS (NORTHERN CYPRUS^o)

Intensity: **2** | Change: **•** | Start: **1963**

Conflict parties: TRNC^o vs. government

Conflict items: secession, resources

The non-violent crisis over resources and secession of Northern Cyprus between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)^o and the government continued. Domestic politics in Northern Cyprus and the containment of Covid-19 shaped the interaction of the conflict parties during the year.

On January 30 and July 28, the UNSC routinely extended the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for another six months, respectively. On May 12, UNFICYP reported the detonation of an IED outside a bakery in Pyla, Larnaca District, that caused minor damages. In response, UNFICYP extended patrols in the area. On October 8, in the run-up to the TRNC presidential elections, the beachfront of Varosha, Famagusta district was reopened with Turkey's support, which drew criticism by the EU and the UN. On October 18, then TRNC Prime Minister Ersin Tatar won the presidential elections with a campaign that supported a two-state solution. On November 3, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades met Tatar at the UN compound in Nicosia, eponymous district, and endorsed five-plus-UN meetings that include Cyprus, TRNC, Turkey, Greece, and the UK.

Measures to contain the spread of Covid-19 led to the first closure of the de facto border checkpoints since 2003. On February 29, the Cypriot government closed four of eight checkpoints as a precaution, leading to criticism by the TRNC and the UN. On March 7, an estimated 200 Greek Cypriots and 150 Turkish Cypriots gathered on either side of the Ledra Street checkpoint in central Nicosia and demanded its reopening. During clashes at the checkpoint, Cypriot police used tear gas and protesters threw stones, injuring four police officers. On March 10, the remaining four checkpoints were also closed after the TRNC reported its first case of Covid-19. On May 21, Anastasiades and then TRNC President Mustafa Akıncı agreed to gradually reopen the crossing points starting on June 8 under the condition that Covid-19 outbreaks were contained. On June 21, Cyprus started reopening the crossings.

plo

CYPRUS, GREECE ET AL. - TURKEY (EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN)

Intensity: **2** | Change: **NEW** | Start: **2020**

Conflict parties: Libya (GNA), Turkey vs. Cyprus, Egypt, EU, France, Greece, Israel, UAE

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power, resources

A new conflict on the level of a non-violent crisis over international power, oil and gas resources, and the conceptions of international law in the Eastern Mediterranean region between Turkey and Libya, on the one hand, and the EU members Greece, Cyprus, and France as well as Egypt, the UAE, and Israel, on the other, emerged.

The conflict intertwined Turkey's long-standing territorial and resource conflicts with its neighbors Greece and Cyprus [→ Greece – Turkey; Cyprus – Turkey] with broader regional rivalries over international power and resources. While the latter revolved mainly around the war in Libya, in which Turkey and its regional neighbors supported opposing sides [→ Libya (opposition)], the former concerned the exploitation of Eastern Mediterranean gas fields discovered over the past decade. Two of these are located in what Cyprus defined as its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in agreements with Lebanon, Israel and Egypt. As Turkey continued to dispute Cyprus' sovereignty and support the internationally unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus° [→ Cyprus (Northern Cyprus°)], it harassed international gas projects in the area through naval and its own drilling operations. In February, the EU passed sanctions on two Turkish nationals connected to these operations. Turkey remained staunchly opposed also to the EastMed pipeline project by Greece, Cyprus and Israel, whose construction accord was signed on January 2. In January 2019, these countries established the East Med Gas Forum (EMGF) for energy cooperation together with Egypt, Italy, Jordan and Palestine, building on a forum led by international oil companies in the area. In January of this year, the forum was transformed into a regional organization, involving also the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the USA as observers as well as France as a prospective full member. Turkey denounced the EMGF as an "axis of malice".

The various conflicts over resources and power in the region became further linked in November 2019, when Libya's internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA)

and Turkey concluded two agreements over military cooperation and the delineation of their maritime boundaries. The latter ran through the EEZ claimed by Greece under the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Turkey is not party to UNCLOS and rejects Greece's entitlement of islands with a 200-mile EEZ, such as the Greek islands of Crete and Kastellorizo. The GNA-Turkey maritime accord was widely condemned as a violation of UNCLOS, especially by Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, France, and the UAE.

The same countries were also unanimously opposed to Turkey's military intervention in Libya, which began in January of this year, countering the support for the Libyan National Army and the Tobruk-based House of Representative by Egypt, Russia, and the UAE. Throughout the year, tensions occurred over Turkey's suspected violations of the UN arms embargo on Libya, with Turkey subverting the embargo's enforcement by NATO and EU maritime security operations "Sea Guardian" and "Irin". For example, in June, Turkish naval ships repeatedly thwarted the inspection of the freighter ship *Çirkin* by Greek and French ships as part of the EU and NATO operations, respectively. Having claimed that the Turkish ships repeatedly locked the fire-control radars on its frigate, France requested a NATO investigation. In July, it withdrew from "Sea Guardian", in which NATO member Turkey was itself a participant. On September 21, the EU sanctioned the Turkish operator of the *Çirkin* for violating the arms embargo. Based on the maritime accord with Libya, Turkey handed out exploration permits to its Turkish Petroleum Corporation and announced survey missions in waters also claimed by either Greece, Cyprus, or, more peripherally, Egypt. In late July, Turkey began to send seismic research ships with naval escorts into disputed waters. After a temporary pause following German-brokered talks between Greece and Turkey, Turkey resumed the surveys after Egypt and Greece signed an EEZ agreement on August 6 that contradicted the Libyan-Turkish accord. On August 14, a Greek-Turkish naval encounter resulted in a minor collision. Military presence in the Aegean markedly increased with Greece and Cyprus holding joint exercises with Italy and France from August 26 to 28. In February, France had sent its aircraft carrier to the region. From November 30 to December 6, Greece held joint exercises with Egypt and the UAE off the Egyptian coast, following the announcement of their strategic partnerships. When US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Cyprus and Greece in September, he announced the lifting of the 1987-imposed US arms embargo on Cyprus and US naval deployments to Crete. Following an EU- and NATO-mediated détente in September, Turkey announced another seismic survey on October 12, which lasted until November 30. On December 11, the EU announced it would impose further sanctions on Turkish companies and officials over illegal drilling activities in the Aegean, extending the first round of sanctions imposed over similar activities in the Cypriot EEZ in November 2019. jfr

ESTONIA – RUSSIA

Intensity: **2** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1994**

Conflict parties: Estonia vs. Russia

Conflict items: territory, international power

The dispute over territory along the borderline and international power between Estonia and Russia escalated to a non-violent crisis.

In December, Estonia finished constructing the first part of

its 23,5 kilometers long fence along its border with Russia. Moreover, in addition to the fence, the EU and NATO announced plans to install further surveillance infrastructure along the border.

Military exercises by both Estonia and its allies as well as Russia were markedly smaller and took place less frequently than in prior years, mostly due to Covid-19. For instance, the planned exercise Saber Strike by United States Army Europe was canceled for the first time.

Estonia and NATO blamed Russia for a total of 228 violations of aviation norms, claiming that NATO fighter jets were called 48 times to counter these actions. For instance, on July 6, NATO Air Policing intercepted a fighter jet flying from Kaliningrad to mainland Russia with its transponder turned off and without a filed flight plan.

Explicitly stating that it wanted to support the fight against pro-Russian separatists, Estonia delivered 2,400 pistols to Ukraine [→ Ukraine (Donbas)]. spe

EU, USA ET. AL – RUSSIA

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **2007**

Conflict parties: Canada, Denmark, Estonia, EU, France, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA et al. vs. Russia

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over ideology and international power between the EU, USA, and several other states, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, continued.

As in previous years, both sides accused each other of territorial violations. For instance, on August 28, a Russian Su-27 fighter jet from Kaliningrad oblast allegedly followed a US B-52 bomber into Danish airspace over the Island of Bornholm, eponymous municipality [→ Norway et al. – Russia (Arctic)]. On another occasion, on June 15, two Russian Su-27 fighter jets from Kaliningrad oblast intercepted US B-52H bombers and NATO spy planes during a NATO exercise due to the perceived violation of entering neutral airspace above the Baltic Sea [→ Estonia – Russia; Latvia – Russia].

Moreover, both sides held multiple military maneuvers throughout the year. For example, from June 7 to 16, NATO conducted its BALTOPS 2020 exercise, comprising approx. 3,000 personnel, 28 ships, and 28 military aircrafts from several NATO and EU member states in the Baltic Sea. From September 21 to 26, Russia held its collaborative large-scale maneuver Kavkaz-2020 in the training grounds of Kasputin Yar, Volgograd oblast, and Ashuluk, Astrakhan oblast, as well as in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea involving approx. 80,000 troops, 250 battle tanks, a minimum of 20 fighter jets, and at least 20 ships and submarines from 16 countries, among them China, Iran, and Turkey.

Cyberattacks were the main concern of both sides. On May 13, the German government accused Russia of a cyberattack against the German federal parliament as well as Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2015. Consequently, the EU imposed sanctions against two members of the Russian security apparatus on October 22. Besides that, both sides prolonged or extended their respective sanction regimes over the ongoing conflicts in Crimea [→ Russia – Ukraine; Ukraine (Donbas)]. Afore, on September 25, Russia called on the US to launch bilateral negotiations on cyber security, to prevent future

confrontation.

On August 20, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) allegedly poisoned Russian opposition figure Alexey Navalny using the nerve agent Novichok in Tomsk, eponymous oblast, Russia [→ Russia (opposition)]. Two days later, after treatment in a hospital in Omsk, eponymous oblast, he was transported to a hospital in the German capital, Berlin. He recovered after receiving special treatment. On October 7, France and Germany accused Russia of being responsible for the attack, referring to OPCW's findings. Consequently, the EU as well as the UK imposed travel bans and asset freezes against Russian individuals. On November 12, Russia announced sanctions against the EU. On December 17, Russian President Vladimir Putin rejected any involvement of the FSB.

The US withdrew from the Treaty on Open Skies (OST) on November 22. The OST mutually allows its parties – among which most are NATO countries and Russia – to conduct unarmed surveillance flights over each other. The US announced the withdrawal on May 21, claiming Russia had repeatedly violated the OST by blocking flights over Kaliningrad, the Baltic Sea, and the Russian-Georgian border [→ Georgia – Russia]. One day later, Russia denied the allegations, and in turn accused the US of violating the OST, implying that this action could threaten global security, jeopardizing the prolonging of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 2010.

tcr

FRANCE (CORSIKAN NATIONALISTS / CORSICA)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1975**

Conflict parties: Corsican regional government, FC, FLNC, nationalist activist groups vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The non-violent crisis over the autonomy or secession of Corsica between the paramilitary organization National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC), its various splinters, nationalist activist groups, and the Corsican regional government formed by the nationalist pro-independence alliance For Corsica (FC), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The Haute-Corse department saw FLNC-related activities. On July 14, four armed FLNC members interrupted a meeting of Corsican independence supporters over the reactivation of the Consulta Populera Naziunale – an entity meant to be an alternative to French institutions – in the town of Casabianca. The FLNC group claimed to have conducted a shooting attack against the headquarters of the Gendarmerie Nationale at Montesoro barracks, in Bastia town, the night before. Neither major damages nor casualties were reported. Furthermore, the group demanded reforms of the education system in Corsica and a solution to the question of independence. The French National Antiterrorism Prosecution Service took on the investigation of the attack. Later that year, on October 6, a dozen people were arrested over the incident, and nine were charged with terrorism, among them the 76-year-old nationalist and writer Jean-Piere Santini. About two weeks later, on October 22, the A Muvra movement and students protested in Corte town, calling for his release. On December 9, he was released but put under judicial observation.

tcr

GEORGIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2007**

Conflict parties: UNM, various opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between the political party United National Movement (ENM) and various other opposition groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

On March 8, the government reached an agreement with opposition groups over changes to the electoral system for October's parliamentary election with strong backing by the USA. According to the deal, 120 MPs will be elected proportionately through party lists and 30 through single-member majoritarian constituencies.

Nonetheless, during the first half of the year, small-scale protests focused on the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic fallout. On April 22, for instance, hundreds of citizens and farmers in the Marneuli District, Kvemo Kartli Region, protested due to insufficient support from local government during a lockdown. Some protesters blocked a road and prevented trucks from passing. The ruling Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party (KO) accused the opposition of organizing the protests.

The second half of the year was dominated by tensions surrounding the parliamentary elections. Ahead of the elections, on October 21, an unidentified armed group approached the KO office in Dmanisi, Kvemo Kartli Region, and clashed with party members using knives and guns, leaving four people injured. KO accused ENM of the raid, which it denied.

After KO won the first round of the parliamentary elections on October 31, the opposition refused to recognize the results, calling for indefinite protests. The opposition, led by ENM and the European Georgia party, and including six other parties that won seats, claimed election fraud and boycotted the newly elected parliament. From November 8 to 9, more than 45,000 opposition supporters demanding new elections clashed with the police in the capital Tbilisi. Riot police used water cannons and tear gas against protesters. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 14 police officers, three journalists, and at least ten protesters were injured, and 19 were detained. Thousands of protesters gathered again in Tbilisi on November 14.

On November 21, runoff elections were held but took place without the participation of the opposition, which withdrew its observers and called on its supporters to boycott the voting in protest against the results of the first round of the elections. The ruling KO party received 48.22 percent of the votes, while the opposition ENM received 27.18 percent and European Georgia 3.79 percent. On December 10, KO parliamentarians started the new parliamentary session without the opposition. Simultaneously, parliamentarians from five of eight opposition parties and blocs, namely ENM, European Georgia, Lelo, Labour Party, and Strategy Agmashenebeli, signed a joint memorandum in which they refused to recognize the election results, refused to take up their parliamentary mandates, and demanded new elections. The multiple rounds of election talks between the KO and the opposition parties, mediated by diplomats from the US and the EU, failed to deliver a solution to the deadlock before the end of the year.

tav

GEORGIA (SOUTH OSSETIA^o)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1989**

Conflict parties: Republic of South Ossetia^o vs. government

Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance

The violent crisis over the secession of South Ossetia and subnational predominance between the government of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia - the State of Alania^o, supported by Russia, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. As in the previous year, the conflict focused on the demarcation of the administrative boundary line.

At the beginning of June, the government of South Ossetia reported two incidents of border violation. Allegedly, it observed Georgian UAVs crossing the administrative boundary line near the village of Tselisi, Shida Kartli Region. It also claimed that a group of Georgian secret service agents attempted to cross the administrative boundary line on July 29. The State Security Service of Georgia, on the other hand, accused the South Ossetian troops of so-called "borderization" activities along the village of Karapila, Shida Kartli Region.

According to the South Ossetian KGB, on average there were over 33 detentions per month. For instance, on July 3, South Ossetian border guards detained a Georgian citizen. They accused him of illegally crossing the administrative boundary line to South Ossetia. He was later sentenced by a South Ossetian court to three months of pre-trial detention. The Georgian Foreign Ministry called the sentencing "a provocative and destructive" decision. The citizen was released in September.

On July 11, tensions on the border escalated violently. South Ossetian border guards injured a Georgian citizen and arrested him near the village of Kvemo Chala, Shida Kartli Region. The Committee of State Security of South Ossetia stated that it was a citizen who had crossed the administrative boundary line and opened fire. In return, Georgian government condemned the actions of the South Ossetian law enforcers. This was the first violent incident of this kind since 2008.

The second half of the year was marked by protests within South Ossetia. Following an attack on the head of the South Ossetian Ministry of Internal Affairs on August 17, a South Ossetian citizen was arrested and died in custody. Pictures of his body, suggesting that he had been tortured, went viral on social media. In the following months, numerous protests took place demanding the resignation of the government.

From December 10 to 11, participants of the Geneva International Discussions met for the only time this year to address security and humanitarian issues in Abkhazia^o and South Ossetia. The co-chairs, among them the EU, assessed the overall situation as "relatively calm and stable".

clp

GERMANY (XENOPHOBES)

 Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2014**

Conflict parties: GIDA-movements, various right-wing groups, xenophobes et al. vs. government

 Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, in particular asylum and immigration policies, between right-wing groups, various regional movements against the Islamisation of the Occident, as well as xenophobic individuals, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, 23,080 politically motivated criminal offenses with right-wing background were conducted all over Germany, 1,054 of which were acts of violence that were almost exclusively xenophobic, according to the government. By September at least 226 people had been injured.

On February 19, a xenophobic attacker killed nine people and wounded five in Hanau town, Hesse state. The group of people who were shot dead consisted of Germans with a migratory background and foreigners. The perpetrator killed his mother and committed suicide shortly after. In videos and a manifesto, he gave a portrait of his xenophobic far-right extremist worldview, as in cases of comparable attacks [→ USA (right-wing extremists); Sweden (xenophobes)]. The Public Prosecutor General took over the investigations the same night. The next day, Chancellor Angela Merkel strongly condemned the attack, declaring "racism is poison."

On the night of July 31 to August 1, a group of approx. ten people attacked three men from Guinea, injuring two in Erfurt city, Thuringia state. Additionally, xenophobes conducted attacks on infrastructure for refugees and asylum seekers. For instance, on the night of August 14 to 15, an unknown perpetrator set fire to a refugee accommodation container in Rommerskirchen municipality, North Rhine-Westphalia state (NW), making the facilities uninhabitable.

Furthermore, several demonstrations took place throughout the year. For example, on June 6 – after the killing of George Floyd and in support of the emerging Black Lives Matter movement [→ USA (racial tensions)] – demonstrations were held all over Germany, with three major demonstrations against racism in the capital Berlin with approx. 15,000, in Hamburg city, eponymous state, with approx. 14,000, and in Munich city, Bavaria state, with approx. 25,000 participants. On November 9 – the historic date of the Kristallnacht pogroms – PEGIDA demonstrated in Dresden city, Saxonia state, publicly displaying right-wing insignia such as flags, causing protest from within the German Jewish community.

As in previous years, security authorities conducted investigations and raids against right-wing extremists. Notably, on September 24 and November 24, police raided the homes of NW-police personnel directly linked to right-wing extremism and racism due to findings of investigations in chat groups.

tcr

GREECE (SOCIAL PROTESTS, LEFT-WING MILITANTS)

 Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2010**

Conflict parties: left-wing militants, social groups, workers' unions vs. government

 Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various left-wing and anarchist groups and different workers' unions, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The first half of the year was dominated by attacks and other violent acts by different anarchist groups. In January, following a series of police operations in the Exarchia district in the capital Athens, members of Anarchist Groups of Night Raids set at least 15 luxury cars on fire in Athens. On March 5, members of the anarchist group Rouvikonas stormed into the office of the Minister of Labor in Athens in order to protest the government's new social security bill. In April, approx. 50 anarchists threw Molotov cocktails at a church in Athens, with police arresting two of the alleged attackers. Anarchists also sprayed slogans on other churches in Athens and Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia region.

On June 29, the parliament drafted a new law restricting protests. The bill provided for criminal liability for protesters attending unsanctioned rallies as well as protest organizers responsible for damage caused if rallies turned violent. The left-wing opposition such as SYRIZA, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the European Realistic Disobedience Front as well as trade unions opposed the law and compared the restrictions with those of the past military junta's presidential decree. On July 2, thousands rallied in Athens against the bill. KKE supporters and members of the Communist Youth of Greece also protested in Alexandroupoli, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace region. On July 9, more than 10,000 people again rallied in Athens, with protesters throwing petrol bombs and police responding with tear gas and stun grenades. Six police officers were injured and nine protesters were arrested. Rallies also took place in a dozen of other cities across the country.

On November 17, on the anniversary of the 1973 Athens Polytechnic uprising, several violent incidents occurred across the country. In Athens, thousands rallied defying Covid-19 related bans. Police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowd, temporarily detaining 100 and arresting five. During protests in Thessaloniki, police forces arrested members of extra-parliamentary left-wing parties and fined them for violating Covid-19 pandemic regulations. Confrontations between protesters and police also occurred in Patras, Western Greece region, and Ioannina, Epirus region.

gap

HUNGARY (RIGHT-WINGS – MINORITIES)

 Intensity: **2** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2008**

Conflict parties: Fidesz, Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom, Mi Hazánk Mozgalom vs. Jewish community, LGBT groups, Muslim community, refugees

 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

The dispute over ideology and subnational predominance between minority groups such as Romani, Jewish, Muslim, and LGBTQI communities and refugees, on the one hand, and right-wing parties and groups, consisting of Fidesz, Jobbik, Our Homeland Movement, Force and Determination, and the Hungarian Self-Defence Movement, on the other, escalated to a non-violent crisis. Minority groups' marginalization persisted, with right-wing politicians and groups repeatedly issuing discriminatory statements and policies.

On January 9 and February 11, Prime Minister Victor Orbán from Fidesz criticized the compensation for Romani students affected by segregation. On February 18, the European Roma Rights Center categorized those statements as discriminatory. Following the arrest of an alleged Romani in a murder inquiry, members of Our Homeland Movement rallied unauthorized in the capital Budapest on May 29, chanting antigay abuse and demanding the halt of Romani-related integration programs. Police detained six attendants.

The discrimination against LGBTQI communities continued. On May 19, the parliament passed a legislation effectively hindering the change of gender on public documents for trans- and intersexual people and defining gender as based on chromosomes. Over the course of the year, individuals affiliated with right-wing groups destroyed publicly displayed LGBTQI flags. For instance, on August 14, far-right-activists tore down and burned an LGBTQI flag from Budapest's city hall. On December 15, parliament passed a constitutional amendment effectively hindering same sex couples from adopting children.

 mzs

KOSOVO^o – SERBIA

 Intensity: **1** | Change: **↘** | Start: **1989**

 Conflict parties: Kosovar government vs. Serbian government, Serbian minority (in Kosovo^o)

 Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over secession of Kosovo^o between the Kosovar government, on the one hand, and the Serbian government as well as the Serbian minority in Kosovo, on the other, de-escalated to a dispute.

Throughout the year, Serbia and Kosovo signed multiple agreements to renew their relations. In January and February, both parties agreed to restore flights and railway links between Belgrade and Pristina. On April 1, Kosovo lifted the 100 percent import tariff on Serbian goods. Nevertheless, it demanded Serbian companies to write "Republic of Kosovo" on export documentation. The newly elected Kosovar government ultimately lifted this requirement in June.

Subsequently, during a virtual summit on July 10, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovar Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti agreed to resume the dialog for the normalization of relations. Under EU facilitation, Vucic and Hoti then met in Brussels on July 16 and September 7. Additionally, on September 4, Vucic and Hoti signed an agreement to normalize their economic relations under the mediation of US President Donald Trump. As part of that accord, Serbia staffed the Merdare Common Crossing Point, which Serbia had previously refused to operationalize.

 met

LATVIA – RUSSIA

 Intensity: **2** | Change: **•** | Start: **1994**

Conflict parties: Latvia vs. Russia

 Conflict items: international power

The non-violent crisis over international power between Latvia and Russia continued.

On September 24, the Latvian parliament approved a new concept of national defense with the Defense Minister identifying Russia as Latvia's most important military challenge. Both military training operations and the deployment of troops in the region by both Latvia as well as by Russia were either canceled or significantly downsized due to Covid-19. Similarly, the number of intercepted military flights decreased. According to Latvia and NATO, reports of NATO soldiers allegedly spreading Covid-19 in Latvia were created and promoted by Russia to destabilize the country.

Espionage operations continued to strain Latvian-Russian relations. For instance, on August 17, a court in the Latvian capital Riga convicted a former employee of the Latvian Interior Ministry to 15 years in prison for spying for Russia. In turn, on December 24, a Russian court sentenced a Russian couple to 13 and 12.5 years of prison respectively on charges of espionage for Latvia.

Additionally, both sides' standoff over the media and the treatment of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia continued. On January 13, Latvia provided asylum to a Russian journalist and his family, after he was accused of defamation and blackmail and for whom Russia declared an Interpol notice. On February 24, Latvia banned a Russian journalist's entry, referring to his Schengen's visa being cancelled on Estonian request [→ Estonia - Russia]. On July 3, Russia criticized Latvia's banning of the Russian TV channel RT, part of Russian government-owned news agency Russia Today (RS), claiming it part of Latvia's so-called anti-Russian-speakers policy [→ Latvia (Russian-speaking minority)]. While the Association for International Broadcasting also criticized the move, Latvia, in turn, justified the ban referring to EU sanctions against the head of RS. On December 4, Russia condemned Latvia's move to charge seven RS journalists for allegedly violating EU sanctions. Furthermore, Russia condemned a Latvian court's conviction of an ethnic-Russian Russian-speaking activist on December 17 for allegedly inciting ethnic hatred. spe

MOLDOVA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2009**

Conflict parties: opposition parties vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between several opposition parties, mainly the pro-EU electoral bloc ACUM as well as Pro Moldova and Shor's Party, on the one hand, and the government under President Igor Dodon from the pro-Russian Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM), supported in parliament by the pro-EU Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM), on the other, continued.

Opposition parties repeatedly accused Dodon of corruption and criticized several of his political initiatives. For example, on April 17, Dodon signed a USD 216 million loan agreement with Russia that the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional on May 7 after an appeal by Pro Moldova.

On March 2, around 1,000 people, among them many Transnistria War veterans, rallied in front of a government building in the capital Chisinau to show their discontent with alleged corruption inside the governing PSRM and the government's position regarding the Transnistrian conflict [→ Moldova (Transnistria)]. Veterans subsequently tried to enter the building forcefully but were stopped by security forces. During another veteran protest in Chisinau on July 16, police arrested protesters and injured several using tear gas and rubber batons.

On May 8, Pro Moldova and Shor's Party formed an "anti-government bloc" after several MPs had left the PDM to join the Pro Moldova faction. Dodon accused the opposition of buying deputies and threatened prosecution. On June 21, the government lost its parliamentary majority when another PSRM deputy joined Pro Moldova. A motion of no-confidence filed by ACUM bloc on July 20 failed.

On November 15, Maia Sandu, who had already acted as prime minister in the past, won the second round of the presidential election against the incumbent Dodon with 57.75 percent of the vote. In her campaign, she had focused on the fight against corruption as well as establishing closer ties with the EU.

During and after the presidential election, both Sandu and Dodon supporters raised allegations of electoral fraud. According to Sandu supporters, voters from Transnistria were promised money for voting in favor of Dodon. At the same time, Dodon accused his political opponents of preventing Transnistrian residents from voting. In the village of Varnia, Anenii Noi district, police reportedly clashed with pro-Sandu protesters who tried to block a road and stop Transnistrian voters in the second round of the presidential election.

On December 6, around 20,000 pro-Sandu protesters gathered in Chisinau demanding early parliamentary elections. Sandu called on the government to resign and accused legislators of trying to undermine the presidency after parliament had passed a bill transferring control of the country's intelligence agency from the president to parliament. On December 23, one day before Sandu took office, Prime Minister Ion Chicu announced his resignation in order to facilitate early parliamentary elections. On December 28, Dodon also endorsed early elections.

pem

MOLDOVA (TRANSNISTRIA)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1989**

Conflict parties: Transnistrian regional government vs. government
 Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over secession of Transnistria between the self-proclaimed Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR), supported by Russia, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

On February 7, President Igor Dodon said Moldova was ready to grant Transnistria wide autonomy, while stressing the need for a shared future. PMR authorities stated that Dodon's proposal was unrealistic and demanded Russian military forces in Transnistria be significantly augmented.

On March 2, around 1,000 Transnistrian war veterans rallied in front of the government building in the capital Chisinau to show their discontent with the Moldovan government's position on the unresolved conflict [→ Moldova (opposition)]. Later in March, PMR installed 37 checkpoints along the Transnistrian border under a state of emergency, claiming that the de facto blockade of Moldovan-administered settlements was a protective measure against Covid-19. After the Transnistrian police began imposing fines for lockdown violations on June 2, a crowd of approx. 30 gathered in protest of the measures at one of the checkpoints in Cocieri, Dubasari district, and tried to flip a police car.

On November 29, Transnistria held elections for the local parliament. Turnout was just above 25 percent and the election was declared valid by Transnistrian authorities. The ruling Obnovlenie Party won the election. However, in many constituencies only Obnovlenie candidates ran for the seat.

As in previous years, the Moldovan government continued to criticize the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria. For example, on June 15, the Moldovan Foreign Ministry repeated the demand that Russian forces withdraw from the PMR. The Russian Ambassador to Moldova in return ruled out a withdrawal of troops. On November 30, Moldovan president-elect Maia Sandu called for a complete withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Transnistria and their replacement with an OSCE civilian monitoring mission, a demand that was received negatively in Russia. On December 2, Sandu said a solution to the issue must be sought through the 5+2 format.

pem

NORWAY ET AL. – RUSSIA (ARCTIC)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **2001**

Conflict parties: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, USA vs. Russia
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The non-violent crisis over economic and military activities in the Arctic region between Russia, on the one hand, and Norway, Denmark, USA as well as several other states, on the other, continued.

The increased frequency of military maneuvers conducted by NATO members as well as Russia deteriorated the security

situation in the Arctic region, comparable to another conflict in the region in which the actors were also present [→ EU, USA et al. – Russia]. For instance, on May 4, three US Navy destroyers and a UK Royal Navy frigate held joint anti-submarine drills in the Norwegian Sea, thereafter entering the disputed waters of the Barents Sea. On another occasion beginning around September 8, Norway, the USA, the UK, and Denmark carried out the first maritime security operation in the Russian exclusive economic zone in the Barents Sea since the end of the Cold War.

Between October 4 and October 15, the UK conducted the bi-annual exercise Joint Warrior involving 1,200 military personnel as well as surveillance aircrafts, fighter jets, and several ships and submarines. The operation was carried out close to the Russian Northern Fleet's base, where nuclear warheads were stockpiled by Russia. In reaction to this, a Russian missile destroyer sailed near the Royal Air Force base Lossiemouth in Scotland and conducted drills in the Norwegian and Barents Sea at the end of October. On November 24, Russia accused a US destroyer of having violated Russian territorial waters in the Peter the Great Gulf. Russian authorities highlighted "the possibility of using ramming" in the future while the US Navy emphasized their right to navigate freely. Moreover, on September 23, Sweden, Norway, and Finland signed the "Statement of Intent on Enhanced Operational Cooperation", further solidifying Nordic military cooperation.

RUSSIA (ISLAMIST MILITANTS / NORTH CAUCASUS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1991**

Conflict parties: IS Caucasus Province, other Islamist militant groups vs. government

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

The violent crisis over ideology and secession between Islamist militant groups, most of them fighting under the umbrella of the so-called Islamic State (IS) Caucasus Province, on the one hand, and the central and regional governments, on the other, continued. IS Caucasus Province aimed to establish an independent Islamic Emirate in the North Caucasus Federal District, comprising the republics of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and North Ossetia-Alania, as well as the region Stavropol Krai.

Throughout the year, more than 40 people were killed in security and law enforcement operations against Islamist militants in the North Caucasus, the majority of them militants.

The activities of the IS Caucasus Province reduced in intensity and number compared to the previous year. There were several militant attacks for which it either claimed responsibility, or which were undertaken by known IS militants. For example, on May 30, according to the data of the Ingush Ministry of Interior, 20 to 30 Islamists entered private territory in Sunzha, Ingushetia, and attacked the residents. In the following confrontation with the police, two of the attackers were killed, while five more people were injured. On December 11, a man detonated an IED in the village of Uchkeken, Karachay-Cherkessia, wounding six law enforcement officers during a search operation. The man died in the explosion.

Furthermore, Russian authorities as well as the individual republics carried out operations against Islamist militant or-

ganizations, especially in Ingushetia, where Russian security personnel started a series of special anti-militant operations in March. For example, on May 13, security forces killed an IS subgroup leader in Ingushetia. On May 22, police shot six militants in Chasavjurtovskij rajon, Dagestan. On July 22, security forces killed four militants in Kabardino-Balkaria. According to Chechen officials, four militants were killed in Grozny, Chechnya, on October 13.

Besides the IS Caucasus Province, security forces also targeted other Islamist militant groups. For example, in October the Federal Security Service arrested 20 members from two local groups of At-Takfir wal-Hijra in Dagestan and Karachay-Cherkessia. Most of their activities were focused on spreading Islamist ideology to gain new members.

Militant activities also took place outside the region. On April 4, police shot an alleged IS member in Murmansk, eponymous region, on suspicion of planning an attack.

bba

RUSSIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2001**

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the government continued.

On March 10, the parliament approved constitutional amendments allowing President Vladimir Putin to circumvent term limits and run for president again in 2024, potentially extending his rule to 2036. These and other amendments came into force on July 4, following a 79 percent approval in a referendum conducted between June 25 and July 1. However, several protests against the proposed constitutional changes occurred. For example, people held one-person pickets on January 18 and 25, February 1, and March 12 in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and several other cities. On July 15, Russian police detained more than 140 people in Moscow protesting the constitutional changes. Police also detained one of the organizers, Moscow municipal assembly member Yuliya Galyamina.

Throughout the year, protests also took place in other parts of Russia. For example, on April 20, people took to the streets in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia-Alania, to protest the government's Covid-19 measures, leaving 13 policemen injured. Starting on August 15, environmental activists and local residents held several protests against a mining company's exploitation of Kushtau mountain in the Republic of Bashkortostan. Police used tear gas and batons to disperse the protests.

On July 10, the governor of Khabarovsk Krai, Sergey Furgal from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), was arrested on 15-year-old murder charges. On July 20, Putin dismissed Furgal and appointed a new acting governor from the LDPR. From July 11, people took to the streets to protest Furgal's arrest, which they believe to be politically motivated. Each Saturday, tens of thousands of people gathered for protests and smaller rallies were held every day. For example, on the first day of protests, approx. 30,000 protesters gathered in the city of Khabarovsk, Khabarovsk Krai. On July 25, up to 50,000 people joined the protests, while according to official figures the turnout was 6,500 people. Smaller protests were held in other major cities in solidarity. The authorities largely

allowed the protests to proceed. On October 10, however, police violently broke up protests in Khabarovsk. Police beat at least three protesters with batons and detained more than 20 people.

On August 20, opposition politician and activist Alexej Navalny was poisoned in Tomsk, eponymous region. On October 6, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirmed that he has been exposed to a Novichok-type nerve agent. While Navalny, his team, and many Western countries suspected that Russian secret service officials were involved in the attack, the Russian government denied the allegations [→ EU, USA et al. – Russia].

The government also restricted the work of human rights organizations and journalists. On May 25, for example, a Moscow district court sentenced journalist Ilya Azar to 15 days in jail for repeatedly violating protest laws, while police detained several journalists, lawmakers, and others rallying to his support on May 25 and 29. On December 23, the Duma approved a bill that allowed to designate individuals as “foreign agents”, expanded restrictions and reporting requirements, and placed further restrictions on public demonstrations.

hgr

RUSSIA – UKRAINE

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **2003**

Conflict parties: Russia vs. Ukraine

Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The non-violent crisis over territory, international power, and resources between Russia and Ukraine continued. As in previous years, the bilateral relations were negatively affected by the contested status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the limited war in Donbas [→ Ukraine (Donbas)].

Russia further strengthened its position in Crimea by legal means. For instance, on March 20, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a decree adding most parts of Crimea to a list of border territories banning non-Russian citizens, including Ukrainian residents, and legal entities from owning land. On December 8, Putin signed a bill into law which rendered illegal public calls for actions aimed at violating Russia’s territorial integrity, including the demand to return Crimea to Ukraine.

Over the course of the year, Russian authorities detained several Ukrainian citizens in or close to the Crimean Peninsula. On February 15, for example, Russia’s Federal Security Service apprehended four Ukrainian fishermen and their vessel in the Azov Sea, alleging they lacked necessary fishing permits. Russia released the detained after ten days of administrative arrest.

Russia and Ukraine both demonstrated their military presence in the Black Sea by holding various military exercises. For instance, from September 21 to 26, Russia conducted its annual multinational military drill Kavkaz 2020. Concurrently, Ukraine hosted the US-led annual multinational training Rapid Trident 20 from September 16 to 25.

Diplomatic talks regarding the situation in Eastern Ukraine continued between Russia and Ukraine. On April 16, the third prisoner swap under the leadership of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy took place. Moreover, a new ceasefire was negotiated in the Trilateral Contact Group and came into force on July 27, which reduced armed violence to the lowest level since the start of the limited war [→ Ukraine (Donbas)].

Western states upheld their support for Ukraine by extending their sanctions against Russia [→ EU, USA et al. – Russia]. nbr

SERBIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2018**

Conflict parties: Alliance for Serbia et al., opposition movement vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between a broad opposition movement, the Alliance for Serbia coalition (SzS), and other opposition groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Throughout the year, SzS and all major opposition parties continued to boycott parliamentary sessions and refused to participate in the parliamentary elections of June 21. They claimed that there were no conditions for free and fair elections, citing President Aleksandar Vucic’s full control over the media and the electoral process. Consequently, the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) won 188 of the 250 seats and its former coalition partner, the Socialist Party of Serbia, won 32 seats.

In March, the weekly “One Out Of Five Million” protests against the government paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite curfews, on April 30, SzS and other non-parliamentary opposition parties held their first protest during the state of emergency in Belgrade. On May 7, after the restrictions due to the pandemic were lifted, several hundred people protested in Belgrade. Multiple protesters, led by the leader of the right-wing opposition party Dveri, tried to storm the entrance of the Presidency building. He scuffled with a member of cabinet and attempted to prevent him from entering the parliament. During the protest, police arrested 15 people.

After the announcement of the reimposition of lockdown restrictions, on July 7 new protests erupted across the country. Protesters criticized the authorities for having lifted the restrictions too early in order to hold elections and demanded the government’s resignation. In Belgrade, protesters stormed the parliament building and clashed with the police, throwing stones and Molotov cocktails, while the police used tear gas and batons. Protesters set several police vehicles on fire. The clashes left 43 police officers and 17 protesters injured. On the next day, protesters in Belgrade again threw rocks, flares, and bottles at police forces who deployed tear gas. Rallies in other cities also turned violent. In Nis, Nisava District, protesters threw rocks at SNS headquarters and in Kragujevac, Sumadija District, police dispersed protesters with tear gas. On both days, multiple journalists were injured and reported police brutality. On July 9, thousands of people demonstrated peacefully across the country. Nevertheless, a rally in Belgrade again turned violent on July 10. Protesters threw firecrackers and torches and tried to storm the parliament building, leaving 14 police officers and several journalists injured. More than 70 protesters were arrested. Opposition leaders then accused far-right demonstrators allegedly controlled by the government of infiltrating the rally in order to discredit the peaceful protests. In other Serbian cities such as Novi Sad, Nis, Zrenjanin, Krusevac, and Cacak protests remained peaceful. The anti-government protests continued peacefully across Serbia and had become less frequent by the beginning of August, when the new parliament was inaugurated.

SPAIN (BASQUE PROVINCES)

Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **1959**

Conflict parties: EH-Bildu vs. government
 Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The dispute over autonomy or secession of the Basque Country between the left-wing pro-independence coalition Basque Country Gather (EH Bildu), on the one hand, and the central government, on the other, continued.

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna's (ETA) self-dissolution on 02/05/18 marked the end of its 59-year-long activity in the Basque Provinces. However, judicial confrontations revolving around ETA continued. On July 31, Spain's Supreme Court (TS) followed the ECHR ruling of 2018 and annulled the 2011 verdict of the National Court of five alleged former ETA members, including the 10-year prison sentence of Arnaldo Otegi, former high-ranking ETA and current EH Bildu member, on the reason that his human right to an impartial judge had been infringed. On December 14, TS ordered a retrial of all five defendants.

The location of ETA prisoners remained an issue of contention. On January 11, 65,000 people marched in Bilbao town, Basque Province, and thousands marched in Bayonne town, Nouvelle-Aquitaine department, France, demanding the extradition of ETA prisoners from France to Basque prisons. In 2020, 233 ETA prisoners were incarcerated, approx. 199 of which in Spain and approx. 34 in France.

tcr

SPAIN (CATALAN NATIONALISTS / CATALONIA)

Intensity: **2** | Change: ▼ | Start: **1979**

Conflict parties: Catalan civil society groups, Catalan regional government vs. government, Spanish civil society groups
 Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The violent crisis over autonomy or secession of the autonomous community of Catalonia between the Catalan regional government and various civil society groups, on the one hand, and the Spanish central-left government as well as Spanish far-right political parties or trade unions, on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

Various judicial confrontations continued. For instance, on January 3, the Central Electoral Commission of Spain removed Catalan regional president Joaquim Torra from his position because he had displayed symbols of solidarity with jailed pro-independence leaders on public buildings before general elections in Catalonia in early 2019. The Supreme Court of Spain (TS) confirmed the decision on January 23. In response to this decision, on January 28, violent protests erupted in Barcelona city, Catalonia. Protesters clashed with the police, erected roadblocks, set trash containers on fire, and threw bottles. TS confirmed the verdict again on September 28. The same day Torra demanded a new referendum on Catalan independence. His predecessor, MEP Carles Puigdemont, supported Torra's claims. Subsequently new protests took place in Barcelona.

Over the course of the year there were several peace-

ful demonstrations. For instance, on February 29, approx. 100,000 people gathered at the Spanish-French north-eastern border in Perpignan town, Occitanie department, to express their support for Puigdemont. On another occasion, on September 11, the regional annual holiday La Diada, approx. 60,000 pro-independence protesters took part in 131 demonstrations across Catalonia according to the organizers the civil society organization Catalan National Assembly and Òminum Cultural.

In early October, around the anniversary of the independence referendum in 2017, protests in Barcelona and Girona town, Catalonia, turned violent. For instance, on October 1, in Girona approx. 300 protesters marched to the city center and clashed with security forces, using smoke bombs and fire-crackers, building roadblocks and throwing objects at police vehicles. Police arrested one person.

On October 9, several thousand pro-independence supporters protested the visit of King Felipe VI of Spain and Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to Barcelona, burning effigies of the King. On October 28, several hundred Spanish Civil Guards conducted raids all over Catalonia, arresting 21 pro-independence activists on suspicion of using public funding to finance the independence movement, releasing all of them two days later.

tcr

SPAIN – UNITED KINGDOM (GIBRALTAR)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1954**

Conflict parties: Spain vs. United Kingdom
 Conflict items: territory

The non-violent crisis over the territory of the peninsula of Gibraltar between the UK and Spain continued.

As in previous years, on several occasions Spanish military and police vessels entered into contested waters around the British overseas territory. For instance, on June 18, a Spanish Meteoro-class patrol vessel sailed close to a routine naval exercise of two British minesweeping vessels near Europa Point, the peninsula's southernmost point. Royal Navy's Gibraltar Squadron speedboats were deployed and escorted the Spanish vessel out of British waters. Later that day, a Spanish Guardia Civil boat entered into British waters and was escorted away from the peninsula toward Marbella, Spain, by a British Scimitar-class patrol boat.

Over the course of the year, the problem of a potential post-Brexit hard external border for Gibraltar remained between the EU and Spain, on the one hand, and the UK, on the other. The UK left the EU on January 31, thereby triggering the 11-month post-Brexit transition period. On December 31, the UK and Spain preliminarily agreed on unhindered movement between Gibraltar and Spain, via La Línia de la Concepción town, Andalusia autonomous community. This preliminary agreement was set to be transformed into a treaty in near future. For doing so, Spain and the UK used the EU Community acquis for Gibraltar, giving Gibraltar the opportunity to become a member of the EU's Schengen Area in the future. Spain's foreign minister Arancha González and the UK PM Boris Johnson both welcomed the results of the negotiations.

tcr

SWEDEN (XENOPHOBES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2015

Conflict parties: various right-wing groups, xenophobes vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, in particular asylum and immigration policies, between various xenophobes as well as several far-right political organizations, on the one hand, and the government, supported by social activists, on the other, continued.

The year saw considerable political and legal developments regarding the rights of ethnic minority groups as well as refugees and asylum-seekers. For instance, on January 23, an approx. 30-year-long judicial quarrel ended, when the Supreme Court of Sweden ruled that the Girjas Sameby village, located near Gällivare, Lapland province, should have exclusive managerial rights over hunting and fishing in their area. The Supreme Court's decision triggered a backlash by extremists, who issued insults and death threats against the Sámi people. In line with the backlash, several reindeers, that are particularly important to the Sámi, were mutilated and killed. Furthermore, on September 15, the Cross-party Committee of Inquiry on Migration submitted its suggestions for the future of the Swedish migration policy – "Sustainable migration policy for the long term" – to the Swedish Minister of Justice and Migration. The policy suggestions were meant to be "humane, legally certain, and effective."

Moreover, several anti-racist protests took place throughout the year. For instance, on June 3, following the killing of George Floyd, activists staged a protest in the capital Stockholm to express support for the emerging Black Lives Matter movement in the USA [→ USA (racial tensions)]. Despite the Covid-19 restrictions, allowing only 50 people to gather, thousands came together. Police intervened, using tear gas to disperse the large crowds. Another anti-racist protest took place in Göteborg, Västra Götaland province, on the same day.

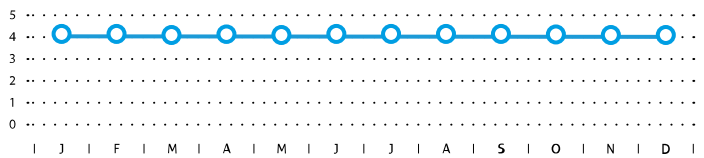
On the other hand, far-right protests occurred later in the year. On August 29, during a prohibited protest, far-right activists linked to the Danish far-right party Stram Kurs publicly kicked a copy of the Quran in Malmö, Skåne province, after Rasmus Paludan, party founder and leader of Stram Kurs, who wanted to participate in the demonstration, had been denied entry to Sweden at the border. Police arrested six people involved in the Quran-kicking incident on charges of inciting hatred against a minority group. Later that day, far-right activists burned a copy of the Quran, an action targeting Rosengård, a Malmö neighborhood predominately populated by Muslim immigrants. In the evening, approx. 300 people held a counter-anti-Islam-protest, which eventually turned violent. Protesters threw bottles and stones at the police and set tires and cars on fire, injuring several police officers. Subsequently, at least ten protesters were arrested. Amidst the clashes, Muslim protesters started anti-Semitic "Khaybar"-chants, calling for the murder of Jews. The same day, in Ronneby, Blekinge province, another protest was sparked by this incident. Protesters injured two people, including one police officer, erected a roadblock with burning tires, and smashed store fronts. The riots continued over the weekend, gradually ending on August 31, when community leaders and security forces called on everyone to calm down. tcr

UKRAINE (DONBAS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2014

Conflict parties: DPR, LPR vs. government

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology



The limited war over secession and the orientation of the political system between the self-proclaimed Donetsk (DPR) and Luhansk (LPR) People's Republics, supported by Russia, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian government, supported by Western countries, on the other, continued. The territories claimed by militants comprised parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in eastern Ukraine.


Over the course of the year, at least 55 Ukrainian soldiers and 34 militants were killed, and at least 288 Ukrainian soldiers and 37 militants injured. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) recorded a total of 134,767 ceasefire violations, mainly along the contact line, which constitutes a 55 percent decrease compared to previous years. On July 27, a new ceasefire agreement came into effect.

Spikes of violence occurred in mid-February, beginning of May, and mid-July with approx. 10,000, just over 7,000, and more than 6,500 recorded ceasefire violations per week respectively. For instance, during clashes on February 18 near Zolote, Luhansk, the Ukrainian Defense Ministry reported one Ukrainian soldier shot dead and four injured, while a militant leader claimed that four LPR fighters were shot dead and four injured during the same event. On May 7, Ukrainian forces and militants exchanged fire in different towns and villages along the contact line in both oblasts, reportedly leaving six Ukrainian soldiers injured and about seven militants killed as well as another five injured. After the new ceasefire came into effect at the end of July, the weekly number of ceasefire violations remained considerably below 1,000 by the end of December.

While this year's number of civilian casualties was the lowest since 2014, civilians continued to be affected by the limited war, with at least 24 dead and 80 injured. On July 3, for example, a civilian was killed in the government-controlled village Zhovanka, Donetsk, in an explosion caused by a mortar allegedly fired from the militants' territory. Additionally, both sides repeatedly damaged civilian infrastructure. For instance, on May 1 SMM reported shrapnel and small arms fire damages to a school in Zolote. Another school was damaged by shelling in Donetsk city, eponymous oblast, on July 10. On July 26, a field in Zaitseve caught fire after shelling by DPR forces. The fire spread to at least ten houses. Both militants and Ukrainian forces retained weaponry within the withdrawal lines in violation of the Minsk agreements, mostly in areas controlled by the militants. As in previous years, SMM observers were repeatedly denied access or otherwise limited in their free movement, almost exclusively on DPR and LPR territory.

Efforts to resolve the conflict continued throughout the year. Talks of the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), including representatives from Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE, took place on a regular basis [→ Russia – Ukraine]. During a meeting of the TCG on March 11, delegates decided on the creation of a new

UKRAINE (RIGHT-WING / OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **2013**

Conflict parties: right-wing groups vs. civil-right groups, minorities, opposition parties vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the government, right-wing groups, and an alliance of opposition parties and civil-right groups, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

The nationwide local elections on October 25 resulted in a significant loss for President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's party Servant of the People. Instead, local politicians and parties of city mayors won the elections. According to international observers, the elections were free and fair.

Nevertheless, corruption remained an issue. On October 27, the Constitutional Court (CCU) overturned the requirement that government officials and senior judges submit electronic declarations of all their assets. Before the ruling, the National Agency for Preventing Corruption had accused the CCU judges of a conflict of interests and had argued that they should not rule on this issue. Three days later, a demonstration took place in the capital Kyiv in front of the CCU, with more than 1,000 participants demanding the immediate resignation of the constitutional judges. The protesters threw burning tires and smoke grenades. No injuries were reported. Right-wing groups, such as the Azov Regiment and its political wing National Corps, were active mainly in spreading propaganda on social media. No violent measures were observed.

Ukraine also suffered from the global Covid-19 crisis. According to a UN report, the human rights situation in Ukraine worsened due to the pandemic. Due to the closure of border crossings, people had no access to social benefits and limited access to health care and education. According to the UN, particularly vulnerable social groups such as Roma, people with disabilities, the homeless, and the elderly were affected. Additionally, the number of attacks on peaceful gatherings, political activists, and political party offices increased. On June 27, for instance, political party members were violently attacked and pepper sprayed while participating in a protest. The perpetrators could not be detained. In another incident on June 25, a political activist who lodged a complaint with the police after having received threats from members of a right-wing group was violently attacked shortly after.

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advisory board within the TCG, continued the preparations for a new exchange of prisoners, and agreed to open two additional checkpoints in the towns of Zolote and Shchastia, Luhansk. On March 14, several thousand people marched through the capital Kyiv, protesting measures they perceived as steps towards the government's capitulation – especially the planned advisory board, which would have included DPR and LPR representatives and was thus feared would lead to a de-facto recognition of the militants. The Ukrainian government consequently refrained from pursuing these plans and the board was not established. On April 16, the third prisoner swap under the leadership of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy took place where DPR and LPR released 20 Ukrainians, while the Ukrainian government set 14 prisoners free. While the date for the opening of the two new checkpoints was initially delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the participants of the TCG eventually agreed on November 10. However, while the necessary infrastructure had by then been created, the checkpoints could not open due to the conflict parties' discord on operational details. No agreement was reached before the end of the year.

On July 22, the TCG parties negotiated a new ceasefire, banning the use of firearms as well as the deployment of heavy weapons, starting on July 27. According to SMM, this led to a significant decrease in ceasefire violations, with the number dropping from 12,755 of such violations in July, to considerably below 1,000 by the end of December.

The Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacted the freedom of movement and humanitarian situation of civilians in the conflict area. In order to contain the spread of the virus, all checkpoints were closed on March 21. According to UN OCHA, this led to a dramatic reduction of recorded individual crossings from an average of 1.2 million per month to under 200 in April and May. While two out of five checkpoints partially reopened on June 10, the number of crossings remained low for the rest of the year. This affected especially those people living in the separatist territory who represent 90 percent of those crossing the contact line, and the elderly who rely on access to the government-controlled side to collect pensions and receive medical treatment.

The standoff between both sides over Donbas' further status and related topics, such as the execution of local elections on DPR and LPR-controlled territory, continued. While Zelenskyy persisted to withdraw so-called foreign and illegal military units and reestablish full governmental control over Ukraine's external border before an election taking place, militants demanded vice versa proceedings. With no accord reached, Ukraine's local elections on October 25 were not held on militant-controlled territory.

Investigations into the 2014/07/17 shoot-down of Malaysian Airline Flight MH17 continued.

On July 10, the Dutch government announced its filing of a lawsuit against Russia at the ECHR over the airliner's downing. Russia, in turn, condemned the move and on October 15 announced its withdrawal from MH17 consultations with the Netherlands and Australia, blaming the latter of scapegoating it for the incident [→ EU, USA et al. – Russia]. jub. eeb

UNITED KINGDOM (NATIONALISTS / NORTHERN IRELAND)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1968**

Conflict parties: 32 County Sovereignty Movement, AAD, AnP, CIRA, IRM, RIRA, Saoradh, SDLP, SF vs. Alliance Party, DUP, government, UDA, UDA South East Antrim Brigade, UUP, UVF

Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis over secession of Northern Ireland (N-IRL) between the two antagonistic communities as well as the UK government continued.

Talks to restore the 2017 collapsed power-sharing regional government succeeded in an accord on January 9, with N-IRL's five main political parties forming a coalition. The Stormont Agreement, facilitated by the UK and Irish governments, incorporated inter alia the creation of two language commissioners for Ulster Scots and the Irish language. However, the political situation remained fragile. Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU on January 31, both sides struck an Association Agreement on December 24, reaffirming the 10/17/19 Protocol on N-IRL's special status. While N-IRL government members welcomed the agreement's signing, unionists opposed it, fearing N-IRL's position in the UK would be undermined. In contrast, nationalists repeatedly called for a referendum on Irish unification, which both unionists and the British and Irish governments ruled out.

Dissident republican and loyalist groups' activity continued. On November 17, the cross-government monitoring body Independent Reporting Commission called them an ongoing threat. Loyalist groups alone consisted of 12,500 members, according to leaked security assessments. Overall, the Police Service of N-IRL (PSNI) listed 17 bombing incidents, 65 paramilitary-style attacks, and dozens of forced displacements. On February 5, the British Army defused a Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA) IED in the port of Lurgan, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon district, placed in a truck to detonate a ferry on Brexit Day. On February 17, republican Sinn Féin (SF) accused the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA) of planning attacks on party members, following SF representatives' first attendance of a PSNI recruitment event the week before. Amidst a series of paramilitary-style attacks in Coleraine, Causeway Coast and Glens district, perpetrators shot and wounded a civilian on October 5.

Unrest frequently accompanied the removal of dummy devices and IEDs in various parts of N-IRL. For instance, three nights of clashes ensued in early August in Londonderry, Derry and Strabane district, following the discovery of a dummy device. From a crowd of 150, nationalist youths repeatedly attacked PSNI with petrol and paint bombs and also tried to hijack vehicles, setting at least one truck on fire and assailing its driver with fuel. Similar incidents took place on August 23 in Lurgan, and on October 24 and 29 in north Belfast and Londonderry, respectively.

Over the course of the year, British and Irish security forces intensified surveillance-led operations, especially targeting dissident republicans and their legal political supporters, arresting 79 people. MI5's bugging of alleged CIRA and RIRA meetings resulted in 20 people being charged. In the largest crackdown, approx. 500 officers took part in the cross-border Operation Arbacia between August 18 and 24, seeing NIRA's

political wing Saoradh's British and Irish properties searched and nine leading party members arrested on charges of terrorist offenses. The crackdown sparked protests across N-IRL, repeatedly seeing scuffles and rallies in front of the detainees' prisons, injuring several police officers and participants. Furthermore, approx. 20 dissident republicans staged a hunger strike from September 16 to 30.

Sectarian tensions in N-IRL persisted, with a number of assaults on people and property recorded. For instance, on October 6, a loyalist youth smashed a school bus window in north Belfast, leaving three Catholic students injured.

As in previous years, bonfires marking meaningful anniversaries for both communities prompted standoffs. At a north Belfast Interface area, three nights of clashes accompanied the Ulster Protestant celebration of "Twelfth of July." On July 11, clashes erupted, when several dozen nationalist youths repeatedly attacked riot police using petrol bombs, bricks, and other projectiles, setting several PSNI vehicles on fire. On August 7, clashes between large youths' groups and PSNI left 29 officers injured in west Belfast.

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UNITED KINGDOM (SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS / SCOTLAND)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **2007**

Conflict parties: AUOB et al., SNP vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over the secession of Scotland between the Scottish regional government under First Minister Nicola Sturgeon of the Scottish National Party (SNP), supported by nationalist civic organizations such as All Under One Banner (AUOB), on the one hand, and the British government led by the Conservative and Unionist Party, on the other, continued. The legal standoff concerning a second referendum on Scottish independence persisted. On January 14, Johnson officially rejected Sturgeon's 12/19/19 request to transfer powers to the Scottish parliament, enabling it to stage another vote. However, Sturgeon repeatedly demanded a second referendum taking place if SNP would win a majority in the upcoming 2021 election.

Several protests took place throughout the year. For instance, on January 11, AUOB organized a march in which approx. 80,000 Scottish independence supporters participated, in Glasgow City, eponymous council area. Protesters carried pro-independence symbols and European flags. The march took place after general elections on 12/12/19 had turned out with the SNP winning 45 percent and the Conservative and Unionist Party winning 25.1 percent of the votes. Protests were accompanied by trans-European political, nationalist, and secessionist campaigning on social media. Among others, on February 2, SNP welcomed former European Council President Donald Tusk's remark that he believed the EU "would be enthusiastic" to admit Scotland back into the EU after Brexit. On another occasion, AUOB called for mutual support with the Catalan independence movement [→ Spain (Catalan nationalists / Catalonia)] on May 11.

Later in the year, on July 4, Scottish nationalists, organized by the new regional group Alliance For Independence protested near the English-Scottish border, on the A1 motorway leading from England towards Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland ceremonial county, attempting to block the motorway. The group claimed the actions were aimed at protecting Scot-

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land against the spread of Covid-19 by foreigners, especially the English. Sturgeon and the SNP condemned the incident shortly after.

On August 8, the nationalist civic organization Action For Scotland staged protests in the capital Edinburgh, flying banners from Waverley Station to Queen Elizabeth House, an official government building. The protesters called on the Scottish regional government to immediately close all bor-

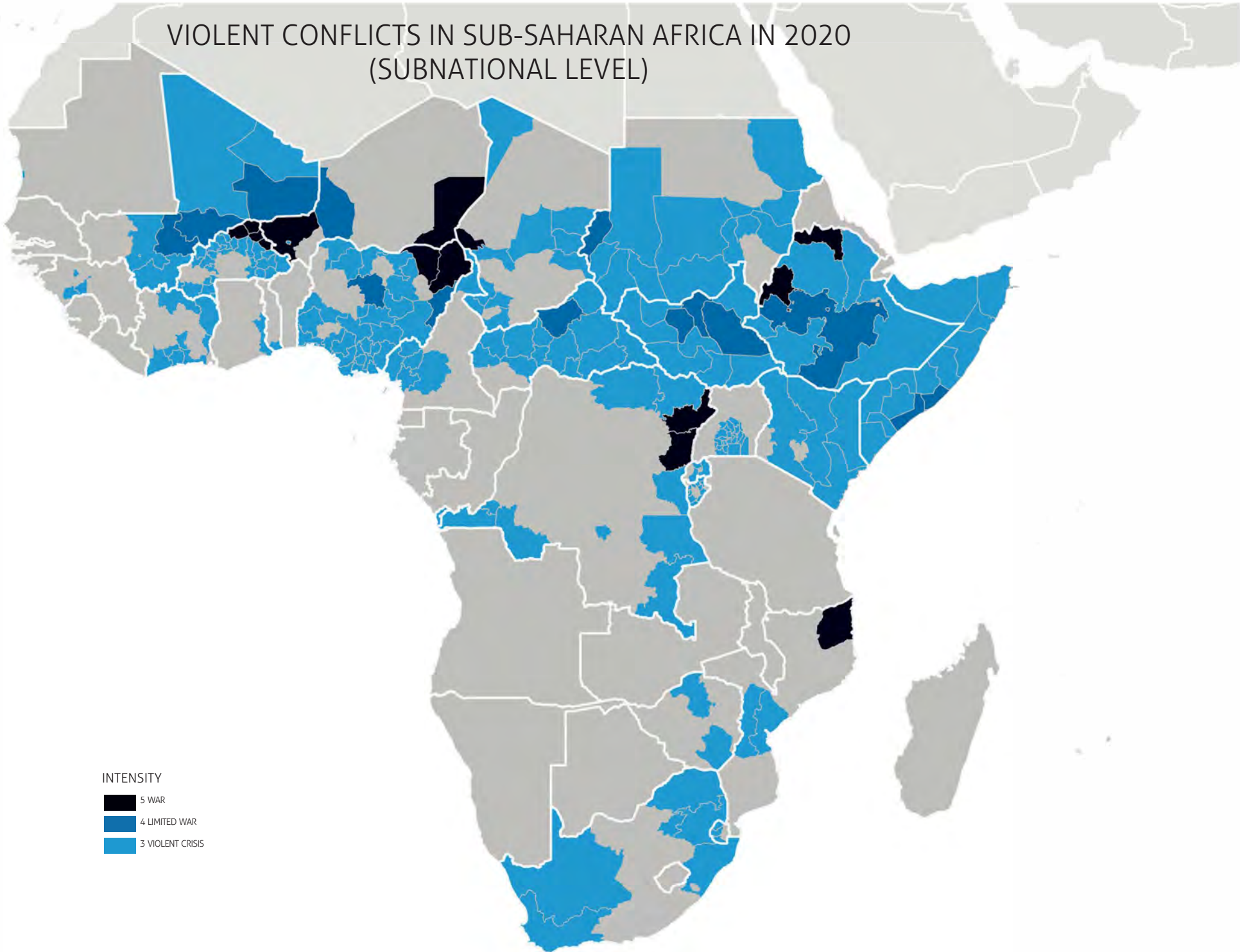
ders between England and Scotland.

Moreover, on December 1, Sturgeon announced her government wanted a second referendum on Scottish independence. Approx. three weeks later, on December 18, Sturgeon expressed Scotland's desire to remain in the EU after Brexit. A Brexit agreement between the UK and the EU was reached on December 24.

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SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2020 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2020, HIIK observed 86 active conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, an increase of three compared to the previous year. Overall, 66 conflicts were on a violent level, six more than in the previous year. Overall, six ongoing wars continued, while another four violent conflicts escalated to the level of war. Moreover, one conflict erupted directly on the level of a war, bringing the number of wars to eleven and thus making Sub-Saharan Africa the region with the most observed conflicts on war-level. Moreover, nine limited wars were observed in 2020, a decrease of one compared to the previous year. Four limited wars were fought on the same level as in 2019, while five violent crises escalated to the level of a limited war, and two limited wars de-escalated to violent crises. In total, HIIK observed 20 highly violent conflicts in the region in 2020.

In Chad, the political and security situation continued to be volatile. Clashes between herders and farmers over subnational predominance left at least 110 people dead [→ Chad (inter-communal rivalry)], especially affecting regions in Southern Chad. In the most fatal attacks on November 23 and 24, pastoralists raided farming villages in the Mayo-Kebbi Ouest region, which resulted in the death of 22 people and the displacement of several hundred. Furthermore, the violent crisis between the opposition and the government sparked several large protests [→ Chad (opposition)]. By contrast, the conflict between militant groups and the government in the Tibesti region saw fewer clashes than in previous years but still remained violent [→ Chad (militant groups)].

In Sudan, the opposition conflict, which had been marked by mass protests against then-President Omar al-Bashir in 2019, de-escalated from a limited war to a violent crisis [→ Sudan (opposition)]. Protests continued this year, calling for an improved security situation and the complete transition to civilian rule. The transitional government continued to deploy the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), considered to be closely linked to the Janjaweed militia, to violently disperse the protesters. While the war in Darfur had de-escalated to a violent crisis in 2019, it escalated to a limited war again in 2020. SPLM-AW remained the only armed group fighting government forces, whereas the army and RSF continued to attack civilians and to hinder IDPs from returning to their villages [→ Sudan (Darfur)].

The inter-communal conflict in South Sudan between various local communities over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and land, escalated to a war [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. In total, at least 1,847 people were killed and more than 680,900 displaced, as a consequence of the local power vacuum caused by an implementation delay to the 2018 peace deal [→ South Sudan (opposition)], as well as from humanitarian threats such as drought, flooding, and severe food insecurity. Moreover, UNMISS warned that fighters in uniform were spotted during raid attacks, indicating that organized forces may be involved in the fighting. Following the 2018 peace deal between the government and the main opposition group Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), SPLM/A-IO joined forces with the army. In 2020, both jointly fought the National Salvation Front, who refused to sign the deal. Moreover, both the army and SPLM/A-IO continued to clash with civilians, such as on August 8, when more than 70 people were killed and over 70 injured in Tonj, Warrap state, after a disagreement over a disarmament exercise.

Due to restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, Sudan and South Sudan made no further progress in clarifying the yet unsolved status of Abyei region, which is claimed by both countries [→ South Sudan, Sudan (Abyei)].

In Cameroon, the limited war over autonomy or secession of the Anglophone regions persisted [→ Cameroon (English-speaking-minority)]. Clashes between separatist groups and the government resulted in more than 200 deaths. In February, the parliamentary elections were overshadowed by separatist violence.

In Gabon, the opposition conflict de-escalated to a dispute [→ Gabon (opposition)]. The conflict over territory between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon ended on March 3, which marked the successful conclusion of the UN mediation process [→ Equatorial Guinea – Gabon (Mbanié, Cocotier, Conga Islands)]. The ruling of the ICJ, to which the border dispute had been submitted, is still outstanding.

In Uganda, the violent crisis between the government, led by President Yoweri Museveni, and various opposition groups continued [→ Uganda (opposition)]. In the run-up to the elections, violent clashes broke out between opposition supporters and security forces, escalating after repeated arrests of presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, alias Bobi Wine. At least 37 people were killed in countrywide protests.

In Guinea, an anticipated constitutional referendum was held, enabling President Alpha Condé to prolong his presidency for a third term in October, which sparked protests as well as clashes between the opposition and security forces [→ Guinea (opposition)]. Similarly, in Togo, the 2019 constitutional amendment allowed President Faure Gnassingbé to run for a fourth term, leading to his re-election in February and sparking a wave of protests [→ Togo (opposition)]. Despite his announcement to step down, Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara was again elected president in October. Violent clashes between opposition supporters and the government marked a significant departure from the previous years' relative stability [→ Côte d'Ivoire (opposition)]. Furthermore, the country witnessed the first major Jihadist attacks, presumably carried out by Katiba Macina militants [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.)]. Elections in Ghana, Niger [→ Niger (opposition)], and Burkina Faso [→ Burkina Faso (opposition)] remained relatively peaceful.

In Mali, the Constitutional Court's overturning of the parliamentary election results as well as the further deterioration of security and living conditions in the country sparked protests and violent clashes between the opposition and security forces. Subsequently, soldiers of the Malian army conducted a coup d'état on August 18. This resulted in further violence, the ousting of President Boubacar Keïta, and the subsequent dissolution of the government and parliament. In November, a transitional government was formed, led by new President Bah N'Daw [→ Mali (opposition)].

The Sahel experienced continuous attacks by IS and al-Qaeda affiliated Islamist militants, resulting in thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of displaced people [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)]. Furthermore, the countries' political and security-related instability spurred discontent among the populations, increasing demands for better living conditions and reforms. Local communities and their self-defence militias, some of them supported by the respective governments, carried out attacks against rivaling groups and fought against Islamist militants [→ Mali (inter-communal rivalry / Central Mali); Mali (inter-militant rivalry / Northern Mali); Burkina Faso

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

(inter-communal rivalry)].

This year, two new conflicts erupted in Nigeria, bringing the total to eleven conflicts observed in the country. Nigeria continued to witness Islamist militant attacks in the north. Since the 2019 presidential election, violence between the supporters of the two major political parties decreased for the second consecutive year and was mainly characterized by disputes on local government levels [→ Nigeria (APC supporters – PDP supporters)]. A new conflict over the orientation of the political system and police brutality between the EndSARS movement opposing the Special Anti Robbery Squad (SARS) and the government erupted [→ Nigeria (EndSARS)]. Due to weeklong mass protests, the conflict received extensive international attention. Furthermore, the violent conflict between the Islamic Movement of Nigeria and the government [→ Nigeria (Islamic Movement)] as well as the violent secession crisis between pro-Biafra groups and the government persisted [→ Nigeria (pro-Biafra groups / Biafra)]. In the northern regions, the limited war over subnational predominance and resources between predominantly Christian farmers and mainly Muslim Fulani pastoralists continued [→ Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)]. In total, violent clashes resulted in at least 740 fatalities, almost twice the amount of the previous year.

The north-western and north-eastern parts of Nigeria continued to experience attacks by several Islamist militant groups. In addition to the two main Boko Haram affiliated groups, Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS), a previously latent conflict between Jama'atu Ansaril Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan, also known as Ansaru, and the government re-erupted on the level of a violent crisis [→ Nigeria (Ansaru)]. In the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, the war between JAS and its splinter ISWAP, on the one hand, and the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, on the other hand, continued for the tenth consecutive year [→ Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS – Boko Haram); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)]. In total, approx. 1.9 million people were displaced in north-eastern Nigeria, approx. 320,000 in the Far North Region of Cameroon, approx. 335,000 in the Lac Region of Chad, and 260,000 in the Diffa Region of Niger. In 2020, the two conflicts together accounted for at least 1,000 fatalities. In the Central African Republic, violations of the 2019 peace agreement between the government and numerous ex-Séléka and Anti-Balaka militias continued [→ Central African Republic (Anti Balaka, ex-Séléka)]. In the run-up to the presidential elections on December 27, various ex-Séléka militias supporting the opposition temporarily seized several cities.

In DR Congo, the number of IDPs, especially from the conflict-ridden eastern provinces, reached a peak of 5 million since 2017. Three wars and one violent crisis were observed in the eastern Ituri as well as North and South Kivu provinces. In Ituri, CODECO and FPIC militias continued to attack civilians and government forces, supported by MONUSCO [→ DR Congo (Ituri militias)]. Furthermore, the Congolese army conducted a military operation against militia strongholds. Continuous attacks and clashes left over 1,000 people dead, thousands of houses destroyed, and more than 660,000 people displaced. Violent attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) intensified in southern Ituri following the loss of one of their headquarters in North Kivu [→ DR Congo (ADF)]. The war accounted for at least 1,483 deaths and hundreds of thousands IDPs and refugees. Although the ADF had been associated with the so-called Islamic State (IS), links between the groups remained questionable. Various militias continued to operate in North and South Kivu [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. An internal split within one of the most active groups, Nduma Defence of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R), also led to new inter-group alliances and fighting. Overall, more than 1,000 people were killed and accommodation, livestock, and infrastructure were destroyed. The Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) reportedly employed members of NDC-R to push the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the National Council for Renewal and Democracy (CNRD) out of North and South Kivu [→ DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR, CNRD)]. Although FDLR and CNRD activity significantly decreased, violent attacks continued, including frequent incidents of sexual violence.

While the violent crisis between the militant groups Bana Mura, Kamuina Nsapu, and the government in Kasai Central and Oriental provinces decreased to a non-violent crisis [→ DR Congo (KN)], Bena Nshimba, Bena Kapuya, and Bena Mwembia communities clashed over arable land and wells in Katanda territory, Kasai Oriental [→ DR Congo (inter-communal rivalry / Kasai Oriental)].

Increasing tensions among the parties of the DR Congo's power-sharing coalition were accompanied by violent protests by both government and opposition supporters [→ DR Congo (opposition)]. Intra-governmental tensions culminated in the break-up of the coalition in December, triggering clashes between the supporters of the respective parties.

Although the non-violent crisis over regional power between Burundi and Rwanda escalated to a violent crisis, both countries restored their diplomatic relations. On that account, both countries held a virtual tripartite meeting with the UNHCR in August on the mutual exchange of refugees [→ Burundi – Rwanda]. Similarly, the non-violent crisis over regional power between Uganda and Rwanda escalated to a violent crisis despite considerable diplomatic efforts between both countries [→ Uganda – Rwanda].

In the border region between Burundi and the DR Congo, the violent crisis between various Burundian opposition groups and the governments of both countries continued with several clashes over the course of the year [→ Burundi, DR Congo (FNL, RED-Tabara, Forebu)].

In Mozambique, the limited war between the Islamist militia Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma (ASWJ) and the government escalated to a war, with at least 800 reported deaths [→ Mozambique (ASWJ)]. While the South African Dyck Advisory Group superseded the Russian Wagner Group as a private military company in support of the government, ASWJ increasingly targeted military personnel, major cities in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, and civilians. Meanwhile, the peace process between the main opposition Party RENAMO and the government continued amidst clashes between a RENAMO splinter group, the so-called RENAMO Military Junta, and the government [→ Mozambique (RENAMO)].

In South Africa, socioeconomic protests by residents of informal settlements continued, with major roads being blocked to raise awareness of poor service delivery in terms of electricity, water, and housing, amongst others [→ South Africa (socioeconomic protests)]. Additionally, the violent crisis between groups of immigrants and xenophobic South African nationals continued, especially in the form of protests and attacks against suspected foreign truck drivers [→ South Africa (xenophobes)].

In the Horn of Africa, the war between the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab, on the one hand, and the Somali and Kenyan

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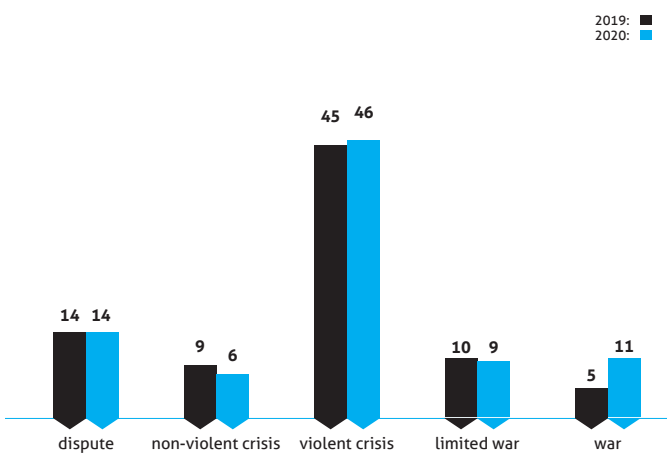
governments supported by, amongst others, the African Union Mission in Somalia as well as American military forces, on the other hand, continued [→ Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)].

In Somalia, the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system continued between the rivaling Islamist militant groups al-Shabaab and the so-called Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) as well as the federal government of Somalia, supported by security forces of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland and US AFRICOM. Further, the violent crisis over subnational predominance between the regional governments of the self-declared state of Somaliland and the semi-autonomous region of Puntland over their border region persisted [→ Somalia (Somaliland – Puntland)].

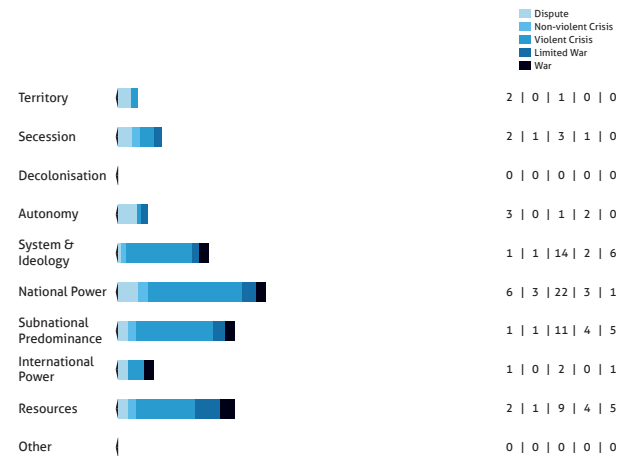
In Kenya, the violent crisis over resources and subnational predominance between various ethnic groups and their sub-groups continued [→ Kenya (inter-communal rivalry)]. Throughout the year, several arrests of opposition figures sparked protests in Djibouti, in which security forces injured several protesters [→ Djibouti (opposition)].

In Ethiopia, a new war over the orientation of the political system between the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), on the one hand, and the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments, on the other, erupted after political tensions between the regional government of Tigray and the federal government of Ethiopia had escalated in early November [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)]. Furthermore, the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the government escalated to a limited war [→ Ethiopia (opposition)]. Also, the violent crisis over subnational predominance between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the federal government escalated to a limited war [→ Ethiopia (OLF / Oromia)]. The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources between various ethnic groups escalated to a war [→ Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)].

CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2020



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2020



SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Overview: Conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa in 2020

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Angola (FLEC et al. / Cabinda)	FLEC, MIC vs. government	secession	1975	•	3
Angola (opposition)*	UNITA vs. government	national power	1975	END	1
Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry)	Mossi, Gourmantché, Koglweogo et al. vs. Fulani vs. Islamist groups	subnational predominance, resources	2016	↗	4
Burkina Faso (opposition)*	CDP vs. government	national power	2014	•	2
Burundi (opposition)*	ADC-Ikibiri, CNL, RED-Tabara, UPRONA vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2006	•	3
Burundi – Rwanda	Burundi vs. Rwanda	international power	2015	↗	3
Burundi, DR Congo (FNL, RED-Tabara, Forebu)	FNL, Forebu, RED-Tabara vs. Burundi, DR Congo	national power	2005	•	3
Cameroon (English-speaking-minority)	English-speaking-minority vs. government	secession, autonomy	2016	•	4
Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka, ex-Séléka)	Anti-Balaka vs. Ex-Séléka vs. government	national power, resources	2012	•	4
Central African Republic, DR Congo, South Sudan (LRA)	LRA vs. CAR, DR Congo, South Sudan	resources	1987	•	3
Chad (inter-communal rivalry)	pastoralists vs. farmers	subnational predominance	1947	•	3
Chad (militant groups)*	CCSMR, CSD, UFR vs. government	national power, resources	2005	•	3
Chad (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	national power	1990	•	3
Côte d'Ivoire (militant groups)*	militant groups vs. government	national power	2012	•	1
Côte d'Ivoire (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	national power	1999	•	3
Djibouti (FRUD)*	FRUD vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1991	•	1
Djibouti (opposition)	ARD, opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	3
Djibouti – Eritrea*	Djibouti, Eritrea	territory	2008	•	1
DR Congo (ADF)	ADF vs. DR Congo	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1995	↗	5
DR Congo (Bantu – Batwa)*	Bantu militias vs. Twa militias	subnational predominance	2013	•	3
DR Congo (ex-M23)*	ex-M23 vs. government	national power	2004	NEW	2
DR Congo (inter-communal rivalry / Kasai Oriental)	Bena Nshima vs. Bena Kapuya, Bena Mwemba	subnational predominance	2007	END	3
DR Congo (Ituri militias)	CODECO vs. FPIC vs. FRPI vs. Zaïre militia vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	1999	•	5
DR Congo (Kata Katanga)*	Kata Katanga vs. Government	subnational predominance, resources	2011	•	3
DR Congo (KN)	KN vs. BM, government	subnational predominance	2016	↘	2
DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)	NDC-R vs. APCLS-R vs. Mayi-Mayi groups vs. Nyatura groups vs. APCLS vs. Banyamulenge militias vs. Bafuliuro militias vs. Babembe militias vs. Government	subnational predominance, resources	2003	•	5
DR Congo (opposition)	Lamuka vs. FCC vs. government	national power	1997	•	3
DR Congo – Rwanda*	DR Congo vs. Rwanda	international power	1998	↘	1
DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR, CNRD)	FDLR vs. CNRD vs. DR Congo, Rwanda	subnational predominance, resources	1994	•	3
Egypt – Ethiopia, Sudan (GERD)*	Egypt vs. Ethiopia vs. Sudan	resources	2011	•	2
Equatorial Guinea – Gabon (Mbanié, Cocotier, Conga Islands)*	Equatorial Guinea vs. Gabon	territory, resources	1970	END	1
Eritrea (RSADO)*	RSADO vs. government	autonomy	1999	•	1
eSwatini (opposition)*	COSATU, PUDEMO, SUDF vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1998	•	3
Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)	Oromo vs. Amhara vs. Tigrayans vs. Misqan vs. Marego vs. Afar vs. Berta vs. Gumuz vs. other ethnic groups	subnational predominance, resources	2017	↑	5
Ethiopia (OLF / Oromia)	OLF vs. government	subnational predominance	1992	↗	4
Ethiopia (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2005	↗	4
Ethiopia – Sudan*	Ethiopia vs. Sudan	territory, resources	1902	↑	3

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Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)	Eritrea, Ethiopia vs. TPLF	system/ideology	2020	NEW	5
France – Rwanda*	France vs. Rwanda	other	2004	END	1
Gabon (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	national power	2009	↓	1
Gambia (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	national power	2016	•	3
Ghana (HSGF et al. / Western Togoland)	HSGF et al. vs. government	secession	2017	↗	3
Guinea (opposition)	FNDC vs. government	national power	2006	•	3
Guinea-Bissau (opposition)*	MADEM-15 vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1998	↘	2
Kenya (inter-communal rivalry)	Pokot vs. Turkana vs. Kikuyu vs. Masai vs. Uasin Gishu vs. Siria vs. Borana vs. Degodia vs. other ethnic groups	subnational predominance, resources	1963	•	3
Kenya (MRC / Coast)*	MRC vs. government	secession	2008	•	1
Kenya (opposition)*	NASA vs. government	national power	1999	↘	1
Mali (CMA et al. / Azawad)*	CMA et al. vs. government	autonomy	1989	•	1
Mali (inter-communal rivalry / central Mali)	Dogon, Bambara, Dozo vs. Fulani vs. Islamist groups	subnational predominance, resources	2012	•	4
Mali (inter-militant rivalry / northern Mali)	CMA vs. Platform vs. Islamist groups	subnational predominance	2012	•	3
Mali (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	national power	2012	•	3
Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.)	Al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine, Ansaroul Islam, AQIM, JNIM, Macina Liberation Front vs. Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, France, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, USA	international power	1998	•	5
Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)	ISWAP vs. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria	system/ideology	2015	•	5
Mozambique (ASWJ)	ASWJ vs. government	system/ideology	2017	↗	5
Mozambique (RENAMO)	RENAMO, RENAMO Military Junta vs. government	national power	2012	•	3
Niger (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	national power	2009	↗	3
Nigeria (Ansaru)	Ansaru vs. government	system/ideology	2012	↑	3
Nigeria (APC supporters – PDP supporters)	APC supporters vs. PDP supporters	system/ideology, national power	1960	•	3
Nigeria (EndSARS)	protester groups vs. government	system/ideology	2020	NEW	3
Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)	farmers vs. pastoralists	subnational predominance, resources	1960	•	4
Nigeria (Ijaw groups / Niger Delta)*	CNDA, Ijaw groups, NDA vs. government, international oil companies	autonomy, resources	1997	•	3
Nigeria (Islamic Movement)	IMN vs. government	system/ideology	1991	•	3
Nigeria (pro-Biafra groups / Biafra)	pro-Biafra groups vs. government	secession	1967	•	3
Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS-Boko Haram)	Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria vs. JAS	system/ideology	2003	•	5
Republic of Congo (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	national power	2015	•	1
Rwanda (opposition)*	FDU-Inkingi vs. government	national power	2003	•	1
Rwanda – Uganda	Rwanda vs. Uganda	international power	2018	↗	3
Senegal (MFDC / Casamance)*	MFDC vs. government	secession	1982	•	2
Sierra Leone (opposition)*	APC vs. government	national power	2007	•	3
Somalia (Hiraale militia – Jubaland)*	Hiraale militia vs. Jubaland	subnational predominance	1991	END	1
Somalia (ISS)	ISS vs. al-Shabaab vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2015	•	3
Somalia (Somaliland – Puntland)	regional government of Somaliland vs. regional government of Puntland	subnational predominance	1998	•	3
Somalia (Somaliland)*	regional government of Somaliland vs. government	secession	1991	•	1
Somalia (subclan rivalry)*	Abgaal vs. Gaaljecel vs. Habar Gidir vs. Hawadle vs. Leelkase, other ethnic groups	subnational predominance	2012	•	3
Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)	al-Shabaab vs. Kenya, Somalia	system/ideology, national power	2006	•	5

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Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
South Africa (opposition)	civil rights groups, DA, EFF, IFP vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2015	•	3
South Africa (socioeconomic protests)	residents of informal settlements vs. government	system/ideology	2018	•	3
South Africa (xenophobes)	immigrants vs. xenophobes	system/ideology	1994	•	3
South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)	Murle vs. Dinka vs. Nuer	subnational predominance, resources	2011	↗	5
South Sudan (opposition)	SSOA vs. government, SPLM/A-IO	system/ideology, national power	2011	↗	4
South Sudan – Sudan*	South Sudan vs. Sudan	territory, resources	2011	•	1
South Sudan, Sudan (inter-communal rivalry / Abyei)	Ngok Dinka vs. Misseriya	subnational predominance, resources	2011	•	3
South Sudan, Uganda (border communities)*	Kuku vs. Mandi	territory	2011	END	1
Sudan (Darfur)	SRF vs. government, RSF	autonomy	2003	↗	4
Sudan (Eastern Front)*	Beja congress vs. government	autonomy, resources	2005	END	1
Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)	Beni Amer vs. Nuba vs. Zaghawa vs. Hadendawa et al.	subnational predominance, resources	2007	↘	3
Sudan (opposition)	FFC vs. RSF, transitional government	system/ideology, national power	2011	↘	3
Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)*	SPLM/A-North vs. government	autonomy, resources	2011	↘	1
Tanzania (Christians – Muslims)*	Christians vs. Muslims	system/ideology	2012	END	1
Tanzania (opposition)*	ACT-Wazalendo, CHADEMA, CUF vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1993	↑	3
Togo (opposition)	MPDD, ANC vs. government	national power	1963	•	3
Uganda (Baganda / Buganda)*	Kingdom of Buganda vs. government	autonomy, other	1995	END	1
Uganda (opposition)	DP, FDC, Jeema, NUP, UPC vs. government	national power	2001	•	3
Zimbabwe (opposition)	MDC vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2000	•	3

¹ Conflicts marked with * are without description

² Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

³ Change in intensity compared to the previous year: ↑ or ↗ escalation by one or more than one level of intensity; ↓ or ↘ deescalation by one or more than one level of intensity; • no change

⁴ Levels of intensity: 5 = war; 4 = limited war; 3 = violent crisis; 2 = non-violent crisis; 1 = dispute

⁵ HIIK considers statehood to be non-contested if the state is an official UN members state. Disputed statehood is marked with a ° if a territory is recognized by at least one other official UN member state ("limited recognition")

ANGOLA (FLEC ET AL. / CABINDA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1975**

Conflict parties: FLEC, MIC vs. government
 Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis over the secession of Cabinda province between the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), their armed wing FLEC-Armed Forces of Cabinda (FAC), and the Movement for Independence of Cabinda (MIC), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. On June 16, June 24, and July 17, UN Secretary-General, the biggest opposition party in Angola UNITA, and the government, respectively, recognized the violent crisis with FLEC in the enclave.

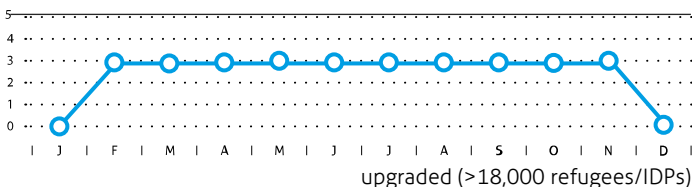
Fighting mainly concentrated in Cabinda province, especially in June. For example, on June 3, FAC clashed with government forces near Chivovo village, leaving six civilians, four Angolan soldiers, and two FAC fighters dead. One day later, another clash near the village of Tando-Limbo resulted in the deaths of two civilians, three Angolan soldiers, and one FAC member. On June 6, 13 Angolan soldiers and two FAC fighters were killed in the villages of Macama-Nzila and Ndongo Buba during further clashes between both parties. Between June 19 and 20, skirmishes between FAC and Angolan soldiers broke out in Mbata-Mbengi village, leaving six civilians, four Angolan soldiers, and one FAC soldier dead. On July 8, government forces and FAC fighters clashed in Buco-Zau town, leaving three civilians and two Angolan soldiers dead. On June 28 and November 28 respectively, security forces arrested three and nine alleged members of MIC on accusations of being members of a secessionist association and participation in an anti-government protest.

Additionally, government forces and FLEC clashed in border areas with the neighboring DR Congo and Republic of the Congo, on some occasions making incursions into their territories, especially in April and June. For instance, on June 6, Angolan soldiers, who were searching for FAC fighters, killed one civilian in Lukula town, Kongo Central province, DRC. On June 7, during similar incursions, a total of seven civilians were killed in the towns of Massabi, Cabinda, and Tchiamba-Nzassi district, Republic of the Congo. Specific details on the clashes remained scarce and casualties reported by FLEC were often unconfirmed. *who*

BURKINA FASO (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2016**

Conflict parties: Mossi, Gourmantché, Koglweogo et al. vs. Fulani vs. Islamist groups
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources between various ethnic groups, such as Mossi,

Gourmantché et al., with their Koglweogo self-defense militias, and Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland (VDP), on the one hand, the Fulani ethnic group, on the other hand, and Islamist groups as a third party, escalated to a limited war.

In previous years, surging Islamist attacks [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)] and the inability of the government to provide security had incentivized various communities to create self-defense militias as a protection measure. While conflicts over resources and territory especially between the predominantly Muslim Fulani pastoralists and farming communities occurred sporadically in earlier history, these tensions have accelerated in recent years. In particular, Fulani have been accused of affiliation with Islamist groups by the Burkinabe government and various communities, who have in turn individually and jointly carried out purported reprisal attacks. This year, on January 21 the Burkinabé parliament adopted a law allowing for the recruitment and training of the VDP militia to fight Islamist groups. Contrary to the law's proclaimed intention to safeguard villages and control local militias, Koglweogo and other self-defense groups continued to carry out attacks beyond the agreed areas of responsibility. For instance, on March 2, suspected Koglweogo burned down the Fulani villages of Dinguila-Peulh, Barga, and Ramdolla-Peulh, Nord region, killing at least 43 villagers with hunting rifles, and displacing many others. Furthermore, in Est region, Koglweogo militants killed several Fulani civilians in Tanwalbougou village on June 6, in retaliation to Islamist groups killing six Koglweogo at Nagare market, the previous day.

Violence erupted between members of ethnic groups that had been largely peaceful in previous years. For instance, following a land dispute, members of Mossi and Karabo communities clashed in Dagani village, Cascades region on April 11, leaving four people dead and several injured. On July 11, fighting between members of Lobi and Dogosse communities over access to a water pump in Nianiara village, Sud-Ouest region, resulted in three people killed and one injured. On October 21, members of the Gourmantché and Fulani communities clashed in the village of Ouabidi, Est region, leaving five Fulanis and one Gourmantché dead.

Throughout the year, VDP fighters supported by government forces targeted mainly Fulani, but also Tuareg communities for their alleged affiliation with Islamist groups [→ Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)]. For instance, on November 6, VDP fighters and Burkinabé soldiers attacked the village Ti-n-Samane, Sahel region, killing at least ten members of the Tuareg community. On the same day, they also entered the village of Kouna, Sahel region, killing two members of the Fulani ethnic group, burning down houses, harvests, and motorbikes.

Despite the increase in violence, some communities engaged in reconciliation attempts. For instance, on October 8, Fulani and Dogon communities reached a peace agreement in the Barani and Kombori communes, Boucle du Mouhoun region. However, most areas of the country continued to be affected by ongoing fighting.

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BURUNDI – RWANDA

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2015**

Conflict parties: Burundi vs. Rwanda
 Conflict items: international power

The non-violent crisis over regional power between Burundi and Rwanda escalated to a violent crisis. Two clashes occurred in the first half of the year. On May 7, a group of Burundian fishermen crossed the maritime border between the two countries at lake Rweru, Eastern province, Rwanda, and Kirundo province, Burundi, respectively. While ordering them back, Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) and Burundian National Defence Forces (FDNB) exchanged gunfire, killing one Burundian soldier. On June 27, an unidentified armed group from Burundi crossed into Rwandan territory at Ruheru sector, Nyaruguru district, Southern province, and attacked members of the RDF, killing four people and injuring three. After the attackers left, remnants of military equipment from the FDNB were found, including weapons and communications hardware. While Rwanda requested a clarification of the incident, Burundi denied any involvement. Despite these tensions, Rwanda and Burundi restored their diplomatic relations after they were severed in 2015. On June 6 and 11, respectively, Rwandan President Paul Kagame congratulated newly elected Burundian President Évariste Ndayishimiye and expressed his condolences on the death of former president Pierre Nkurunziza. Furthermore, a virtual tripartite meeting between Burundi, Rwanda, and the UNHCR to negotiate the repatriation of Burundian refugees from Rwanda was held on August 13. Subsequently, on August 27, 500 Burundian refugees returned from Rwanda as well as a further 507 on September 10. On August 26, the first high-level meetings since 2015 were held, during which delegations of military intelligence officers of both countries met at the border town of Nemba, Eastern province, Rwanda, to bilaterally discuss trade, mobility, and security issues along their shared border. Another meeting between the foreign ministers of both countries was convened at the same border post on October 20, to further normalize their bilateral relations.

BURUNDI, DR CONGO (FNL, RED-TABARA, FOREBU)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2005**

Conflict parties: FNL, Forebu, RED-Tabara vs. Burundi, DR Congo
 Conflict items: national power

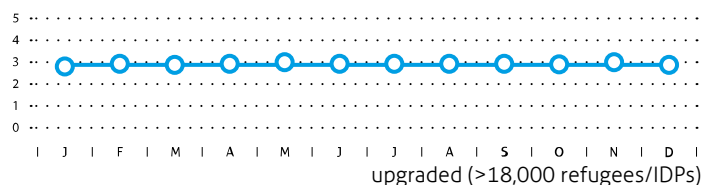
The violent crisis over national power in Burundi between the Resistance for Rule of Law in Burundi (RED-Tabara), the Popular Forces of Burundi (Forebu), and a militant faction of the National Forces of Liberation (FNL), on the one hand, and the Burundian government as well as the government of the DR Congo (DRC), on the other, continued. Violent clashes primarily took place in South Kivu province, DRC, while RED-Tabara crossed the border and became active in Burundi as well, in August. On April 26, during a clash with Burundian Defence Forces

(FDNB), in Uvira city, South Kivu, RED-Tabara killed five FDNB soldiers. On May 15, the FNL abducted six civilians in Kagurube village, South Kivu. Responding to this attack, the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) clashed with the FNL on the same day. While the FARDC killed two FNL fighters and captured one, the FNL killed one FARDC soldier. On May 31, the FNL and the Mayi-Mayi, another militant faction operating in the region, clashed with the FARDC in Rubuga, South-Kivu [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. The FARDC killed one FNL member and injured three others, while the FNL killed two FARDC soldiers. In light of former Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza's death in June, human rights organizations anticipated a potential peace agreement under his successor President Évariste Ndayishimiye. Nonetheless, during the second half the year, several clashes between FDNB and rebel groups were reported. For instance, on July 16, RED-Tabara collaborated with Banyamulenge militias, attacking civilians in Kipupu village, South-Kivu [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. RED-Tabara killed at least 200 people and burned 100 houses. On August 22, the FNL joined the Mayi-Mayi in an attack on the FARDC in Kitundu, South Kivu, without any reported casualties. The following day, RED-Tabara crossed the border to Burundi and killed eleven civilians in Bugarama district, Rumonge province. In turn, FDNB killed five members of RED-Tabara. On August 25, RED-Tabara clashed with FDNB and the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling Burundian government [→ Burundi (opposition)], between Mugamba and Bururi provinces, Burundi. RED-Tabara killed one FDNB soldier and two members of the Imbonerakure. Between September 17 and 25, RED-Tabara killed at least 29 government officials and 30 FDNB soldiers during several attacks in the city of Bujumbura, Rumonge and Bururi. On October 24 and 25, the FARDC attacked RED-Tabara and FNL in Niombe, South Kivu, regaining control over the village, which had been the stronghold of the FNL. FARDC killed 27 members of the FNL and RED-Tabara, while FNL and RED-Tabara killed three FARDC soldiers and injured four. Throughout the year, the FNL abducted around 20 civilians for ransom in Uvira.

CAMEROON (ENGLISH-SPEAKING-MINORITY)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **•** | Start: **2016**

Conflict parties: English-speaking-minority vs. government
 Conflict items: secession, autonomy



The limited war over autonomy or secession of the Southern Cameroons region between various groups of the English-speaking minority, such as the Ambazonian Defence Forces (ADF), the Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASC), and the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF), on the one hand, and the French-speaking Cameroonian government, on the other, continued. The ASC and ADF were attached to the main political wings of the self-declared Federal Republic of Ambazonia, the Interim Government of the Federal Re-

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

public of Ambazonia and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC), respectively. The government was ruled by President Paul Biya and his Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM).

Overall, both sides were responsible for more than 200 deaths in 2020, most of which occurred in the anglophone North West Region (NW) and South West Region (SW), although the conflict continued to spread to neighboring francophone regions. At least 9,000 people sought refuge in Nigeria and more than 80,000 were internally displaced.

The outbreak of Covid-19 caused a brief decline in violence, as a major separatist group, the SOCADEF, declared a unilateral ceasefire in March in relation to the call to rest arms by the UN. However, other groups and the government did not follow the call and attacks continued.

Throughout January and February, armed separatists continued to call for a boycott of the nationwide elections on February 9 in the anglophone regions. They subsequently attacked and destroyed election centres and abducted more than 100 people, mostly opposition candidates, in NW and SW. From February 6 to 11, militants imposed a lockdown in NW and SW to prevent civilians from voting and threatened to kill anyone who violated the self-imposed lockdown. In turn, on February 25, the Cameroon Constitutional Council annulled the election results from NW and SW due to irregularities caused by violence. A rerun of the elections was held on March 22, in which the incumbent CPDM won.

As in 2019, the separatists mostly conducted ambush attacks against government forces in NW and SW. For instance, on March 8, ADF staged an IED attack in Bamenda town, NW, killing one person and injuring eight soldiers and police officers. On March 20, the separatist group Intelligence Force of Oku ambushed a military convoy escorting politicians in the Oku subdivision, NW, killing at least eight convoy members. On November 18, unidentified separatist fighters attacked a patrol, killing two soldiers and one civilian in Kisseme town, NW.

The separatist groups also attacked government targets in francophone regions. For example, on March 7, around 20 armed separatists attacked a Gendarmerie outpost in Galim town, West Region. As a result of the attack, at least four gendarmes and three civilians died.

The military further increased their pressure on separatist groups throughout the year by conducting several military operations. On September 5, the military killed a known separatist group leader in the city of Bamenda, NW. On September 8, a joint operation of the military and the Gendarmerie, focusing on Bamenda and the surrounding villages, was launched. The operation, which has not yet been concluded, has so far resulted in at least 17 deaths, mostly civilians.

Both separatists and the military continued to conduct violence against civilians. Overall, more than 65 attacks on civilians were carried out, which resulted in a high number of civilian deaths and the destruction of critical infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals. For instance, on February 13 and 14, the military, together with the Wodabee ethnic militia, raided the village of Ngarbuh, NW, killing at least 21 civilians as well as looting and destroying multiple houses. The incident raised domestic as well as international criticism and the UN Secretary-General demanded an independent investigation. In a first statement, the government denied any military involvement, however, an investigation was later opened. On April 21, the government admitted that military personnel were involved in the raid. On October 24, separatist fighters launched an attack on a school in the city of Kumba, SW. At least seven children were killed

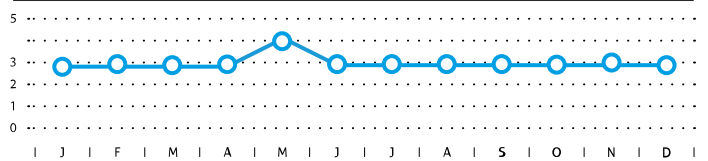
and 13 injured. On November 5, Cardinal Christian Wiyghan Tumi, who had been engaged in the peaceful resolution of the conflict, was kidnapped in NW after separatists accused him of bringing the children back to school. The attack and subsequent kidnapping, which is part of an increase in separatist attacks linked to the government's yearly nationwide back-to-school efforts, led to national and international calls to end the crisis. mat

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (ANTI-BALAKA, EX-SÉLÉKA)

Intensity: **4** | Change: • | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: Anti-Balaka vs. Ex-Séléka vs. government

Conflict items: national power, resources



The limited war over national power and resources between numerous ex-Séléka militias, such as the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC), Patriotic Front for the Renaissance in the Central African Republic (FPRC), Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R) as well as Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (MLCJ), anti-Balaka militias, and the government, supported by MINUSCA as well as Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group, continued. On November 12, the UNSC extended MINUSCA's mandate until 11/15/21. Tensions partly declined following the implementation of the Khartoum Political Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation that had been signed between the government of President Faustin Archange Touadéra and 14 armed groups on 02/06/19 in the capital Bangui. Although many of the formal follow-up mechanisms of the agreement were suspended following the Covid-19 outbreak, the government, supported by international actors, continued engagement with armed group leaders. MINUSCA continued to record violations of the agreement, over half of them affecting the civilian population.

Following clashes in Bria town, Haute-Kotto prefecture, at the end of January, which left 31 dead and approx. 10,000 people displaced, the FPRC attempted to retake control of Bira town, northern Vakaga prefecture, from MLCJ on February 16. MINUSCA intervention resulted in the withdrawal of FPRC and the establishment of a weapon-free zone in Bira town on March 14. Twelve members of the FPRC were reportedly killed in the operation and several more injured. Parts of the local population fled to Sudan.

Tensions over leadership in Haute-Kotto between ethnic Gula, Kara, and Runga factions of the FPRC rose in northeastern Haute-Kotto and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures in the first half of the year. Between March 10 and April 30, several attacks and clashes, mainly in the city of Ndélé, Bamingui-Bangoran, resulted in at least 106, mainly civilian, deaths. On April 29, around 100 Gula FPRC members armed with guns reportedly entered the main market of Ndélé dressed as civilians, killing approx. 37 civilians, injuring at least 50, and displacing approx. 2,000. After successful mediation efforts by local authorities, leaders of the Gula and Runga factions signed a nonaggression pact in Ndélé on August 27, monitored by the prefectural security committee and

MINUSCA.

In the western Nana-Mambéré and Ouham-Pendé prefectures, 3R-related violence resurged, causing the displacement of at least 15,000 persons between May and December. On June 6, 3R's leader declared the suspension of his group's participation in the follow-up and monitoring mechanisms of the Khartoum Agreement. Despite being forced back partly from Nana-Mambéré and Ouham-Pendé following MINUSCA military operations in June, 3R continued to attack security forces and MINUSCA. For instance, on July 7, 3R allegedly attacked a MINUSCA vehicle using an anti-tank mine in Gedzé, Nana-Mambéré, killing one and injuring three peacekeepers. This incident constituted the first reported use of landmines in the conflict. Furthermore, they also occupied several villages in Ouham-Pendé.

In CAR's most eastern prefecture, Haut-Mbomou, UPC committed a series of violations of the peace agreement. For instance, UPC members blocked access to voting centers in Zemio and abducted a medical team on August 13, releasing them unharmed four days later. Additionally, in May, the UPC leader accused members of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (FACA) of abuses against the local population in the city of Obo. Subsequently, local authorities arrested a FACA soldier for allegedly killing a civilian on June 2.

According to MINUSCA, members of anti-Balaka groups were responsible for 58 violent incidents until October. On March 14, the local anti-Balaka group in Basse-Kotto prefecture attacked the residence of the Sub-Prefect. When MINUSCA intervened on the same day, one peacekeeper was killed.

Due to numerous incidents affecting the local population, refugee and IDP numbers remained high. By the end of the year, approx. 30,000 were newly internally displaced. This accumulated to a total 630,000 IDPs as well as 634,000 refugees in neighboring countries, mainly Cameroon, DR Congo, and Chad, according to UNOCHA.

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held on December 27. Incumbent president Touadéra was considered front-runner beforehand. The leading opposition candidate Anicet Georges Dologuele was backed by the Democratic Opposition Coalition including former president Francois Bozize who is under UN sanctions and was banned from running for the elections. On December 19, the government accused Bozize of organizing a coup and preventing people from voting. On the same day, six rebel groups including UPC, FPRC, and 3R, among others, announced the formation of the so-called Coalition of Patriots for Change. Various ex-Séléka militias supporting the opposition temporarily seized several cities before the elections. International observers called it a partial election, as violence in some parts of the country prevented polling stations from opening. kda

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, DR CONGO, SOUTH SUDAN (LRA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1987**

Conflict parties: LRA vs. CAR, DR Congo, South Sudan

Conflict items: resources

The violent crisis over resources between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), on the one hand, and the governments of the Central African Republic (CAR), DR Congo (DRC), and South Sudan, on the other, continued.

The LRA remained fragmented into several small groups lacking a central command structure and was estimated at less than 100 militants. LRA activities this year were centered upon the border region between DRC and CAR, affecting DRC's Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé provinces and the southern fringes of Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou prefectures, CAR. Only one LRA attack was recorded in South Sudan's Western Equatoria province in close proximity to the border with DRC. Operating out of the heavily forested areas around Mbomou River, LRA militants carried out attacks in the areas south of Mbomou River down to Uélé River and made short incursions north into CAR territory, operating in small groups up to 20 militants equipped with machetes, hunting rifles, and AK-47s. Throughout the year, LRA militants were involved in at least 53 violent incidents, 80 percent of which took place in the DRC. LRA militants regularly raided and looted remote villages, robbing food supplies, money, and technological devices such as telephones. In many cases, they abducted local inhabitants to porter the looted goods back into the forests and released the majority of them shortly afterwards. On April 6, for instance, LRA militants attacked Bougoua village, Haut-Mbomou, and abducted 15 civilians to carry the loot, releasing them later that day. At times, however, abducted civilians, in most cases children, were not released. This corresponded to a high number of children that escaped LRA captivity, sometimes several years after having been abducted. This was the case on October 13, for instance, when a girl escaped an LRA group near Mboki village, Haut-Mbomou, after five years in captivity. In total, approx. 277 civilians were verifiably abducted by LRA or escaped LRA captivity throughout the year. Apart from targeting villages, LRA militants also repeatedly ambushed travelling civilians. On April 24, LRA militants ambushed and looted 18 civilians on a road near Bayote village, Haut-Uélé. In addition, LRA militants targeted farmers as well as pastoralists, fishermen, hunters, and miners in remote locations, robbing them of their possessions. On May 14, for instance, LRA militants attacked three hunters in their forest camp near Makpolo village, Bas-Uélé, abducting two and seizing their hunting rifles and foodstuffs. In turn, LRA militants refrained from openly attacking military personnel and clashed with government soldiers on only three occasions, when soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) accompanied targeted civilians or intervened in LRA ambushes. On March 30, for instance, LRA fighters clashed with two FARDC soldiers accompanying a group of 35 civilians when the former ambushed the group on the road near Soki village, Haut-Uélé, killing the soldiers.

Over the course of the year, twelve people, including four FARDC soldiers, seven civilians, and one LRA militant, were reportedly killed in LRA-related incidents. LRA fighters killed civilians trying to escape, as near Dungu village, Haut-Uélé, on April 18, or when confronted by village inhabitants trying to retrieve their stolen possessions, like in Linamboli village, Haut-Uélé, on April 27. Hundreds of civilians were displaced due to LRA violence. From May 7 onwards, 249 Congolese civilians fleeing from LRA violence crossed the border into CAR at Dangura Payam, Western Equatoria, within a week. On May 23, around 300 protesters, some of them carrying knives, marched to the offices of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation at Bili town, Bas-Uélé, demanding the distribution of weapons seized from poachers in order to defend themselves against LRA attacks.

Meanwhile, the trial against former LRA commander Dominic Ongwen before the ICC continued. Charged with 70 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, the verdict is

set to be delivered on 02/04/21. The trial against former LRA colonel Thomas Kwoyelo before the International Crimes Division of the Ugandan High Court in Gulu city, however, was adjourned indefinitely in late March due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

le

CHAD (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1947**

Conflict parties: pastoralists vs. farmers
Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between farmers and pastoralists continued. The crisis, which had started in 1947, reached its peak in 2019 with 177 deaths. In 2020, at least 110 people were killed and at least 139 injured.

Southern Chad was especially affected by the inter-communal clashes. On January 31, six people were killed when Arab pastoralists clashed with members of the Boulala community in the village of Djokhana, Hadjer-Lamis region. On April 14, a conflict between farmers and pastoralists erupted in the village of Komi, Mayo-Kebbi Est region, leaving one dead, five injured, and several people missing. On April 28, the brother of the Chadian president killed one person when he fired shots at a group of pastoralists near his property in the capital N'Djamena. Furthermore, farmers and Fulani pastoralists fought over access to grazing land in the town of Bemangra, Tandjilé region, on June 8, leaving two people dead and 13 injured. Two days later, pastoralists attacked several farmers in the town of Boudo, Tandjilé, killing one. During a violent confrontation between pastoralists and farmers on July 2, five people were injured in the town of Foul Touare, Mayo-Kebbi Ouest region. On August 12, farmers and Fulani pastoralists clashed over land use in Lai, the capital of Tandjilé, leaving four people dead and 24 injured. On August 28, farmers staged a retaliatory attack over stolen cattle, killing eleven people in the town of Bourou, Logone Occidental region. Authorities subsequently arrested 43 people on both sides.

November and December marked the most violent months in Southern Chad. On November 23 and 24, Fulani pastoralists raided farmer villages in the Kabbia department, Mayo-Kebbi Ouest, setting several houses on fire. At least 22 were killed, 34 injured, several hundred displaced, and 67 arrested. Further violence between December 10 and 24 left at least 15 dead and ten injured in Mayo-Kebbi Ouest, seven dead and five injured in Tandjilé, and two dead and ten injured in the Sila region.

Western Chad, Central Chad, and Eastern Chad were also affected by the violence. Twelve people were wounded when pastoralist youth militias fought over water for their cattle in the village of Hadjar Hadid, Ouaddai region, around June 1. On December 13, 24 people were killed and ten injured in clashes between farmers and pastoralists over land use in the village of Achiguel, Batha region. Finally, on December 26, violence between pastoralists and farmers left at least 13 dead and eleven injured in the Birak locality, Wadi Fira region.

kab

CHAD (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1990**

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government
Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between opposition groups and the government continued. The opposition consisted of various political parties, civil society groups, and loosely organized protesters, mainly students.

In response to the government's ongoing austerity measures, several protests took place early in the year. On January 4, public servants threatened to strike following the government's failure to honor an agreement over wage increases reached on 10/26/18. Two days later, negotiations between government officials and the public servant labor union failed and, subsequently, strikes started on January 7. Strikes subsided after President Idriss Déby reached an agreement with the labor union on January 9. Moreover, on February 10, students took to the streets close to the University of N'Djamena in the capital N'Djamena, demanding the restoration of scholarships and the reinstatement of public transport services. The police dispersed the crowd using tear gas and batons, injuring at least 81.

On June 29, the Association Tchadienne pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Homme accused the government of being responsible for the death of 44 prisoners on April 14 due to severe mistreatment. The prisoners, identified as Boko Haram militants by security forces, were reportedly civilians from the Lac region, where Boko Haram attacked Chadian troops on March 23 [→ Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger (JAS-Boko Haram)]. The government denied all allegations.

The government continued to undermine opposition activities. Between October 30 and November 5, police forces surrounded three oppositional party headquarters in N'Djamena on claims that the parties had violated Covid-19 restrictions, disrupting party activities. One of the affected parties, the Union Nationale pour le Développement et le Renouveau, denied violating the restrictions and accused the authorities of intimidation. On November 27, police forces raided the radio station FM Liberté in N'Djamena and arrested 70 people, including journalists and activists. Authorities released all but three of the detainees on the same day, accusing the remaining activists of organizing the Forum Citoyen, banned due to social distancing measures. On December 13, the opposition party Transformateurs organized a demonstration in N'Djamena against constitutional provisions setting a minimum age requirement for candidates running in presidential elections. The police dispersed the crowd using tear gas. Members of the Transformateurs continued demonstrations on December 23. The police again resorted to tear gas to disperse the protesters, leaving at least one injured.

dke

CÔTE D'IVOIRE (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1999**

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government
 Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between several opposition parties, namely the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) and the Générations et Peuples Solidaires (GPS), on the one hand, and the government of the inter-party coalition Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP), led by President Alassane Ouattara, on the other, continued. This year, the country saw increasing violence due to the contested presidential elections. In total, violent election-related clashes left at least 50 people dead and around 300 injured between August and November. Furthermore, approx. 8,000 people fled to neighboring countries.

Following two civil wars in the early 2000s, Ouattara had won against then-president Laurent Gbagbo in 2011, ending the country's de facto division between North and South. This year's political unrest marked a departure from the past years of relative stability with clashes between opposition parties, the government, fueling the conflict between ethnic communities affiliated with the respective parties.

Despite his announcement not to seek re-election, President Ouattara declared his candidacy in August, after the death of the designated candidate. Furthermore, several opposition candidates, among others Gbagbo from the FPI, and former prime minister and rebel leader Guillaume Soro from the GPS, were barred from participating in the election. Soro, who was in exile in Europe, was convicted in absentia for embezzlement of funds, and sentenced to 20 years in prison. In contrast, Gbagbo, who was acquitted of having committed crimes against humanity by the ICC last year, was authorized by the same to leave Belgium on May 28. However, the date of his return to Côte d'Ivoire remained uncertain.

Denouncing Ouattara's decision to run for a third term, the opposition called for the boycott of the elections, staging several protests. For instance, on August 23, two persons were killed when members of opposition groups clashed with Ouattara supporters in Divo city, Gôh-Djiboua district.

The elections, which took place on October 31, resulted in Ouattara's victory, with 94 percent of the vote. On election day, opposition supporters destroyed voting material in Oumé city, Gôh-Djiboua, and clashed with government supporters. Both sides used machetes, clubs, and hunting rifles, leading to the death of one person and injuring dozens before security forces dispersed the crowds with tear gas. Furthermore, after Pascal Affi N'Guessan, leader of the FPI, announced the creation of a parallel government, he was arrested along with other opposition members on charges of terrorism and sedition, in Akoupe city, Lagune district, on November 6. FPI members protested against his detention, clashing with Ouattara supporters in M'Batto city, Lacs district, on November 10. Both sides used guns and machetes, resulting in the death of three and at least 30 injured people. On December 30, N'Guessan was released from detention and placed under judicial supervision.

However, after his inauguration on December 14, Ouattara appointed an opposition leader as minister of reconciliation. Furthermore, opposition leaders met with Ouattara on several occasions seeking to overcome their political disagreements.

jwi

DJIBOUTI (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2011**

Conflict parties: ARD, opposition groups vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition party Alliance Républicaine pour le Développement (ARD) and other opposition groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The crisis turned violent in November 2019, after the police injured about 50 people during protests.

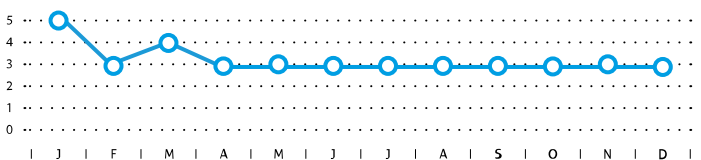
Throughout 2020, several arrests sparked protests. On March 3, the police arrested a member of the ARD. Subsequently, protests demanding his release were held across several cities in early to mid-March, for example in the capital Djibouti City, in the city of Tadjoura, eponymous region, and in Paris, France. On April 27, further protests were held in the town of Obock, eponymous region. Also in March, the government detained air force pilot Fouad Ali Youssef who had released a video calling for armed revolts against the government due to its alleged corruption and discrimination. He fled to Ethiopia, from where he was extradited to Djibouti on April 9 and subsequently prosecuted for allegedly trying to steal a military aircraft and collaborating with Eritrea [→ Djibouti – Eritrea]. In June, Youssef and his lawyer claimed that he had been physically abused by prison guards. Following this, protests demanding his release erupted throughout Djibouti. Between June 1 and 10, the police detained Youssef's family and approx. 200 protesters. Protests continued on July 27, at which one person was injured.

In June and July, three journalists working for the opposition newspaper La Voix de Djibouti were arrested, two of whom had reported on Youssef. twe

DR CONGO (ADF)

Intensity: **5** | Change: ↗ | Start: **1995**

Conflict parties: ADF vs. DR Congo
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources



The limited war over the orientation of the political system, subnational predominance, and resources between the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), on the one hand, and the government of DR Congo (DRC), supported by MONUSCO, on the other, escalated to a war. ADF is also known as National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) and Madina at Tawhid Wai Muwahedeen (ADF-MTM).

Compared to last year, the conflict territory shifted and solely concentrated on DRC as measures were no longer observed in Uganda. The Islamist militant group ADF, consisting mostly of Ugandan nationals, was based primarily in Beni territory, northern North Kivu province, DRC. Most incidents involving ADF militants took place in the Semliki river basin southeast

of Beni town, and in a northern triangular area comprising the towns of Eringeti, Oicha, and Mbau. Led by Seka Musa Baluku, who was included in the UN sanctions list on February 6, the group was composed of several hundred members, some of whom abducted civilians. Throughout the year, ADF militants were allegedly involved in 289 violent incidents resulting in at least 1,483 deaths. However, as ADF generally refrained from claiming responsibility for assaults, attribution of attacks often remained uncertain.

As part of the Sokola 1 campaign launched on 10/30/19, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) carried out several large-scale military operations which resulted in the capture of almost all former ADF camps in Beni. Discovered with support of MONUSCO drones, FARDC frequently deployed field artillery and attack helicopters to bombard ADF camps before attacking with ground troops. On January 13, FARDC seized the ADF headquarters Madina I and II near Eringeti town, after five days of heavy fighting, which left 30 FARDC soldiers dead and 70 injured. In addition, 40 ADF militants were killed in the fighting, including at least one high-ranking commander. Between March 6 and 13, FARDC forces attacked several newly discovered ADF camps in the forests near Semliki river, leaving 18 FARDC soldiers and 75 ADF militants dead. On April 28, FARDC forces attacked an ADF camp near Kambi ya Yua town, killing 25 ADF militants. FARDC captured another major camp entitled Madina IV near Bango village in early August. Furthermore, FARDC claimed to have detained Baluku's wife alongside five other ADF militants following clashes at Kwele village on October 22, which left nine ADF militants dead. Although FARDC operations scattered ADF forces, which split into at least three mobile groups, ADF maintained its international and local recruitment, support, and supply networks.

In turn, ADF attacked FARDC and MONUSCO forces on numerous occasions during the year, targeting FARDC positions as well as ambushing convoys and forest patrols. On May 28, for instance, ADF militants killed 23 FARDC soldiers in an attack on a military position near Otokaka-Makembi village. Furthermore, on June 22, ADF militants ambushed a MONUSCO convoy near Makisabo village, killing one peacekeeper and injuring another. On August 28, ADF militants orchestrated an ambush with RPGs on the FARDC convoy of Sokola 1's commander on the Mbau-Kamango road near Kitaura village. While the commander happened not to be on board, the ambush and the ensuing shootout left eight FARDC soldiers dead, seven injured, and ten ADF militants dead. On October 20, ADF militants also launched a large-scale attack on Kangbayi central prison and an adjacent FARDC position near Beni town, freeing approx. 1,330 prisoners, some of them ADF militants. In the aftermath, MONUSCO deployed drones to support FARDC's search for the escapees. During the year, fighting reportedly left at least 183 FARDC soldiers, police personnel, and UN peacekeepers as well as at least 270 ADF militants dead.

Moreover, partly in retaliation for FARDC offensives, ADF frequently carried out attacks on civilians by assaulting farmers and mineworkers, ambushing traveling civilians, and raiding villages. Over the course of the year, at least 1,030 civilians were reportedly killed due to ADF violence, while approx. 480 were abducted. In many cases, ADF militants shot and stabbed civilians when attacking villages, looting and burning down houses, shops, and churches in the aftermath. For instance, on May 25, ADF militants attacked Loselose village, killing seven civilians and abducting a further 45, while looting 15 shops and burning down six houses. They also clashed with intervening FARDC soldiers, killing two and injuring

one. In another instance, ADF militants killed 19 civilians when raiding Baiti village, on October 28, returning two days later to attack mourners returning from the burial ceremony, resulting in four deaths. While many remote villages lacked military protection, government forces repelled ADF attacks on several occasions, such as on February 11, when FARDC and the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) fought off an ADF attack on Mbau town, with heavy weaponry. Occasionally, local Mayi-Mayi militia also opposed ADF militants raiding their villages, such as on April 2 in Mambau village. However, Mayi-Mayi groups have often been found to be supportive of ADF [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi)].

Although Beni territory remained the epicenter of ADF activity, the southern Mambasa and Irumu territories of bordering Ituri province saw an upsurge in ADF attacks following the loss of Madina headquarters. While only two ADF attacks had been recorded in Ituri in 2019, violence escalated in early February, with ADF militants carrying out a series of attacks on several villages including Kambiasa, Masenze, Mbotole, Ndalia on February 2, killing at least 34 civilians. After 79 fatalities were reported in Ituri in February, violence abated again until May, when ADF militants carried out ten attacks, resulting in at least 85 deaths. Simultaneously, several reports indicated that ADF had established new headquarters in the Mukasula hills near Kamambou village, Irumu, with the support of Mayi-Mayi Simba militia. In total, less than 20 percent of ADF-related deaths in 2020 occurred in Ituri.

According to UNHCR, ADF attacks have displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians throughout the year. For instance, following the ADF raid on Manzalao village, Beni, on February 28, local authorities claimed that 1,850 persons fled the area. While some civilian initiatives organized marches in solidarity with the government's efforts against ADF, numerous civil society groups and local politicians expressed their frustration with the government's and MONUSCO's alleged incapability to end the violence. Throughout the year, civil movements like Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA) repeatedly staged protest marches in Beni town, at times erecting barricades and bringing public life to a standstill. Congolese National Police (PNC) quelled the protests on multiple occasions detaining LUCHA activists, and shot dead a civilian participating in a rally on May 21. Following an ADF raid on Bulongo village, Beni, a few days prior, local youth clashed with a FARDC patrol on December 26, resulting in the deaths of two FARDC soldiers and three civilians. In late February, local MPs and civilian initiatives also called on the public to arm themselves to counter ADF attacks. On March 3, inhabitants of Mutsanga village, Beni, detained a suspected ADF militant and beat him to death. Similarly, inhabitants of Masambo village, Beni, stoned a suspected ADF militant to death on December 24, as she could not provide an ID card and had difficulties expressing herself in the local language. Following the establishment of its Central African Province (CAP) comprising DRC and Mozambique on 04/18/19, the so-called Islamic State (IS) claimed an increasing number of incidents involving ADF groups, mostly via messaging services [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. According to UN reports, IS-CAP laid claim to at least 49 incidents in Beni and Irumu territories throughout the year. Some of these claims were fictitious, such as an alleged battle on April 30, when IS militants supposedly fought off four FARDC regiments in Mama Ngudu village, Beni, despite being heavily outnumbered. Other claims can be linked to reported events, though frequently distorting fatalities and outcomes. Following the death of a peacekeeper in an ADF ambush on June 22, for instance, IS-CAP claimed to have killed five UN soldiers. Despite these

claims, the extent of collaboration between ADF and IS-CAP remained unclear.

Meanwhile, the trial against founder and former ADF commander Jamil Mukulu before the International Crimes Division (ICD) of Uganda’s High Court in Gulu city, Northern Region, was delayed due to the outbreak of Covid-19 [→ Central African Republic, DR Congo, South Sudan (LRA)]. Mukulu, indicted on 20 counts including crimes against humanity, refused to be tried via video conferencing, a measure adopted by the court. *lre*

DR CONGO (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY / KASAI ORIENTAL)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **END** | Start: **2007**

Conflict parties: Bena Nshima vs. Bena Kapuya, Bena Mwembia

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between members of the Bena Nshimba community as well as Bena Kapuya and Bena Mwembia communities in the Kasai Oriental province continued.

Bena Nshimba, Bena Kapuya, and Bena Mwembia communities belonged to the Katanda territory, Kasai Oriental province. Long-lasting tensions over arable land and wells resulted in violent clashes between the communities in September 2007. As a result, approx. 30 people were killed and up to 500 houses burned down within one month. Following the eruption of inter-communal violence, the provincial government had initiated reconciliation talks in 2009, leading to the establishment of a neutral zone in which both of the communities were prohibited from cultivating the land. Violence subsided with only sporadic, reciprocal attacks reported since 2009, mainly during the planting season.

This year, however, violent clashes resurged when Bena Nshimba members in late August discovered that Bena Kapuya members had cultivated the neutral zone. On September 2, Bena Nshima members attacked the village of Bena Kapuya community, setting fire to a majority of the houses. Subsequent clashes between the communities in the following three days resulted in eleven people killed, seven injured and approx. 1,000 houses burned down, including schools. As a result, 10,000 residents were displaced.

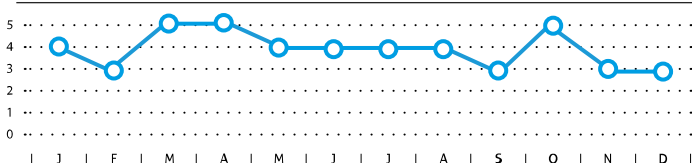
Following mediation efforts by the provincial government, community leaders of Bena Nshimba, Bena Kapuya, and Bena Mwembia signed a peace agreement in Katanda territory, on September 11. *ase, liw*

DR CONGO (ITURI MILITIAS)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **•** | Start: **1999**

Conflict parties: CODECO vs. FPIC vs. FRPI vs. Zaïre militia vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The war over subnational predominance and resources, especially gold, between the militant groups Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO), Patriotic and Integrationist Force of Congo (FPIC), Zaïre militia, and Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FRPI), on the one hand, and the government supported by MONUSCO, on the other, continued in Ituri province, eastern DR Congo.

Since December 2017, violent attacks by militant groups against civilians and the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) have surged and ebbed in Djugu and Mahagi territories of Ituri. In 2019, the government claimed that an allegedly coherent, agro-religious group called CODECO was responsible for these recurring attacks. CODECO was considered an umbrella association subsuming different factions such as the Union of Revolutionaries for the Defense of the Congolese People (URDPC) and the Army for the Liberation of Congo (ALC). Led by Justin Ngudjolo, URDPC comprised approx. 15,000 fighters, whereas ALC personnel was estimated at 2,000 primarily Lendu members. However, violent attacks were mostly attributed to CODECO in general.

Moreover, over the course of the year, further militias emerged in Irumu territory. On the one hand, FPIC, mainly composed of Bira community members, operated near the mining areas of Marabo and Nyakunde as well as northwest of the provincial capital Bunia, Irumu. Zaïre militia, on the other hand, comprising, among others, members of Hema and Alur communities, reportedly formed as a self-defense group following persistent attacks against their communities. Apart from inter-communal tensions, it can be assumed that other factors also contributed to the conflict in the resource-rich region with a history of cross-border conflict dynamics.

While in the previous three years, approx. 700 people were killed, 2020 alone accounted for more than 1,000 conflict-related deaths, including at least 487 civilians. Furthermore, up to 445 militants were killed in clashes with FARDC, as part of the ongoing military operation Ituri Storm II, that had been launched in December 2019.

Militant groups continued to carry out large-scale and systematic attacks against civilians and FARDC positions. Groups of varying size armed with rifles and machetes invaded villages, attacking civilians, looting livestock, and burning down houses. Throughout the year, thousands of houses were destroyed, and thus entire villages deserted. According to the UN, 660,000 people were internally displaced in Ituri during the first half of the year. The deteriorating security situation in Djugu and Mahagi as well as the rising number of increasingly violent attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces in southern Irumu territory [→ DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)] accumulated to a total of 1.6 million IDPs in Ituri since 2017. Throughout the year, CODECO repeatedly attacked civilians in Djugu and Mahagi. By July, at least 362 civilians had been killed, peaking between April and July at 60 to 70 deaths per month. Towards the end of the year, violence against civilians gradually subsided.

In Djugu, two chiefdoms were the target of major attacks with high civilian casualties. In Bahema Nord chiefdom, attacks on Ndoki-Koli and Dzathi villages, on April 13, resulted in the deaths of 23 civilians. Furthermore, Wadabu village was attacked on May 17, resulting in 21 residents killed. In the mining area of Banyali Kilo chiefdom, CODECO killed 25 civilians in Digeni village, on February 29. Subsequently, attackers stole “significant quantities” of gold. Moreover, on July 7, at least 400 CODECO militants invaded Bounzenzele village, killing up to 35 residents, torching houses, and displacing several hundreds. One month later, another CODECO

DR Congo (Ituri militias)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December



attack on the villages of Tchulu, Lisey, and Aloize left 19 civilians dead and 10,000 displaced. Furthermore, CODECO also conducted localized attacks against gold miners such as in the Petsi area on March 28, killing three.

Between April and May, violence escalated in Mahagi with CODECO attacking seven out of eight chiefdoms. On April 24, CODECO militants attacked Ngurai village, Djukot chiefdom, clashing with FARDC, which left at least 19 civilians and two militants dead. On May 15, in a series of attacks on villages of the Walapar and Panduru chiefdoms, three civilians were killed and up to 500 houses torched. According to civil society groups, 400,000 people from Mahagi were displaced in two months.

Over the course of the year, CODECO temporarily controlled several chiefdoms of Djugu and Mahagi, reportedly taxing the remaining residents. Moreover, they repeatedly ambushed and looted vehicles and trucks on the main routes connecting Bunia to Djugu and Mahagi. Therefore, humanitarian access to both territories was extremely restricted, as for instance in April when the main roads were closed for three weeks following persistent CODECO presence, thus hindering the transport of supplies.

Furthermore, FARDC and CODECO clashed on multiple occasions throughout the year. On the one hand, CODECO continued to attack FARDC positions, however less often than last year. On the other hand, as part of the operation Ituri Storm II, FARDC conducted attacks against CODECO strongholds. Between March 1 and May 15, fighting accounted for at least 300 CODECO and 65 FARDC fatalities, according to FARDC. For instance, on March 14, FARDC attacked CODECO in Tchele area, Ndo-Okebo chiefdom, Djugu, using heavy artillery. Subsequent clashes resulted in twelve militants and three FARDC soldiers killed. On March 25, FARDC killed URDPC leader Njudjolo along with four militants in Mokpa village, Walendu Pitsi chiefdom, Djugu. Additionally, MONUSCO, in support of FARDC, deployed two attack helicopters which patrolled for two days over Djugu and Mahagi in the end of March. On April 10, FARDC regained control over a series of CODECO-held villages in Djugu, killing a total of 33 militants. Three days later, FARDC attacked CODECO in Mwanga and Ngongo villages, Djugu, using multiple rocket launchers. As a result, ten militants, three soldiers, and two police officers were killed. Military operations continued until July.

Government officials repeatedly called on CODECO to end hostilities. Moreover, in July, President Félix Tshisekedi sent a delegation of former militia commanders, including FRPI general Germain Katanga, convicted by the ICC, to Djugu to negotiate militia disarmament. ALC was the first CODECO faction to sign a unilateral ceasefire agreement on July 15. Subsequently, URDPC joined on August 1. Nevertheless, following a lull of violent attacks in August, approx. 200 ALC militants entered Bunia on September 4, demanding the release of prisoners. Sporadic CODECO attacks continued.

In October, ALC abandoned the peace process, resuming violent attacks. On October 24, ALC attacked a FARDC position in Dele village, near Bunia, reportedly attempting to invade the provincial capital. Subsequently, FARDC, supported by MONUSCO, conducted military strikes, using attack helicopters against ALC strongholds in the Ezekere area, Djugu. Four days of heavy clashes resulted in the deaths of at least 40 militants and four FARDC soldiers and the displacement of 25,000 people. FARDC reportedly regained control over the area. However, clashes continued until the first week of November, leaving a further 20 militants and twelve soldiers dead.

At the beginning of the year, FPIC militia emerged in Irumu

territory. Initially targeting FARDC positions, FPIC repeatedly carried out attacks against civilians between July and December. Civilians in Bahema South, Andisoma, Mobala, and Babelebe chiefdoms were most affected by FPIC violence. For instance, on August 15, FPIC attacked Murubia village, Bahema South, killing seven civilians. Furthermore, during an attack on Babukela village, Babelebe, on December 4, FPIC militants armed with rifles and machetes killed 20 residents. Consequently, at least 6,000 civilians were displaced. Furthermore, FPIC attacked three villages in Banyali Kilo, Djugu, on December 22, killing at least nine and abducting eleven civilians.


Throughout the year, FPIC clashed with FARDC on several occasions. For instance, clashes in Kunda village, Babelebe, on July 25 and October 3, left 13 FPIC militants dead. Between September 21 and 22, FARDC launched an operation against FPIC strongholds in the chiefdoms of Babode, Beabo, and Babelebe, killing 13 militants. One month later, FPIC made an incursion into Irumu town. In the subsequent clashes, three FARDC soldiers, two police officers, and four militants were killed.

Zaïre militia was reportedly based in Dala, Mbijo, Mongbwalu, and Iga-Barrière villages, Djugu, Berunda village, Mahagi, and Shari village, Irumu. While predominantly described as a self-defense group against Lendu militia, they erected roadblocks and imposed taxation, notably in Dala village. Moreover, Zaïre was sporadically involved in violent clashes such as on July 18, when alleged Zaïre militants attacked Subadelwa village, Babelebe, killing six people.

Following the 2018 peace negotiations, FRPI and the government signed a peace agreement in Gety town, Irumu, on February 28. The agreement included the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process as well as the transformation of FRPI into a political party. On September 30, however, clashes erupted between FRPI and FARDC in Gety, following a FRPI attack against a FARDC position and a demobilization camp. Fighting left three soldiers, six militants, and two civilians dead and another ten people injured. Subsequently, the DDR process, scheduled to start on September 29, was stalled.

In January, a UN report indicated that violence committed in Ituri since 2017 could constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. This was reiterated by the Prosecutor of the ICC, on June 4, announcing the deployment of an investigation mission to Djugu and Mahagi territories once Covid-19 conditions improved. [liw](#)

DR CONGO (KN)

Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **2016**

Conflict parties: KN vs. BM, government

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between the militant groups Bana Mura (BM), Kamuina Nsapu (KN), and the government in Kasai Central and Kasai Oriental provinces de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

Since the inauguration of President Félix Tshisekedi in 2019, the number of attacks by KN militants against government forces and vice versa had declined. Human rights experts, however, highlighted that the incomplete disarmament of militants could threaten sustainable peace. At the beginning of the year, former KN militants reportedly began reorganizing around the commune of Nganza and Kananga, Kasai

Central. Furthermore, BM still held women and girls from the Luba ethnic group captive in Kamonia territory, Kasai, subjecting them to forced labor and sexual slavery. International organizations funded and initiated reintegration and rebuilding programs. For instance, UNICEF funded a training session for more than 650 ex-militia children and IDPs in Kananga to strengthen their skills for future employment.

On February 7, investigations into the crimes committed during an operation of the Armed Forces of the DR Congo against the KN in Nganza, Kasai Central, in March 2017 commenced. On July 29, several soldiers were arrested in connection with the incident in Nganza. Furthermore, the trials regarding the murder of UN experts in 2017 continued throughout the year. Moreover, on May 29, a former militant was arrested for suspected murder and recruiting children for KN.

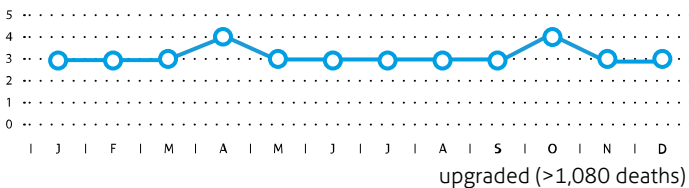
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DR CONGO (MAYI-MAYI ET AL.)

Intensity: **5** | Change: • | Start: **2003**

Conflict parties: NDC-R vs. APCLS-R vs. Mayi-Mayi groups vs. Nyatura groups vs. APCLS vs. Banyamulenge militias vs. Bafuli-iro militias vs. Babembe militias vs. Government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The war over subnational predominance and resources in the eastern provinces North and South Kivu, Maniema, and Tanganyika, continued. The conflict involved various local armed groups, as well as the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC), supported by MONUSCO.

Between 1998 and 2003, various militias had formed in the context of the Second Congo War opposing Rwandan and Ugandan-backed armed groups. After the end of the war, local militias continued to emerge and many groups fragmented further, increasing the number from around 70 in 2015 to at least 120 in 2017 in North and South Kivu alone. The militias varied in size and strength, often consisting of fewer than 100 fighters and recruiting along ethnic lines. Most of them were named after their commanders and relied on the taxation of individuals and goods in areas under their control.

Throughout the year, over 1,000 people were killed by armed groups operating in North and South Kivu.

The most active groups in North Kivu were the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R), Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), and the Collective Movement for Change (CMC) comprising Nyatura groups, whereas in South Kivu Raia Mutomboki (RM) factions and armed groups affiliated with the Banyamulenge community, on the one hand, and Bafuli-iro, Babembe, and Banyindi communities, on the other, dominated the conflict dynamics. NDC-R remained active and operated in North Kivu territories Rutshuru, Masisi, and Walikale, extending both the territory under its control and its troop strength by co-opting fighters

from other armed groups. NDC-R leader Shimirayi Mwisho Guidon further coordinated the Réseau des patriotes résistants congolais (RPRC), a coalition of armed groups including Mayi-Mayi Kifuafua, Mayi-Mayi Simba, Mayi-Mayi Guides-Mouvement acquis au changement, Mayi-Mayi Mazembe Union pour la protection des innocents (UPDI), and Raia Mutomboki (RM) groups. In addition, APCLS-R had joined forces with NDC-R in late 2018 after the faction led by Mapenzi Bulere Likuwe had split from APCLS. The operational area controlled by NDC-R and their allies extended to cover Masisi, Walikale, Lubero, and Rutshuru territories in early 2020.

Moreover, FARDC supported NDC-R activities targeting the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and provided logistical support [→ DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR, CNRD)]. NDC-R activities targeted Nyatura groups, mainly Nyatura APRCD, Nyatura Domi. Other groups organized within the CMC as well as the Mayi-Mayi Forces populaires de paix (FPP) in Masisi territory. In Rutshuru territory, NDC-R targeted the APCLS and FDLR. Furthermore, NDC-R targeted civilians in all regions they controlled.

Discontent among NDC-R commanders and allies increased with Guidon's rule over the equitable sharing of internal resources, the loss of control over several mining sites and the inability to counter FDLR's influence. Subsequently, NDC-R commanders Gilbert Bwira and Mapenzi Likuhe dismissed Guidon, resulting in the split of the group.

On June 8, NDC-R fighters led by Bwira and supported by FARDC attacked Guidon at the NDC-R headquarters in Pinga locality, Walikale. Alerted by a FARDC officer, Guidon escaped and regrouped with remaining followers in Walikale. Heavy infighting between the Bwira wing and the Guidon wing of NDC-R marked NDC-R's activity in the second half of the year, especially in Walikale. For instance, 17 people were killed and seven injured in a clash between Bwira-led and Guidon-led fighters on July 14 in the villages of Byamba and Bukucha. On July 20, NDC-R Bwira, supported by FARDC, clashed with NDC-R Guidon in Pinga, killing 37 people and leaving twelve injured. On September 4, NDC-R Bwira fighters shot and killed a civilian, whom they suspected of collaborating with NDC-R Guidon, in Mutongo village. The Bwira wing was often supported by FARDC. For instance, on October 14, FARDC and NDC-R Bwira attacked NDC-R Guidon in the villages of Nkingwa, Twamakuru, Koko, and Mpama, killing eleven people.

In Masisi, NDC-R operated against a coalition of APCLS and various Nyatura groups including APRCD and Jean Marie. The attacks often resulted in civilian casualties and displacement. For instance, on February 3, Nyatura Jean Marie attacked NDC-R in Kitso village, leaving 14 civilians dead. On February 11, APCLS fighters clashed with NDC-R in Kinumbi village, killing 13 people. Eight people were killed on May 12, when a coalition of APCLS and Nyatura APRCD attacked NDC-R in Kamonyi village. Three days later, 13 people were killed when a coalition of APCLS, Nyatura Domi, FDLR-Forces Combattants Abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA), and Nyatura APRCD attacked NDC-R in Bwendero village. Following the split of NDC-R in June, NDC-R activity in Masisi was reduced. However, fighting between NDC-R Bwira and APCLS continued throughout the year. On November 4, APCLS attacked and dispersed NDC-R Bwira and FARDC from Kinyumba village. In Rutshuru, NDC-R, often supported by FARDC, operated against Nyatura Domi, under the CMC, and FDLR [→ DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR, CNRD)]. For instance, on January 6, Nyatura Domi attacked NDC-R and FARDC positions in the villages of Kabumba and Mutwangano killing 16 and injuring

seven people. 18 people were killed in an attack targeting Nyatura Domi and FDLR-FOCA in the villages of Mukaka, Kinyamugenzi, and Bumbasha. On March 3, NDC-R clashed with Nyatura Domi in Katsiru locality, killing 18. Twelve people were killed in an attack by NDC-R targeting Nyatura Domi in Kamudoka village on April 3. Following the split of NDC-R in June, its activity in Rutshuru territory decreased.

APCLS, predominantly recruiting among Hunde communities, increased its activities in Masisi compared to the previous year. This year, APCLS cooperated with Nyatura groups and FDLR. Besides frequent clashes with NDC-R in Masisi, the group targeted FARDC as well as civilians. For instance, on February 7, APCLS fighters raided the village of Bulende, killing two civilians suspected of collaborating with the NDC-R. One person was killed and four others injured when a coalition of APCLS and Nyatura APRDC attacked civilians in Lukweti village, on April 7. On May 16, a coalition of APCLS and Nyatura APRDC raided Lwama village killing two people and looting livestock. Following the split of NDC-R in June, clashes between APCLS and NDC-R decreased. Subsequent APCLS activity concentrated on FARDC and civilians. For instance, on September 25, APCLS fighters clashed with FARDC in Luhinzi village, killing six and injuring three. On October 6, APCLS clashed with FARDC and occupied the village of Loashi village.

Various Nyatura factions, organized within the CMC, predominantly recruiting among Hutu communities, operated in Walikale, Masisi, and Rutshuru territories. Besides clashing with NDC-R and FARDC, in Rutshuru and Masisi, Nyatura groups targeted civilians, mainly through abductions and lootings. For instance, on January 14, Nyatura Domi raided Bambu locality, Rutshuru, killing one civilian. On January 31, Nyatura Domi looted Minjenje village, Walikale, injuring three people and abducting five civilians. One person was killed and one injured in a Nyatura FDP attack on a police station in Nikiko village, Rutshuru, on April 10. On May 25, FARDC, allegedly supported by Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF), attacked a coalition of FDLR-FOCA and Nyatura Domi in the villages of Mudugudu, Sisa, Manyoni, Rugarika, and Kibwe, Rutshuru. Three people were killed and more than 20 houses burned down. Nyatura FDP fighters clashed with FARDC in the villages of Rubwe-Sud, Kanyatsi, and Kasesero, Rutshuru, on August 3, killing six and injuring four. Two people were killed, eight injured and 64 houses burned down, when FARDC attacked Nyatura FDP fighters in a series of villages in Rutshuru, on August 26. Clashes between Nyatura factions and FARDC, as well as attacks targeting civilians continued throughout the year in Rutshuru.

In comparison to previous years, the activity of Mayi-Mayi Charles, operating in Rutshuru, decreased. However, Mayi-Mayi Charles continued to attack civilians, including armed park rangers of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN). For instance, on February 10, Mayi-Mayi Charles abducted 36 fishermen on Lake Edward near Kamuroro village, and demanded a ransom for their release. On March 3, a coalition of Mayi-Mayi Charles and FDLR attacked ICCN park rangers in Nyabitale village, killing four people. Later that month, on March 19, Mayi-Mayi Charles forcefully recruited more than 100 children from the villages of Kisharo, Buramba, and Nyamilima. The group's activity decreased significantly in the second half of the year.

In South Kivu, the violent conflict between armed groups recruiting its members from the Banyamulenge community, on the one hand, and Bafuliuro, Babembe, and Banyindu communities, on the other, continued in the first half of the year in the highlands of Fizi, Mwenga, and Uvira territo-

ries. The main armed groups affiliated to the Banyamulenge community comprised Twiganeho, Ngumino, and Makanika. Ngumino was allegedly cooperated with the exiled opposition group Rwanda National Congress. The main armed Bafuliuro group, Mayi-Mayi Biloze Bishambuke, and the main Babembe armed group, Mayi-Mayi Ebuela, were supported by armed groups organized within the National Coalition of the People for the Sovereignty of Congo (CNPSC), such as the Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba, and were allegedly cooperating with RED-Tabara and National Forces of Liberation (FNL) [→ Burundi, DR Congo (FNL, RED-Tabara)].

Pre-existing inter-communal tensions in the area had escalated in 2019 following the appointment of a Banyamulenge mayor of the newly created administrative entity of Minembwe. The accompanying increase in Ngumino activity raised mistrust among the Bafuliuro, Babembe, and Banyindu communities. This resulted in heavy clashes between the armed groups and FARDC leading to civilian casualties and the destruction of property. Fighting between the armed groups and FARDC in Uvira, Fizi, and Mwenga continued. For instance, on January 26, Biloze Bishambuke fighters attacked Ngumino and Twiganeho positions in a series of villages in Uvira. In the course of the attacks, houses, schools, and a health center were burned down and cattle were stolen. The same day, Biloze Bishambuke fighters looted Mitamba village, Uvira, and burned down houses as well as local market stalls. On March 7, FARDC attacked Mayi-Mayi Ebu Ela fighters, recovering 350 cows which had previously been stolen from the villages of Kivumu and Biziba, Fizi. On April 26, Mayi-Mayi Ebu Ela fighters attacked a RED-Tabara position in Runywera, Uvira, resulting in the destruction of houses. 25 people were killed and ten injured on May 24, when Twiganeho, supported by Ngumino, attacked the FARDC in the villages of Kakenge, Kalongi, Kabingo, and Madegu, Fizi. From June on, fighting increasingly turned violent. For instance, on June 1, Twiganeho fighters attacked Biloze Bishambuke and Mayi-Mayi Ebu Ela fighters in a series of villages in Fizi, killing 29 people and injuring two people. The attackers also set houses on fire and stole 370 cows. On June 14, Makanika fighters killed six FARDC combatants in an ambush near Kangwe village, Fizi. The attackers also torched houses in the surrounding villages of Kangwe.

Large-scale destruction of livestock, accommodation, and infrastructure continued throughout the year. On July 16, a coalition of Ngumino, Twiganeho, and Makanika fighters raided the villages of Kipupu, Alinga, Kongwe, and Kiseke, Mwenga, killing 15 people and injuring eleven. The attackers burned 127 houses and stole medicine as well as cattle. On August 31, Ngumino, Twiganeho, and Makanika fighters attacked the FARDC in the villages of Bilalombili and Ngezi, Mwenga. A total of seven people were killed and nine injured, 250 houses were burned down, and livestock was stolen. On October 20, a coalition of Makanika, Ngumino, and Twiganeho clashed with Biloze Bishambuke in five villages in Fizi, killing 19 people and burning down 60 houses. A few days later, on October 25, Twiganeho fighters attacked civilians in the villages of Imbyangoma, Kaleke, and Bishigo, Fizi, burning down more than 85 houses. On December 21, a coalition of CNPSC and Biloze Bishambuke attacked Twiganeho and Ngumino positions in the villages of Ngoma, Kitasha, Mikalati, Cakira, Nyamara, and Kamombo, Fizi, killing 37 people and injuring 23. The attackers also abducted 42 civilians and burned houses.

Various RM factions continued to operate in Kalehe, Shabunda, and Kabare territories. Following low state authority in those territories, attacks on civilians through extortion,

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rape, and abduction persisted. The groups also clashed with FARDC and targeted mining areas. For instance, on January 5, RM Walike attacked civilians in Kiseku village, Shabunda, and stole livestock, as well as solar panels. The attackers also abducted 20 people and forced them to carry the looted goods. On July 7, a coalition of Mayi-Mayi Malaika and RM Musumbu attacked civilians in the villages of Lobe, Bwanahali, and Kabulongo, Shabunda. The attackers killed one person and looted livestock, twelve solar panels, and other goods. On November 14, the RM Kabazimia attacked the RM Kazimoto in the mining sites of Kagoga, Ngola, Masamba, and Nzenzela, Shabunda. Overall, two people were killed, four injured, and 14 houses burned down. On December 17, RM Wemba Mabala fighters attacked the RM Kabazimia in Suiza village, Shabunda, killing five people, including the leader of the RM Wemba Mabala. lhu

DR CONGO (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1997**

Conflict parties: Lamuka vs. FCC vs. government
Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between various opposition parties and civil society groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. In December 2018, President Félix Tshisekedi of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) was elected. Subsequently, his party alliance Heading for Change (CACH) had formed a power-sharing coalition with former president Joseph Kabila's alliance Common Front for Congo (FCC), comprising Kabila's own party People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) as well as other parties. The opposition alliance Lamuka comprised, for instance, the Engagement for Citizenship and Development (ECIDE) party, led by Martin Fayulu.

Nationwide protests, initiated by the opposition against the alleged 'balkanization' of the eastern DR Congo, were violently dispersed by the police on January 17. Several protesters were injured and 22 arrested. On April 8, Tshisekedi's chief of staff was arrested for his involvement in the embezzlement of approx. USD 50 million. In reaction to the arrest, his supporters took to the streets in the capital Kinshasa. In his hometown Bukavu, South Kivu province, hundreds of protesters set up barricades and burned tires. On June 30, he was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment.

On June 22, two FCC deputies proposed justice reforms concerning the powers of district attorneys which led to severe tensions in the CACH-FCC coalition. In response, UDPS activists organized large-scale protests in several cities throughout the country from June 24 to 27. Following a protest in Kinshasa on June 24, 18 people were injured, among them 15 police officers, and at least 40 people were arrested.

On July 3, a candidate closely aligned to Kabila was elected and confirmed as new head of the Independent National Electoral Commission. This led to large-scale protests throughout the country. For instance, on July 7, the police dispersed Lamuka protests, injuring and arresting several people in Kinshasa. On July 8, the Ministry of Interior imposed a nationwide ban on rallies. However, on July 9, mass protests erupted in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, Haut-Katanga province. These protests were violently dispersed by the police using live ammunition, resulting in the death of at least three protesters

and two police officers. Moreover, at least 115 people were injured. Furthermore, on October 14, the police dispersed a protest initiated by Fayulu in Kinshasa and prevented him from joining the march.

In November, Tshisekedi held consultations with government and opposition members to overcome the country's ongoing socioeconomic crisis. On December 6, Tshisekedi, in an attempt to achieve parliamentary majority in his favor, threatened to dissolve the parliament and announce new elections, thereby effectively ending the coalition between FCC-CACH. The announcement triggered clashes between FCC and CACH supporters in Kinshasa on the following two days, resulting in several injured persons. Subsequently, the president of the national assembly as well as other FCC members of the board of parliament were dismissed on December 10, which led to clashes between FCC and CACH supporters outside the parliamentary building in Kinshasa.

day

DR CONGO, RWANDA (FDLR, CNRD)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1994**

Conflict parties: FDLR vs. CNRD vs. DR Congo, Rwanda
Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The violent crisis over national power, subnational predominance, and resources between the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the National Council for Renewal and Democracy (CNRD), on the one hand, and the governments of the DR Congo (DRC), supported by MONUSCO, and Rwanda, on the other, continued.

FDLR was mainly active in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, DRC, while CNRD was mainly active in Kalehe territory, South Kivu province, DRC. Overall, FDLR and CNRD activity significantly decreased, mainly due to the ongoing military operation Sokola 2 by the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) and pressure from other armed groups [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.).]

Throughout the year, FARDC continued operations against FDLR and CNRD. In the first half of the year, FARDC operations in South Kivu dislodged CNRD from Kalehe. CNRD leadership lost command and control of their organization, leaving fighters and dependents scattered across Kalehe, Mwenga, Walungu, and Uvira territories, in addition to hundreds being repatriated to Rwanda. To combat FDLR and CNRD, FARDC reportedly employed members of the armed group Nduma Defence of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R) [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)] as a proxy to push FDLR and CNRD out of North and South Kivu. While the NDC-R ran the bulk of fighting against FDLR allies, the FARDC launched a series of operations in North and South Kivu, allegedly involving small, rotating detachments of Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF). Both Rwanda and DRC denied Rwandan involvement in FARDC operations.

On April 24, FARDC launched military operations against FDLR. At least seven civilians were killed and up to 250 houses burned. Following an operation targeting inter alia FDLR-Forces Combattants Abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) elements, FARDC announced that one of their self-proclaimed generals was killed on August 28 in Makoka locality, Rutshuru. Although weakened by FARDC operations, FDLR and CNRD attacks continued throughout the year. In the first half of the year, attacks attributed to FDLR increased in Nyiragongo and

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Rutshuru territories, with at least 21 civilians killed. On April 24, suspected FDLR-FOCA members ambushed and killed 13 rangers and four civilians in Virunga National Park. In the latter half of the year, following the redeployment of some FARDC units, FDLR and CNRD began to recruit actively in the northern part of South Kivu, especially among young people in Kalehe.

Several former FDLR and NDC members were tried for crimes against humanity. On August 19, the Operational Military Court of North Kivu concluded hearings in the prosecution of the former leader and two members of the NDC and one FDLR leader who were tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated between 2007 and 2017. On November 25, all four accused were convicted to life sentences. On June 8, the same court started to examine 20 suspected militants in the Miriki case, among them FDLR-FOCA members charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and participation in an insurrectional movement between 2015 and 2016.

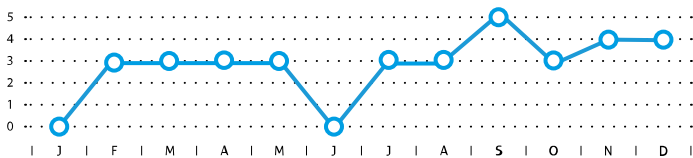
According to a MONUSCO report, at least 254 women and 67 children were victims of conflict-related sexual violence this year. The majority of these incidents was documented in North and South Kivu and in particular attributed to FDLR as well as state agents such as FARDC. fb

ETHIOPIA (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **↑** | Start: **2017**

Conflict parties: Oromo vs. Amhara vs. Tigrayans vs. Misqan vs. Marego vs. Afar vs. Berta vs. Gumuz vs. other ethnic groups

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources between various ethnic groups escalated to a war. Violent attacks between ethnic groups mostly took place in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. The conflicts escalated around disputes over the usage of arable land and resources. Additionally, the conflict around the regional elections in Tigray also led to tensions between ethnic groups in the region.

On February 27, two communities in the Gambela region clashed for multiple days after the assassination of a local state official, leaving twelve people dead and 21 injured. Furthermore, 7,000 people were displaced, nearly 400 houses destroyed and 300 livestock killed.

On March 12, armed Afar militants attacked members of the Oromo community over arable land in Awash town, Afar region, leaving ten people dead and seven injured.

Eight Oromo died after an attack from an unidentified armed ethnic group in Benishangul-Gumuz on April 9. Consequently, at least 1,000 people fled the area around Gilgel-Beles town.

On May 11, armed militias of the Afar state killed eight people in a cross-border raid on Somali pastoralists in Madaane town, Somali region. Clashes between members of the Misqan and Marego communities due to a land dispute left six people dead in the area of Meskan, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR).

In Bambasi district, Benishangul-Gumuz, clashes between

Amhara and Berta due to ethnic rivalries left four people dead in early June.

On July 23, the president of the Amhara regional state declared the goal to regain "illegally taken land" from the neighboring Tigray regional government. Throughout the month of August, Tigray regional authorities detained and expelled Amhara people from the Tigray region if they would not register for the upcoming regional election [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)].

On July 27, an unidentified armed group killed 14 Amhara and expelled 100 people from Metekel zone, Benishangul-Gumuz.

In late August, violent clashes due to forest usage rights between members of the Konso and Ale communities left twelve people dead and ten injured in the SNNPR.

On September 6, 140 people were killed in inter-communal clashes in Benishangul-Gumuz. Intending to overthrow the reform agenda by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Gumuz militants attacked Amhara people with guns and spears leading to the displacement of 25,000 people.

In Dangur town, Benishangul-Gumuz, 20 civilians were killed in an attack by an unidentified armed group on September 25.

From October 6 to 7, unidentified militants attacked civilians in Benishangul-Gumuz, leaving 14 dead. Clashes over the robbery of firearms between members of the Amhara and Agew communities in Metekel zone, Benishangul-Gumuz, resulted in the deaths of twelve civilians on October 11.

From October 18 to 21, unidentified militants killed 31 and injured five Amhara in Gura Farda town, Bench Sheko zone, SNNPR. Consequently, 2,600 people fled the region. In late October, border clashes between regional ethnic groups along the Somali and Afar region in the Sitti zone left 27 people dead and 16 injured.

Military operations by state security forces against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in November and December, raised the number of localized attacks and massacres due to ethnic tensions [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)]. Most significantly, on November 9, members of the Tigrayan youth group Samri, aided by Tigrayan militias and police forces, allegedly killed over 600 civilians predominantly identified as Amhara and Wolkaites with knives, machetes, hatchets, and ropes in Mai Kadra town, Tigray region. However, an investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission is still ongoing.

In November, fighting also escalated in the SNNPR over the 2018 restructuring of the Segen Area People's Zone, which left at least 66 people dead and 130,000 displaced.

Due to the ongoing armed conflict between the government and the TPLF, OHCHR expressed concerns over the situation and rising cases of hate speech and ethnic profiling against Tigrayans in the country on December 9.

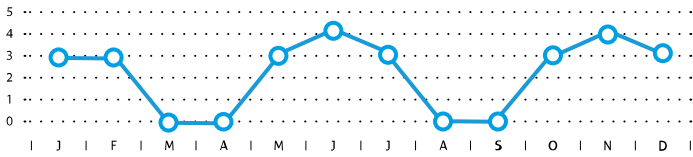
An attack on a bus by unidentified militants left 34 civilians dead between Wonbera and Chagni town, Benishangul-Gumuz, on November 14.

On December 23, an attack by members of the Gumuz community in Bekoji town, Benishangul-Gumuz, left 207 civilians dead and 38 injured, as well as 97,000 displaced. The attack happened the day after Abiy visited the region in response to ethnic violence in recent months. On December 24, 40 suspected attackers were killed by state security forces in Benishangul-Gumuz. noh

ETHIOPIA (OLF / OROMIA)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1992

Conflict parties: OLF vs. government
 Conflict items: subnational predominance



The violent crisis over subnational predominance between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the federal government escalated to a limited war.

Following the escalation of the conflict in 2019, the security situation in the Oromia region and the relationship between the government and the OLF further deteriorated. Mainly the OLF's armed wing Oromia Liberation Army, also known as OLF Shane, was involved in violent encounters.

In January, three Oromo national parties, the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), the Oromo National Party and the OLF announced the formation of a regional coalition for the upcoming elections called the Coalition for Democratic Federalism.

On January 11, 21 students who had been held hostage since the beginning of December 2019 were released. Six students were still missing. The government accused the OLF of being responsible for the abduction, while the OLF blamed the government in turn.

Throughout the year, the Oromia population and the OLF accused the government of conducting violent security operations in the Oromia region, including the torture and killing of civilians and arbitrary mass arrests. For example, on January 27, the police arrested 75 OLF supporters in the Wellega zone, Oromia. On February 14, Oromia state police arrested and hit several Oromo musicians, who were accused by the police of working with the OLF. On December 21, the OLF accused police forces of arresting ten OLF members, eight of them serving as members of delegations or committees, and two journalists.

In addition, the military allegedly killed more than a dozen civilians during their OLF Shane counterinsurgencies, mostly young Oromo with suspected ties to the OLF.

OLF Shane was accused by police of carrying out a bomb attack on February 22 in Ambo city, Oromia, injuring 29 people. The attack also killed civilians and Oromo officials who were allegedly supporting the government under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

In January and February, OLF Shane and military forces clashed in the West Wellega zone, Oromia, during government-led counterinsurgencies against OLF Shane members, in which military forces killed several OLF Shane members as well as civilians during the clashes. Subsequently, several thousand civilians fled the zone.

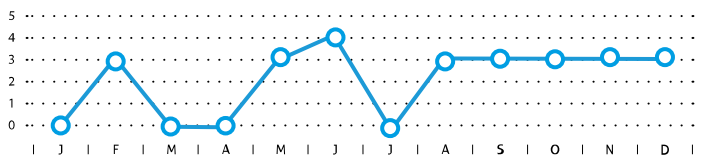
On June 29, an unknown group killed the Oromo musician and activist Hachalu Hundessa in the capital Addis Ababa [→ Ethiopia (opposition)]. The killing sparked extensive protests in Addis Ababa, and Oromia region, especially Shashamane city, with 239 people killed. Following the unrest, the government arrested more than 5,000 individuals, including high ranking OLF leaders, local politicians, traditional leaders, activists, and journalists. Among these were OFC members and popular activists Jawar Mohammed and Bekele Gerba as

well as journalist and activist Eskinder Nega. The government accused both the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the OLF of killing Hundessa and arrested at least two suspects who, according to the government, confessed to having been instructed by the OLF. OLF Shane denied any responsibility for the killing. Following the protests, police forces put OLF chairman Dawud Ibsa under house arrest in Addis Ababa for a week on July 26. krp

ETHIOPIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2005

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power



The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the government escalated to a limited war.

On January 3, an opposition coalition formed out of the three opposition parties Oromo Federalist Congress, Oromo Liberation Front, and Oromo National Party under the lead of Oromo activist Jawar Mohammed.

Clashes between state security forces and the local community broke out on February 4 in the capital Addis Ababa when security forces attempted to demolish a church. Two people were killed and 17 injured.

State security forces shot anti-government protesters in Tume town, Maji district, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), on February 29, killing six people and injuring ten. The protesters opposed the government's decision to change the head of the administrative structure of the region in SNNPR.

On March 31, the federal government ended a three-month long shutdown of internet and phone usage in western Oromia region. Although the government imposed the shutdown due to security reasons, the Covid-19 pandemic required the use of the internet for the distribution of Covid-19 related information and the government lifted the restriction.

The assassination of Oromo singer Hachalu Hundessa in Addis Ababa, on June 29, sparked violent clashes for days in Oromia [→ Ethiopia (OLF – Oromia)]. In the days and weeks after his assassination, Oromo and supporters of Hundessa clashed with police forces and other communities in Oromia and Addis Ababa, leading to the death of 239 people and the displacement of around 10,000. At the beginning of July, authorities imprisoned at least two suspects in relation to the assassination. They claimed to have followed orders by the Oromo Liberation Army in an attempt to incite ethnic tensions in the region.

From August 17 to 24, violent clashes between state security forces and mostly Oromo civilians erupted again in the districts of Haramaya, Aweday, Ciro, Dire Dawa, Ambo, Shashemene, and Bale Robe, Oromia, in the aftermath of the assassination of Hundessa, resulting in the death of 40 people.

Between August 9 and 12, people demonstrated over the imprisonment of local leaders in Sodo town, Wolaita district, SNNPR. Subsequently, violent clashes between state security forces and protesters erupted, leaving 16 people

dead, 18 injured, and displacing approx. 20,000. On August 13, state security forces killed a young man, in the Degehabur district, Somali region, in a police operation to contain youth riots, leading to protests in the following days.

Demonstrators, protesting against police mistreatment, clashed with state security forces on September 3, leaving nine people dead and 39 injured in the Afdher zone of Somali region.

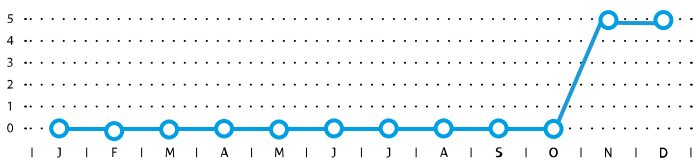
In Robee and Bale district, Oromia, police forces clashed with protesters, demanding the release of political prisoners, on October 11. One person was killed and another one injured. After the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) held regional elections on September 5, which were declared unlawful by the government, a war broke out in Tigray region in early November [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)]. noh

ETHIOPIA, ERITREA (TPLF / TIGRAY)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **NEW** | Start: **2020**

Conflict parties: Eritrea, Ethiopia vs. TPLF

Conflict items: system/ideology



A new war over the orientation of the political system in Ethiopia between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), on the one hand, and the Ethiopian as well as the Eritrean government, on the other, erupted.

The Ethiopian government was supported by special forces of the Amhara regional government and Amhara militias. The TPLF and its Tigray Regional Forces (TRF) were supported by various Tigrayan militias. The Eritrean government, allied with the Ethiopian government, was involved in fighting the TPLF in Tigray since mid-November, although the Eritrean government as well as the Ethiopian government denied this. Violence was mostly concentrated in Tigray region, Ethiopia. Due to the shutdown of communications and transport routes in Tigray, information over conflict developments was limited. Nevertheless, reports indicated several thousand fatalities. According to UNOCHA, approx. 222,000 people were newly internally displaced. Between November 7 and December 29, 53,300 people fled to neighboring Sudan.

The TPLF-led Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) had dominated the Ethiopian government coalition from 1991 to 2018, thus also being in power during the Ethiopian-Eritrean war between 1998 and 2000. In 2018, the chairman of the EPRDF Abiy Ahmed became prime minister. Following his inauguration, he broke with previous TPLF policy and initiated peace talks with neighboring Eritrea, culminating in the Jeddah Peace Agreement, which included the restitution of disputed Tigrayan territory to Eritrea. In 2019, Abiy merged all former EPRDF member parties into the Prosperity Party except for TPLF, which refused to participate. On March 31, the federal electoral board postponed national and regional elections, scheduled for August 29, for an uncertain period of time, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. On May 4, the TPFL-led regional government in Tigray stated their intention to hold on to the election date. In response, the electoral board deemed the planned election in Tigray unlawful. On September 9, despite multiple warnings by the federal government, Tigray held elections with TPLF winning

189 of 190 seats in the regional parliament. On October 5, the regional government of Tigray recalled all their delegates from the federal parliament, stating their mandate had expired. One day later, the federal government announced the cutting of all ties with regional Tigray leaders and stop their funding.

Tensions between the TPLF and the Ethiopian government turned violent when on November 3 and 4, TPLF troops allegedly attacked the Northern Command headquarters in Mekelle and several military bases of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) in the cities of Adigrat, Agula, Dansha, and Sero, Tigray, leaving an unspecified number of people dead. Subsequently, on November 4, the federal government launched a military offensive and declared a six-month state of emergency in Tigray, shutting down the region's telecommunications.

Between November 8 and 11, ENDF, supported by regional Amhara forces and militias, attacked and took control of the city of Humera, Tigray, with artillery strikes, allegedly killing an unknown number of civilians and looting the hospital as well as several other buildings.

A TPLF rocket attack on the airports of the towns of Gondar and Bahir, Amhara region, on November 13, left two people dead and 15 injured.

Both conflict parties confirmed heavy clashes between November 14 and 29 in the cities of Mekelle, Axum, Adigrat, Shire, and Alamata, Tigray.

On November 21, the Ethiopian government announced the capture of Adigrat. One day later, Abiy offered TPLF a 72-hour ultimatum to surrender. Following TPLF's refusal, Abiy ordered ENDF to attack Tigray's regional capital Mekelle on November 26. Heavy fighting was also reported around the towns Alamata and Idaga Hamus, Tigray.

Previously, on November 25, the Ethiopian government had released a statement emphasizing the importance of non-intervention in its internal affairs.

On November 28, Abiy officially declared the victory over TPLF and announced an end to Ethiopia's law enforcement operations in the region.

While the exact date remains unclear, Eritrea joined the federal government of Ethiopia in the fighting against TRF in Tigray. On November 10, TPLF leader Debretsion Gebremichael accused Eritrea of sending military forces into Tigray in support of the Ethiopian government. On November 14, TPLF fired multiple missiles at Eritrea's capital Asmara. Later that month, on November 27 and 28, rocket attacks also targeted Eritrean military installations and an airport in Asmara. Reportedly, Eritrean soldiers killed at least 59 civilians in the border town Zalambessa, Tigray, on November 18. Three days later, Eritrean forces reportedly killed and injured several civilians in Adigrat. Before the conflict had escalated, 96,000 Eritrean refugees had resided in Tigray. Reportedly, many Eritrean refugees were killed by Eritrean forces as well as armed militias in the refugee camps in Tigray since November. Furthermore, Eritrean military officers allegedly forced Eritrean refugees to repatriate to Eritrea, with the exact number of forced returns unknown.

Furthermore, on November 30, Eritrean troops killed at least 80 civilians in Idaga Hamus during the capture of the town and its neighboring villages. In early December in Tigray, Eritrean troops killed 13 civilians in the village of Tokot, and looted a mosque in the town of Negash around December 12 to 14, leaving at least 81 civilians dead.

A total of 1.3 million people were projected to need aid by 01/06/2021. Due to the limited access for humanitarian organizations, people living in Tigray, including Eritrean

refugees, were left without aid for several weeks, triggering a severe humanitarian crisis. On December 2, the UN and the Ethiopian government signed a deal for “unimpeded” humanitarian access to the areas in Tigray under control of the federal government. Ten days later, the first convoy with medicine and other basic goods reached Mekelle. However, access for humanitarian organizations remained limited up until the end of the year.

On December 15, Ethiopian troops and Amhara militias killed at least 750 civilians at Maryam Zion Church in Axum.

On December 22, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urged for investigations of human rights violations against both Amharans and Tigrayans in the conflict. She also pointed to multiple reports that the Fano militia had committed human rights abuses, including killing civilians.

On December 25, the electoral board announced 06/05/2021 as the new date for the general election. However, an election will not be held in Tigray, where an interim administration has been put in place instead. noh, mmu, mmp

GHANA (HSGF ET AL. / WESTERN TOGOLAND)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2017**

Conflict parties: HSGF et al. vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over secession of Western Togoland between secessionist groups, including the Homeland Study Group Foundation (HSGF) and the Western Togoland Restoration Front (WTRF), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, escalated to a violent crisis. While the WTRF described themselves as a militant group striving for independence, the HSGF denied its involvement in violent actions. However, multiple non-violent and violent measures remained difficult to attribute clearly to the respective actors.

In recent years, various secessionist groups had used the term “Western Togoland”, to designate areas of the Ghanaian Volta Region (Volta), Oti Region, Northern Region, North East Region, and Upper East Region. While separatist sentiment had been present since Ghana’s independence in 1957, the first official attempt to secede was made in 2017. However, government forces prevented an official declaration, arresting several separatist leaders on 05/09/17. A second attempt by alleged HSGF members failed and resulted in the arrest of 81 secessionists in Ho, the regional capital of Volta, on 05/09/19. Furthermore, on 11/16/19, the HSGF published a declaration of independence on its social media channels.

This year, from January to September, the conflict was mainly marked by arrests of alleged separatists. For instance, on January 15, the director of the radio channel Tongu, situated in Sogakope, Volta, was arrested for broadcasting separatist content. Subsequently, the government shut down the radio station on February 11. Furthermore, on February 17, members of the Ghana Armed Forces arrested 21 secessionist militants, allegedly intending to join a guerrilla training camp in Dzodze, Volta. On May 30, security forces arrested 14 alleged HSGF members in Kpando Aziavi, Volta.

In the night from September 24 to 25, alleged WTRF members mounted roadblocks on motorways leading towards Volta, close to the villages of Sogakope, Tefle, and Juapong. Police forces dismantled the roadblocks, arresting 31 separatists. On September 25, alleged HSGF members attacked two po-

lice stations in Aveyime and Mepe, Volta, taking three police officers hostage and seizing weapons. In the ensuing clash, security forces freed all hostages, killing one and injuring two separatist militants, while one of the abducted officers was injured as well. Following the incident, at least 29 suspected militants were arrested for involvement in the events. On October 15, a group calling themselves the “Dragons of Western Togoland” claimed to have trained 4,300 people to forcibly take over the disputed territory in a video circulated on social media. HSGF distanced itself from this group.

The rest of the year was marked by irregularities in court proceedings of alleged separatists. For instance, on December 21, 32 alleged separatists, who had been released on bail by the court, were immediately re-arrested by police officers. tgu

GUINEA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: FNDC vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between the opposition coalition National Front for Constitutional Defense (FNDC) and the government of President Alpha Condé and his Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) party continued.

This year the protests that had started in October 2019 continued. Protesters and government forces repeatedly clashed throughout the country, accounting for at least 30 conflict-related deaths. However, the FNDC and the government provided varying data concerning the number of protesters and casualties.

In the first months, the FNDC staged numerous nationwide protests against a planned constitutional referendum, permitting Condé to serve a third term in office. For instance, on January 6, thousands of FNDC supporters took to the streets in the capital Conakry. During associated protests in Kankan city, eponymous region, several protesters clashed with RPG supporters, leaving at least twelve people injured.

The FNDC boycotted the constitutional referendum, which took place on March 22, and was decided in favor of Condé. Subsequently, FNDC supporters clashed with police forces in Conakry, burning voting material and attacking polling stations. While official numbers suggested two people were killed and one kidnapped, opposition groups claimed at least ten deaths. On July 20, FNDC called for new nationwide protests demanding the resignation of Condé. In Conakry and several other cities, protesters erected roadblocks and subsequently clashed with security forces who arrested several opposition members. In total, at least 20 people were injured.

In the run-up to the presidential elections on October 18, protests further increased. Following Condé’s nomination, FNDC supporters blockaded roads and clashed with security forces who dispersed them using tear gas in Kolaboui, Boké region, on September 18. Similarly, on September 21, during a protest in Boké, eponymous region, members of the FNDC burned tires, clashed with security forces, and burned down a police station. Furthermore, during a campaign visit by Condé in Dalaba, Mamou region, on September 30, a FNDC protester was shot and killed by security forces.

The contested presidential elections sparked further violent protests. From October 19 to 27, protesters repeatedly burned furniture and tires in many cities throughout the

country. Government forces dispersed them using tear gas. Approx. 20 people were killed in the clashes. On October 24, Condé's third term was confirmed by the Independent National Electoral Commission with 59 percent of the votes. mgo

KENYA (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1963**

Conflict parties: Pokot vs. Turkana vs. Kikuyu vs. Masaai vs. Uasin Gishu vs. Siria vs. Borana vs. Degodia vs. other ethnic groups
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources

The violent crisis over resources and subnational predominance between various ethnic groups and their sub-groups continued.

The ethnic groups involved in the conflict predominantly fought over access to resources, such as grazing land and water, and opposing territorial claims. This year, the areas most frequently affected by inter-communal violence were the counties of Turkana and Narok. Over the course of the year, at least 46 people were killed in the conflict.

Throughout the first half of the year, the prolonged conflict between the Masaai sub-clans Uasin Gishu and Siria about the Nkararo-Enoretet boundary in the Transmara area in Narok County saw multiple violent incidents. For instance, on January 27, one police officer was killed in a clash. The fighting between the two sub-clans continued in March and April, leaving two persons dead, ten injured, and at least 30 houses torched.

In May, members of Masaai and Kispsigis communities clashed in Olooruasi village and Olpusimoru village, Narok County, allegedly triggered by an incident of livestock theft. Repeated clashes over the course of approx. two weeks left nine people dead and 13 injured.

On January 27, members of the Pokot community conducted a raid in Kapedo village, Turkana County, shooting dead a police officer and two civilians as well as injuring 14 people. Another clash between Pokot and Turkana occurred in July, when two Pokot pastoralists were injured in an attack by Turkana bandits that looted more than 1,000 cows and 3,000 goats and sheep. The cattle were caught again later during the year as part of a recovery process.

On the border of the Marsabit and Wajir counties, members of the Borana and Degodia communities clashed in Badanarero village after a theft of 70 camels during the second week of June. The fighting left at least 13 people dead.

In September, the Ajuran community and the Ethiopian Oromo community clashed in Bute town in Wajir County. The incident was sparked by an alleged killing of a Kenyan taxi driver which led to retaliatory attacks on members of the Ethiopian community, killing five.

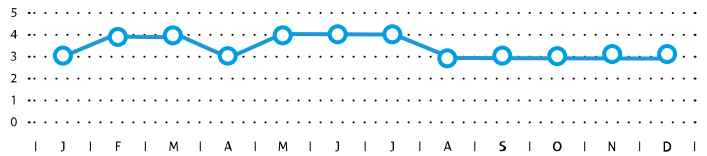
Fighting between the Garre and Murule communities in Mandera town, eponymous county, over control of communal land and pasture left three people dead and at least two injured in October as well as ten pastoralists killed in December.

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MALI (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY / CENTRAL MALI)

Intensity: **4** | Change: • | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: Dogon, Bambara, Dozo vs. Fulani vs. Islamist groups
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The limited war over subnational predominance and resources such as water, wood, and arable land between the Dogon and Bambara ethnic communities and their Dozo self-defense militias, the Fulani ethnic community, and Islamist groups continued.

Since the 2012 Tuareg rebellion in Mali and the subsequent expansion of various Islamist groups [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)], the deteriorating security situation, especially in the country's Northern and Central regions, has further exacerbated rivalries between Bambara and Dogon farmers, on the one hand, and mostly Muslim Fulani herders, on the other. Furthermore, the weak government presence and recurrent Islamist attacks in the area incentivized ethnic groups to form Dozo self-defense militias, such as Dan Na Ambassagou. Moreover, Islamist groups allegedly recruited mostly members of the Fulani.

Over the course of the year, both sides were responsible for at least 718 confirmed deaths in at least 236 confirmed violent confrontations between communities in the Mopti and Ségou regions. Furthermore, approx. 80,000 persons were internally displaced.

Dogon self-defense militias and Fulani continued to attack each other in Mopti. For instance, on January 16, at least 18 predominantly Dozo assailants attacked the village of Siba, killing 14 Fulani, injuring two, and looting houses as well as livestock. Moreover, on January 23, Fulani killed at least 20 Dogon civilians in Diougnani. In the night between February 13 and 14, at least 30 suspected Dan Na Ambassagou members, armed with automatic rifles, killed at least 35 Fulani villagers, injured several civilians, and burned large parts of the town Ogossagou. Similar incidents occurred between March 9 and April 21 in the villages of Kourkanda, Madougou-Dogon, Sogou Yoguem, and Danialy, where Fulani militants killed at least 53 Dogon villagers in total. On the other hand, on May 5, Dozo hunters burned down the village of Djongué-Ouro, killing at least twelve Fulani. Between May 23 and 27, armed men torched several Dogon villages in Bankass, Bandiagara, and Koro, killing a total of 48 civilians. The attacks were supposedly carried out by Fulani militias. By July, over 38 villages in central Mali's Mopti and Ségou regions had been attacked by ethnic militias, burning houses and granaries, and seizing thousands of livestock.

From June onwards, the number of extrajudicial killings in the Mopti region, often carried out by Malian Armed Forces (MAFa) with the support of Dozo, increased. Such incidents were reported, for instance, on June 3 and 6, when approx. 30 Dozo and MAFa armed with automatic rifles killed 15 Fulani in the village of Niangassadiou and at least 26 Fulani

in the village of Binedama, respectively. On July 5, the MAFa, together with Dozo, arrested an estimated number of 50 Fulani villagers in Nema. MAFa described the incident as an operation against terrorists. On October 22, MAFa and Dan Na Ambassagou attacked the village of Libe-Peulh near Bankass, killing 24 Fulani civilians and burning parts of the village.

Attacks by Islamist groups continued, targeting mainly Dogon villages, often in alleged collaboration with Fulani militants. For instance, on July 1, suspected Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM) militants attacked the villages of Djimdo, Gourari, and Pangadougou, Mopti, reportedly killing at least 33 Dogon villagers while burning the villages and seizing livestock. A similar attack in the village of Farabougou, Ségou, on October 9, left at least five persons dead and 15 Bambara Dozos and villagers injured. Between November 23 and 24, suspected JNIM militants attacked the Dogon village of Minima Kanda, Mopti, twice, reportedly killing seven villagers in total, burning houses and harvest, as well as seizing vehicles and livestock. Defending the village, Dozo militiamen reportedly killed twelve Islamist militants. pad

MALI (INTER-MILITANT RIVALRY / NORTHERN MALI)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: CMA vs. Platform vs. Islamist groups

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between various militant groups, primarily the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), the so-called Platform, and the Islamist groups Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), formerly known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) [→ Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)] and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM), in Northern Mali, mainly comprising the regions of Gao, Mopti, Ménaka, and Timbuktu, continued. In 2012, aspirations to create an independent state of Azawad in the Northern regions culminated in the Tuareg rebellion. While the militant groups Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and later the High Council for Unity of Azawad (HCUA) initially cooperated with various Islamist groups in their fight against the Malian government, disagreements over the political and ideological orientation of Azawad split this coalition into various factions. In 2013, CMA was formed by, among others, the pro-Azawad Ifoghas Tuareg groups from MNLA and HCUA. In reaction, the Imghad Tuareg Self-Defense Group and Allies (GATIA) and the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA), as well as other government-loyal armed groups, for example factions of the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MAA), founded the Platform.

This year, violence between different signatory groups of the 2015 Bamako Agreement decreased significantly. On January 7 and 8, the CMA and the Platform concluded a new peace agreement in Ménaka, comprising security arrangements to prevent confrontations between the groups' respective local factions and joint operations against banditry in Ménaka. However, following March, intra-militant tensions resulted in several violent events in Ménaka and Timbuktu. For instance, on June 4, the MSA reportedly arrested an armed bandit and killed another in a shootout in Ménaka. On July 15, militants from two rival MAA-factions of the Platform clashed in the villages of Lekraker and Assidi, Timbuktu, leaving one dead. On July 23, CMA-militants of the Tourmouz community attacked a

Tourmouz camp belonging to Oulad Aich-members affiliated with MAA-Platform in the area of Bou Guendouz, Timbuktu, leaving three Tourmouz MAA-members, four civilians, and two Tourmouz CMA-militants dead. On August 2, Oulad Aich militants attacked two positions of Tourmouz CMA-militants in Hassi Lahmar, Timbuktu, killing seven, burning one vehicle, and seizing weaponry as well as a pickup truck.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths in clashes between Islamist groups, mainly ISWAP [→ Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)] and JNIM [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.)], and other militant groups, such as GATIA, MSA, and CMA, decreased significantly to only 14. For instance, on February 20, suspected ISWAP militants shot and killed MAA leader Yoro Ould, one of his guards, and a Malian army officer between Djebok and Tamboutat, Gao. Around July 9, JNIM militants abducted and executed an HCUA commander in Echell, Timbuktu. Furthermore, on August 3, ISWAP militants killed one civilian from Tin Abaw, Ménaka, who was reportedly an ISWAP defector that had joined the MSA. Additionally, on September 6, ISWAP militants abducted three CMA combatants, including a commander who was later killed in Inazole, Ménaka. Moreover, on September 10, presumed ISWAP militants abducted and executed a GATIA militant in Anderamboukane, Ménaka. pad

MALI (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between various opposition groups and the government continued, resulting in a military coup d'état and the formation of a transitional government.

Up until August, the conflict primarily took place between the main opposition party, Union for the Republic and Democracy (URD) as well as the newly formed June 5 Movement - Rally of the Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP), and the government, led by then-president Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and his Rally for Mali (RPM). Following increasing tensions and violent protests by the opposition, members of the Malian Armed Forces (MAFa) intervened and staged a coup d'état on August 18, ousting the president, and subsequently forming a transitional government. A majority of the parties, the M5-RFP, and several trade unions criticized it for a lack of power-sharing.

With conflicts on Malian territory turning more violent and affecting a larger share of the territory, protests and opposition against Keïta's government had increased in recent years [→ Mali (inter-communal rivalry / Central Mali); Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)]. Opposition parties criticized the government for having failed to provide security and address the strained living conditions of the population. For instance, on March 11, hundreds of teachers protested in the capital Bamako, to criticize low wages and demand the resignation of the prime minister. Security forces dispersed the crowds using tear gas and injuring several. Furthermore, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimi (JNIM) militants abducted Soumaila Cissé, leader of URD, and six other persons, sparking demonstrations condemning the government's alleged inaction in the prevention of attacks of this sort. URD demanded the release of Cissé and demonstrated on several occasions between April 13 and 17, in Bamako. On October 5, Cissé was freed through a

prisoner exchange against 100 JNIM fighters. On March 29 and April 19, parliamentary elections were held. In reaction to the re-election of RPM, a series of protests were staged in the regions of Mopti, Sikasso, Bamako, and Koulikoro..

Following the elections, on April 30 the Constitutional Court announced the overturning of provisional election results for 31 out of 147 seats, thereby awarding ten additional seats to the RPM. In response, the M5-RFP was formed, comprising opposition parties, civil society, and the Coordination of Movements, Associations and Sympathizers of Imam Mahmoud Dicko. In the following months, M5-RFP organized several protests to demand the resignation of president Keïta and the dissolution of the Constitutional Court. For instance, on June 5, M5-RFP organized a demonstration with over 20,000 participants in Bamako. Protesters burned eleven police vehicles and security forces used tear gas, water cannons, and live ammunition to disperse the crowds, injuring 19 persons. Subsequently, Keïta announced negotiations for a unity government on June 16. However, between July 10 and 12, tens of thousands of opposition members protested again in Bamako, looting the parliament and attacking RPM offices. According to MINUSMA, security forces intervened by using tear gas and live ammunition, killing 14 people and injuring 158.

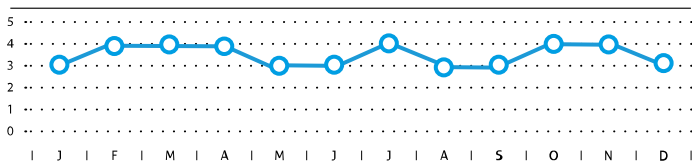
On August 18, MAFa soldiers conducted a coup d'état, arresting Keïta, Prime Minister Boubou Cissé, and other senior government officials. Subsequently, several clashes between the mutinous soldiers and government supporters erupted. Shortly after his arrest, on August 18, Keïta announced his resignation and dissolved the National Assembly as well as the government. The army announced the establishment of the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP) led by Colonel Assimi Goïta. After domestic and international pressure, CNSP agreed to an 18-month political transition period towards civilian rule. On September 25, Bah N'Daw was sworn in as acting president of Mali and Goïta as vice-president. Six days later, Moctar Ouane was appointed prime minister. The transitional government was formed on November 10, and a national transitional council was announced one day later. In the aftermath, several groups, among them fractions of M5-RFP, many political parties, and trade unions, expressed their skepticism toward the composition of the national transitional council. [hit](#)

MALI, BURKINA FASO ET AL. (JNIM, AQIM ET AL.)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **•** | Start: **1998**

Conflict parties: Al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine, Ansaroul Islam, AQIM, JNIM, Macina Liberation Front vs. Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, France, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, USA

Conflict items: international power



upgraded (>1,080 deaths)

The war over the orientation of the international system between the Islamist group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM), comprised of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine, Macina Libera-

tion Front (MLF), and its regional affiliates Ansaroul Islam, and various other Islamist militant groups, on the one hand, and Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger (G5 Sahel), France, and other governments on the other hand, continued. Regional, national, and international efforts to combat Islamist militants in the Sahel zone continued this year. Among international efforts to intervene in the region were MINUSMA, French forces under Operation Barkhane, as well as European and US military contingents. The G5 Forces, pooling military, financial, and logistical resources of their members to combat Jihadist militant groups were accompanied by national and cross-border interventions. In addition, self-defense groups organized by affected communities of either country continued to grow in size and strength this year [→ Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry); Mali (inter-communal rivalry/ Central Mali)].

Since December, the longstanding debate reopened over whether to negotiate with jihadists to break the spiral of violence in the region. At the same time, France considered reducing its contingent. In recent years, protests against international military interventions repeatedly took place, especially in Mali [→ Mali (opposition)].

This year, the Sahel affiliates of IS and al-Qaeda reportedly opened a new battleground in central Mali and the Gourma area in Burkina Faso. The newly emerged inter-islamist tensions added a new dimension to an already multifaceted conflict. The initially small confrontations quickly developed into large-scale clashes with several hundred deaths on each side. Both groups' incitement of local ethnic conflicts, their competing territorial claims, as well as internal shifts in leadership, and ideological and strategic differences were main drivers for increased infighting.

Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso the conflict followed a similar pattern as in previous years and was mainly located in the northern regions bordering Mali and Niger. Throughout this year, JNIM-affiliated Islamist groups continued to carry out attacks against civilians, important infrastructure, and military bases. For instance, on February 1, heavily armed presumed JNIM-militants attacked the village of Lamdamol, Sahel region, killing approx. 20 persons. Furthermore, on April 8, JNIM militants targeted a military base in Sollé, Nord region, killing five Burkinabé soldiers. In reaction to the continuing attacks, the Burkinabé army, together with its allies, performed several military operations including airstrikes. As in previous years, the locality as well as the number of fatalities remained mostly unknown.

Niger

Similarly as in Burkina Faso, JNIM-militants and affiliates continued to carry out attacks and destabilize the country ahead of its presidential elections, which were held in December [→ Niger (opposition)]. For instance, on May 9, alleged JNIM-militants attacked several villages in Tillabéri region, killing approx. 20 people, stealing cattle and looting shops. Furthermore, a few days ahead of the elections, on December 21, suspected JNIM-militants clashed with soldiers of the Nigerien Armed Forces in Tillabéri region, leaving four Islamist militants and seven soldiers dead.

Mali

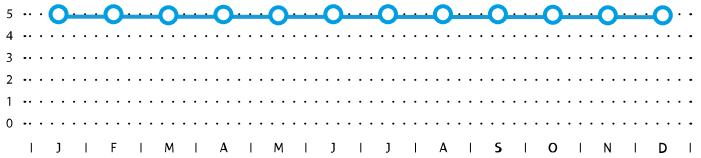
On June 3, AQIM's leader Abdelmalek Droukdel, also known

MALI, NIGERIA ET AL. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)

Intensity: **5** | Change: • | Start: **2015**

Conflict parties: ISWAP vs. Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria

Conflict items: system/ideology



The war over the orientation of the political system between the so-called Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso continued for the fifth consecutive year.

ISWAP comprised two factions operating in West Africa: The first group was formerly called Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) [→ Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger (JAS-Boko Haram)], also known as Boko Haram, and was renamed ISWAP in 2016 after pledging allegiance to so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Iraq, Syria et al. (IS)]. The group is active in the Lake Chad Basin.

The second group, formerly known as so-called Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) became an IS affiliate in 2016 and was assigned to ISWAP by an IS media outlet in 2019. This group was mainly active in the tri-border region of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

While both factions operated under the name ISWAP, they have independent command structures and have not conducted attacks together yet.

ISWAP is opposed to secular and democratic political systems as well as nation states created by former colonial powers, and seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in the region.

To combat ISWAP, the governments of the affected countries launched multilateral security initiatives. The countries in the Lake Chad Basin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger as well as Benin, expanded the mandate of the existing Multi National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2012 to fight Boko Haram and ISWAP. The G5 Sahel countries Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger launched the G5 Sahel Joint Force in 2017 to fight Islamist militant groups in the central Sahel.

Throughout the year, the MNJTF and the G5 Sahel Joint Force, and their respective member states, received intelligence, material support, and military training from the USA, Russia, China, France, and Germany, among others. The fight against ISWAP was also supported and funded by the AU, the EU, and the UN. In 2013, for example, the UN established the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission, MINUSMA. In 2014, the French-led counter terrorism mission Operation Barkhane was launched in Mali and neighboring countries. Following the killing of the leader of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM, et al.)] in 2020, the French government declared ISWAP-Greater Sahara (GS) as the prior target of Operation Barkhane.

Lake Chad Basin

In 2015, JAS became an affiliate of IS and was renamed ISWAP in 2016. Later that year, due to internal disagreements and disputes over the leadership style of Abubakar Shekau, ISWAP split into two factions. Subsequently, in 2016, Musab al-Barnawi was designated as the new leader of ISWAP

by his nom de guerre Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, was killed in the northern city of Talhandak, Kidal region, during a French military operation assisted by the US Africa Command with intelligence. Under Droukdel's guidance, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), one of the first Islamist groups which had become active in the Sahel stretch in the late 1990s, had sworn allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2006. GSPC was later rebranded as AQIM and since then led by Droukdel, who established relations with the al-Qaeda senior leadership and expanded the group's reach beyond Algeria, particularly by adopting the use of suicide bombings and kidnappings. In November, AQIM appointed Abu Ubaïda Yussef al-Aanabi as Droukdel's successor.

Since July, JNIM reportedly facilitated reconciliation meetings between the Fulani and Dogon ethnic groups. Clashes between the two groups in the past years had led to thousands of deaths, extensive destruction of accommodation and livestock as well as high numbers of refugees and IDPs [→ Mali (inter-communal rivalry/ Central Mali)].

Albeit the military seized power amidst nationwide insurgency in a coup d'état in August [→ Mali (opposition)], the military junta National Committee for the Salvation of the People remained committed to the fight against jihadists and continued to work closely with international forces.

Ivory Coast

In May, a military operation between Burkinabé and Ivorian forces, first agreed in 2019 to secure the border stretch and prevent a spillover of Jihadi violence into Ivory Coast, launched its first joint action. Between May 11 and May 22, security forces reportedly killed eight suspected militants, arrested at least 24 in Burkina Faso and a further 14 in Ivory Coast. The militant camp near the village of Alidouougou, Cascades region, was dismantled, weapons and equipment seized. One month later, on June 11, presumed Katiba Macina militants attacked a military and gendarmerie post in Kafolo, Cascades, killing 14 Ivorian troops. Although jihadists had become increasingly active on the Burkinabé side of the border, this was the first jihadist attack in the country since 2016. In response to the attack, the Ivorian government authorised the creation of an operational military zone in the north on 13 July in order to improve border surveillance and fight militant action.

Algeria

The Algerian People's National Army (ANP) continued their operations against Islamist fighters throughout the year. For instance, on December 1, ANP soldiers killed three AQIM militants during a clearing operation in El Ancer, Jijel Province. Among them was a member of AQIM's Sharia Council and the head of AQIM's propaganda and media operation. One day later, AQIM militants killed an ANP soldier on patrol in El Ancer.

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by IS central command. Although the factions diverged, they avoided armed confrontations.

In comparison to JAS, ISWAP attacks increased and became more sophisticated from 2018 onwards. ISWAP had regularly raided military bases and captured large amounts of military equipment. Internal disagreement, however, led to the killings of high level commanders and two violent leadership changes in the last two years, with Ba Lawan assuming power in February 2020.

In 2020, the conflict accounted for at least 2,100 deaths across the Lake Chad Basin. As a consequence of the ongoing violence in the Lake Chad Basin [→ Nigeria, Cameroon et. al. (JAS-Boko Haram)], approx. 1.9 million people were displaced in northeast Nigeria. Further, 320,000 were displaced in the Far North Region of Cameroon and 260,000 in the Diffa Region of Niger. In the Lac Region of Chad, 335,000 people were displaced, nearly twice as many as in 2019.

In the three Nigerian states Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa affected by ISWAP and JAS, violence, extreme weather events, and the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in 10.6 million people needing humanitarian assistance. This marked an increase of 49 percent compared to 7.7 million people in 2019. According to OCHA, in the regions affected by ISWAP in Cameroon, Chad and Niger, the population was also affected by severe food insecurity.

In Nigeria, ISWAP conducted attacks in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, Nigeria. Moreover, regions adjacent to Lake Chad, namely Far North Region of Cameroon, Diffa Region of Niger, and Lac Region of Chad, were also affected by ISWAP violence. Compared to Nigeria, the neighboring countries were targeted less frequently and attacks resulted in fewer fatalities.

ISWAP established strongholds in the border region of Borno with Niger and Chad, as well as on islands of Lake Chad. In this area, ISWAP taxed the local population and controlled cross border trade, thus generating financial income. ISWAP also held religious lectures and provided basic healthcare, attempting to strengthen the group's ties with the broader population.

This development had started in early 2018 but was amplified in 2019 when the Nigerian military, due to constant attacks on remote outposts, retreated from the rural areas of Borno and created so-called "super camps", highly fortified bases near strategically important cities and IDP camps. While this led to a decrease in attacks on military bases in 2020, it also allowed ISWAP to move more freely in those regions.

This year, ISWAP increased its attacks on military and civilian convoys as well as on military installations near strategically important intersections. As a result, food supplies, humanitarian aid, and trade in Borno and Yobe were significantly impaired.

Ambushes ranged from attacks with groups of ten militants armed with assault rifles and RPGs, to attacks with over 100 militants, supported by multiple pickup trucks equipped with heavy machine guns. On multiple occasions, ISWAP had the capabilities to conduct two or more attacks or ambushes on the same day in different areas. The most fatal ambush occurred on March 23 near Goniri, Yobe. ISWAP militants attacked a military convoy using RPGs and heavy machine guns mounted on pickup trucks. During the attack over 100 soldiers were killed and multiple vehicles destroyed. Furthermore, ISWAP targeted convoys carrying the governor of Borno, twice in September and once in November. On September 25, the convoy was attacked near Baga city, leaving 30 people dead.

While in previous years ISWAP largely refrained from tar-

geting Muslim civilians, the group conducted several attacks deliberately killing Muslim civilians in the second half of the year. For instance, on June 9, ISWAP militants invaded Felo village, Borno, killing 81 residents, allegedly in reprisal for cooperation with security forces.

Throughout the year, ISWAP increasingly erected roadblocks and fake checkpoints, sometimes disguised in military uniforms, in order to loot civilian transport and abduct aid workers, state employees, and Christian civilians. Abducted persons were often executed, with subsequent publication of the execution videos. For instance, on December 29, ISWAP released a video showing the execution of five abducted Christians.

While ISWAP's attacks on military bases decreased, the group attacked towns which were protected by "super camps" on some occasions. On June 13, ISWAP militants invaded Monguno, Borno, using heavy weapons mounted on pick-up trucks. During the attack, 20 soldiers and several civilians were killed and the UN's humanitarian hub, a base for various NGOs, was damaged.

In August, ISWAP released a statement declaring aid workers as legitimate targets. Attacks on aid workers and healthcare facilities continued throughout the rest of the year. It can be assumed that this is a strategy to cause further deterioration of the

humanitarian situation, undermine trust in the state, and thus incentivize cooperation with ISWAP.

This year, ISWAP increasingly used IEDs and different types of artillery such as mortars and rockets. While IED attacks resulted in fatalities on various occasions, artillery attacks only led to fatalities once. On April 30, ISWAP released a picture of an improvised Grad rocket launcher mounted on a pick-up truck, demonstrating that they had the technical capability to handle sophisticated military material.

To combat ISWAP, the Nigerian military and allied forces used ground forces to attack ISWAP camps in their strongholds, like the Alagarno forest, Borno, or the border region with Lake Chad.

Following an attack on a Chadian military base on March 23, Chad in coordination with its allies launched the large-scale military operation Warth of Boma from March 31 to April 9, in the Lac Region of Chad and neighboring parts of Nigeria and Niger, involving hundreds of soldiers and heavy weapons. Following the operation, the Chadian military claimed to have killed approx. 1,000 militants whereas 52 soldiers were killed. According to the UN, 20,000 people were displaced as a result. While the operation was a response to an attack perpetrated by JAS, it was mainly conducted in an area where ISWAP had its strongholds. While Chadian President Idriss Déby announced that the operation had been a success, ISWAP on April 19 claimed to have killed four Chadian soldiers and captured one. Six days later, ISWAP released a video showing the execution of the captured soldier.

The offensive did not compromise ISWAP activities significantly in the following months nor did the Nigerian army pursue further large-scale ground operations to consolidate military achievements.

As in previous years, the Nigerian army heavily relied on airstrikes to attack ISWAP camps or to repel attacks on army bases and towns, deploying fighter planes, attack helicopters, and armed drones throughout the year. For instance, on August 24, when an ISWAP camp in Kirta Wulgo, Borno was attacked by fighter planes and an attack helicopter, allegedly killing several ISWAP fighters including some commanders.

SAHEL

In 2015, ISGS had emerged from a split of the Jihadist group al-Mourabitoun. Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui and a small group of fighters loyal to him pledged allegiance to so-called IS. In September 2016, ISGS conducted its first attacks in Burkina Faso and Niger. Following these attacks, ISGS had been featured in a video by an IS media outlet and was officially recognized by IS. In March 2019, an official IS media outlet referred to the group as ISWAP, thus incorporating them into ISWAP.

Throughout the year, the conflict between ISWAP-GS and the governments of Chad, Mali, Niger, and France as well as their international supporters accounted for approx. 1,500 deaths. Due to violence perpetrated by ISWAP-GS as well as other armed groups, approx. 1.1 million people were displaced in the region where ISWAP-GS was predominantly active. In the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions of Niger approx. 196,000 people were displaced, in the Gao, Menaka, and Mopti regions of Mali approx. 100,000 people were displaced and in the Centre-Nord, Sahel, and Est regions of Burkina Faso approx. 850,000 were displaced. Additionally, according to OCHA, 4.4 million people in the tri-border region were affected by severe food insecurity.

Throughout the year, ISWAP-GS conducted attacks in the tri-border region of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. In this area, national parks as well as rough terrain offered the group refuge. The group was highly mobile, using motorcycles to conduct hit and run attacks on civilians, as well as security forces. While the group was presumed to comprise 200 to 300 fighters, it recruited people from the local population on a short-term basis. ISWAP-GS attacks against the local population allegedly also aimed at stoking already existing tensions between various ethnic groups to further destabilize vulnerable regions and stretch government military assets. Persistent insecurity in the region sparked the formation of local self-defense militias. [→ Mali (inter-communal rivalry / central Mali)]

ISWAP-GS supposedly financed itself largely through the extortion of artisanal gold mines in Burkina Faso, illicit trade, and the control of smuggling routes. The group also abducted people for ransom.

In previous years, up until March 2019, ISWAP-GS and the al-Qaeda affiliate Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM) had pursued a policy of non-aggression, allegedly also cooperating in some events. Following ISGS' incorporation into ISWAP and defections from fighters of the Katiba Macina faction of JNIM to ISWAP-GS, the groups started attacking each other in July 2019. Throughout the year, clashes between both groups allegedly resulted in the death of over 500 fighters.

Compared to ISWAP in the Lake Chad basin, ISWAP-GS conducted violent attacks against civilians frequently, often raiding villages and killing civilians. Over the course of the year, approx. 500 civilians were killed in the area where ISWAP-GS operated, with Burkina Faso accounting for approx. 300 fatalities, compared to approx. 100 in Mali and Niger, respectively. Attacks attributed to ISWAP-GS against villages followed a similar pattern as in previous years, group fighters arrived in large numbers on motorcycles armed with assault rifles and RPGs. During attacks on villages, the militants torched houses, looted shops, and targeted communal leaders, government officials as well as civilians. A power vacuum was thus created in these communities. For instance, on May 9, suspected ISWAP-GS fighters attacked three villages in Tillabéri region, Niger, looting the village and forcing the

inhabitants to flee. Throughout the year, ISWAP-GS continued to target security forces with IED attacks, ambushes on convoys or attacked police stations and military bases.

In the regions where the group was active, ISWAP-GS conducted approx. 60 attacks on security forces, resulting in up to 250 fatalities. Attacks in Mali were mostly small-scale hit and run attacks on military convoys, whereas in Burkina Faso and Niger security force installations, like police stations and military bases, were also attacked. ISWAP-GS' largest attacks against military bases focused on Tillabéri region, Niger, on some occasions involving hundreds of fighters. For instance, on January 9, ISWAP-GS fighters on motorcycles as well as armed pickup trucks attacked a Nigerien military base in Chinagodrar Town near the border with Mali. The subsequent fight lasted for hours and was repelled when a French fighter jet intervened. 89 Nigerian soldiers as well as 77 ISWAP-GS fighters were killed in the attack.

Later that year, on August 9, ISWAP-GS fighters attacked a group of French humanitarian workers and their Nigerien companions in Kouré, a wildlife reserve, south west of the capital Niamey, Niger. While Kouré is part of Tillabéri region, it was not in the area where ISWAP-GS had operated before, possibly indicating that ISWAP-GS planned to expand its operations further south towards the border with Nigeria and Benin.

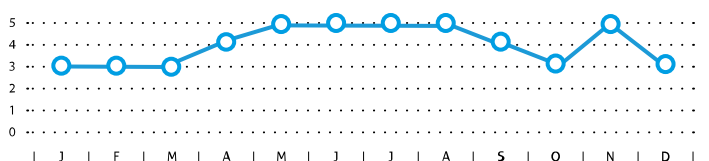
Throughout the year, G5 Sahel Joint Force and French troops of Operation Barkhane targeted ISWAP-GS in all three affected countries, conducting joint patrols aiming at intercepting ISWAP-GS's movement. For instance, in January, approx. 200 French soldiers conducted a mission and intercepted ISWAP-GS fighters in the tri-border region. During the month-long mission, repeated clashes resulted in approx. twelve militants dead and various weapons and other equipment destroyed.

In the fight against ISWAP-GS, in February the French government announced the deployment of an additional 600 troops to the tri-border region of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, increasing the troop contingent to 5,100. To support ground operations, the French military used fighter jets, attack helicopters, and armed drones. On March 27, various European governments, as well as the governments of Mali and Niger, announced the creation of Task Force Tabuka. In December 2020, the task force comprised 100 soldiers from France and Estonia. Furthermore, other European states committed to send additional troops prospectively. The task force operated under the command of Operation Barkhane in the tri-border region. nre

MOZAMBIQUE (ASWJ)

Intensity: 5 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2017

Conflict parties: ASWJ vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology



The limited war over the orientation of the political system between the Islamist militia Ahlu Sunna Wal Jammaa (ASWJ), locally also referred to as al-Shabaab, and the government escalated to a war.

Most of the recorded measures took place in the northern

province of Cabo Delgado in which nine out of 16 districts were affected by militant activities. Both the nature and frequency of the attacks changed compared to last year. In addition to civilians, ASWJ increasingly targeted Mozambican Defence and Security Forces (FDS), private security companies, the police, and major cities. Moreover, increased use of force and human rights violations against civilians by FDS were reported. At the beginning of the year, the Russian Wagner Group was replaced by the South African Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), another private military company, in support of the government. Since then, the DAG has deployed helicopters and ground troops in several clashes with ASWJ.

Nationally and internationally, the war gained attention by the government, the AU, the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, the Southern African Development Community, and the EU, all of whom acknowledging the existence and threat of the ASWJ. Bilateral assistance in training, logistics, but also operational capacities to fight militants in Cabo Delgado were offered by the USA, France, South Africa, and the EU among others. Amidst growing violence, foreign companies in the region which engage in extracting liquified natural gas raised concerns about their security.

Throughout the year, at least 800 people were killed and at least 160 buildings burned, including private housing, medical facilities, schools, and government buildings. According to UNHCR, at the end of December, at least 530,000 people had been internally displaced in Cabo Delgado.

Clashes between ASWJ and DAG and FDS mostly occurred in major towns, with the port town Mocímboa da Praia, in the eponymous district, particularly highly contested. For example, on March 23, ASWJ attacked and briefly occupied the town, during which at least 20 people were killed and key civilian and military infrastructure was destroyed. According to witnesses, militants raised flags of the Islamic State during the occupation. On June 27, ASWJ attacked and captured the town again, killing at least 40 civilians and injuring several others. FDS and DAG used light weapons and helicopters to repel the occupation. Between August 5 and 11, FDS and DAG launched another offensive against ASWJ in Mocímboa da Praia, again with light weapons and helicopters. At least 90 people were killed and 100 injured, while ASWJ managed to keep control of the city. On November 19, FDS and DAG, together comprising around 1,000 troops, attacked ASWJ in Muidumbe district, allegedly retaking it from the militants. FDS claims to have killed 16 militants.

Meanwhile, violence against civilians continued throughout the year. For example, on February 4, Islamist militants attacked five villages in Quissanga district, namely Namidai, Namiruma, Mahate, Nraha 2, and Mussomero. Seven civilians were killed and several houses and one health center were burnt. Furthermore, on April 7, ASWJ killed at least 52 people in Xitaxi village, Muidumbe, allegedly for not joining ASWJ. On June 18, militants killed 17 civilians and kidnapped two children in Ilala village, Macomia district. Around September 12, at least 20 civilians were killed by ASWJ during an attack on a bus near Pundanhar, Palma district.

ASWJ also operated outside Cabo Delgado, conducting cross-border attacks. On October 14, around 300 ASWJ militants crossed the border into Mtwara district, Tanzania. They attacked the village of Kitaya and killed at least 20 people. On November 22, Tanzanian and Mozambican police commanders signed an agreement to fight the insurgency collaboratively along their shared borders. ebe

MOZAMBIQUE (RENAMO)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: RENAMO, RENAMO Military Junta vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between the ruling party Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the main opposition party Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), particularly its splinter group, the so-called RENAMO Military Junta, continued.

Especially the Military Junta, led by Mariano Nhongo, carried out violent attacks against civilians and infrastructure, whereas the political wing of the RENAMO party under leader Ossufo Momade repeatedly condemned those attacks and reiterated their commitment to the peace agreement signed on 08/01/19. On January 13, the day of the inauguration of parliament, Nhongo threatened to intensify the attacks in central Mozambique if the government recognized Momade as the official party leader.

The Military Junta targeted health facilities and civilians throughout the year, killing a total of 14 people and injuring at least 68. On January 20, suspected members of the Military Junta assaulted a health center in Morocorocho, Sofala province, killing four people, stealing medicine, and burning the hospital. Two weeks later, on February 4, suspected members of the Military Junta shot dead a truck driver and injured a passenger in Gondola district, Manica province. On April 6, Military Junta members ambushed a camp of a timber company in Matara, Tete province, killing one person and setting seven cargo trucks and two bulldozers on fire. On July 14, members of the Military Junta attacked a health care center in Gondola, and stole medicine.

While the Military Junta continued to refuse to engage in dialog with the government, the official RENAMO party met with President Filipe Nyusi on April 16 to discuss further steps regarding the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process. Subsequently, by December 16, almost 1,500 RENAMO members were demobilized. Moreover, the RENAMO base at Muxungue, Sofala, was closed on July 15. On October 24, Nyusi announced a unilateral seven-day military ceasefire in Sofala and Manica, declaring that the Mozambican Defence Armed Forces would halt their actions against the Military Junta starting on October 25. Nyusi stressed the government's interest in negotiations and called onto the Military Junta to join the dialog. In mid-December, Nhongo also expressed interest in engaging in negotiations. To that end, on December 24, he announced the suspension of attacks on vehicles and villages in central Mozambique. ero

NIGER (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: ↗ | Start: **2009**

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The non-violent crisis over national power between opposition parties and the government of President Issouffou and the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS) escalated to a violent crisis. This year's presidential elections

were particularly contested, due to the end of Isouffou’s second term in office and the strained security situation in the country.

Throughout the year, opposition groups staged several demonstrations against the government. For instance, on March 15, civil society organizations, trade unions, and opposition parties organized a demonstration in the capital Niamey, demanding the government disclose the purchase of overpriced military equipment. The demonstration, which had been banned due to Covid-19 restrictions, turned violent as police tried to disperse the crowds. In the subsequent clashes, three people were killed, ten arrested, and a market was set on fire. The following months were marked by non-violent, political disputes. For instance, on June 16, several opposition parties denounced the government violence and criticized the economic and socio-political situation in Niger. For the same reasons, the opposition boycotted the June 12 meeting of the National Council for Political Dialogue. On June 29, opposition parties accused Issoufou of misgovernance under his presidency.

In the run-up to the elections, on October 10, four opposition parties created the new political coalition Citizens’ Coalition for the Republic. Furthermore, on November 19, the Constitutional Court issued two rulings, dismissing opposition claims questioning the citizenship of PNDS-Tarayya candidate, Mohamed Bazoum. The claims had been raised in an attempt to block him from taking part in the election. Subsequently, on November 22, a group of 45 political parties, created the Bazoum 2021 coalition to support the government party’s candidate. The elections were held on December 27, with Bazoum winning the first round with 39.33 percent of the vote. The run-off election was scheduled for February 2021.

NIGERIA (ANSARU)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↑** | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: **Ansaru vs. government**

Conflict items: **system/ideology**

The previously latent conflict over the orientation of the political system between Jama’atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan, also known as Ansaru, and the government re-erupted on the level of a violent crisis.

In 2012, following internal disagreements, a faction of Boko Haram formed Ansaru. From 2012 to 2013, the group abducted several Western civilians and conducted attacks in the north of Nigeria. In the following years, Ansaru did not claim attacks and its leader Khalid al Barnawi was captured in 2016. In 2019, an al-Qaeda media outlet published a picture of Ansaru members, announcing the return of the group.

On January 14, a large group of Ansaru fighters armed with assault rifles attacked the convoy of the Emir of Potiskum near Maraban Jos town, Kaduna State, killing up to 30 people. Three weeks later, on February 5, special police forces stormed an Ansaru camp in the Kuduru forest, Kaduna. In the subsequent gunfight, the police reportedly killed 250 Ansaru fighters.

In August, the group claimed an attack in Kaduna, allegedly killing 25 people. This could not be verified through independent information.

Over the course of the year, various media reports indicated that Islamist militant groups established a presence in the northwest of Nigeria, amongst them Ansaru. nre

NIGERIA (APC SUPPORTERS – PDP SUPPORTERS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1960**

Conflict parties: **APC supporters vs. PDP supporters**

Conflict items: **system/ideology, national power**

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between supporters of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and supporters of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) continued. While APC and PDP are the two major political parties of the country which also compete on national level, the conflict was mainly characterized by disputes on local government area (LGA) levels. APC and PDP supporters clashed in several states and accused each other of ballot snatching and vote buying. Throughout the year, at least seven people were killed and 60 injured.

In Imo state, protests erupted on January 6, after the newly elected governor Emeka Ihedioha (PDP) had dismissed the chairpersons appointed by the previous APC governor in several LGA and replaced them with interim management committees. APC and PDP supporters clashed as several hundred APC supporters demanded access to government buildings in Isu LGA. An APC councillor was shot dead. Later, on January 14, the Supreme Court ruled that Ihedioha had no legal power to remove the chairpersons from office and was thus himself suspended. This sparked further protests in the city of Owerri. In Oyo state, a PDP member of the Surulere local government was killed on February 3 in clashes between APC and PDP supporters in Surulere LGA over similar issues. In Edo state, tensions increased in the run up to the gubernatorial election on September 19. For instance, on July 25, supporters of both parties clashed in Benin City after alleged sympathizers of the APC’s governorship candidate, Osagie Ize-Iyamu, booed at governor Godwin Obaseki (PDP). In the following shootout, ten people were injured and several motorcycles were razed. Five days later, two APC supporters were shot dead in Igarra by a PDP supporter. Furthermore, the PDP blamed the APC for a shooting in Akoko-Edo LGA on August 28 that left 13 PDP members injured, while the APC claimed the attack was orchestrated by the PDP.

In Ondo state, APC and PDP supporters clashed in the weeks leading up to the governorship election on October 10, leaving at least 24 people injured. On October 4, 50 members of both parties clashed in an alleged reprisal attack over the killing of an APC member in Akure the previous night. The following morning, both sides engaged in another shootout. Both parties accused each other of inciting the clashes, which left five people injured and several vehicles destroyed.

In Zamfara state, on December 4, APC members clashed with PDP followers in Bakura LGA in the course of the state’s by-elections. Two people were killed and six others injured.

NIGERIA (ENDSARS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **NEW** | Start: **2020**

Conflict parties: **protester groups vs. government**

Conflict items: **system/ideology**

A new violent crisis erupted over the political system and brutality applied by police forces in particular between the

EndSARS movement and the government. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was a police unit which regularly committed violence against civilians and was reformed four times since 2007. Protesters started the EndSARS movement on social media with a hashtag in 2017, raising awareness about indiscriminate violent actions against civilians by SARS personnel. In reaction to a violent incident by SARS personnel on October 3, the EndSARS movement, organized nationwide decentralized protests throughout the following month, primarily via social media. Over the course of the year, at least 69 fatalities were reported.

On October 3, a video of an attack by alleged SARS personnel against a Nigerian youth was distributed across social media. In response, the hashtag #EndSars went viral in Nigeria and sparked first major protests. From October 7, protesters camped outside both the local SARS headquarters and the Lagos State Governor's house in Ikeja Local Government Area (LGA), Lagos state, for two days. On October 10, thousands of protesters took to the streets all over the country after a protester was allegedly killed by police in Oyo State. The same day, a police officer was killed during similar clashes in Delta state. In the capital Abuja, police dispersed protesters using tear gas, water cannons, batons, and sticks. On October 11, the Inspector-General of Police announced the dissolving of SARS and stated that wide-ranging police reforms would follow. Subsequently, President Muhammadu Buhari addressed the protesters and expressed his support for the dissolution of SARS. On October 14, the Inspector-General of Police announced that SARS would be replaced by the Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) unit. In response, protesters declared that the reforms were not comprehensive enough and demanded that no SARS personnel should be admitted into SWAT.

On October 20, the government alleged the protests of being hijacked by criminals, thus imposing a 24-hour curfew in the states Lagos, Edo, and Osun. However, protests continued. Correspondingly, violence by government forces surged in Lagos state. Most significantly, police troops attacked a protest group with assault rifles and shot dead 15 people in Mushin LGA. Later that day, army personnel attacked the protesters at the Lekki toll gate, Lekki city, and shot dead at least nine persons with assault rifles, after protesters blocked the gate for several days. These clashes left hundreds of people injured. One day later, after violence further erupted, the government imposed a 72-hour lockdown in the city of Lagos. On November 4, the ICC probed a preliminary examination on the events. rkr

and cattle, contemporary political, ethnic and religious issues between the predominantly Christian farmers of Berom and Tiv tribes, on the one hand, and the mainly Muslim Fulani pastoralists, on the other, overlaid the conflict dynamics. In total, violence between various farming communities and mainly Muslim Fulani pastoralists led to more than 740 fatalities. The states most affected were Kaduna, Benue, Delta, Plateau, Kogi, Edo, and Ondo.

At the beginning of the year, violence erupted with high fatality rates in multiple clashes, amounting to a death toll of at least 259 before April. For example, between January 6 and January 13, suspected Fulani pastoralists attacked eleven villages in southern Kaduna state and Plateau state, killing 50 people and kidnapping 58 others. Furthermore, pastoralists and farmers clashed on January 11 in Taura Local Government Area (LGA), Jigawa state, leaving ten people injured and at least 100 displaced. During the incident, several houses were damaged and cows rustled by the two parties who both claimed that they were attacked first. With attacks from both parties, violence surged on February 17. For instance, Fulani pastoralists attacked Uwheru community, Ughelli North LGA, Delta State, killing eight people and injuring four. Meanwhile, farmers killed three Fulani pastoralists in an attack on Ifite Ogwari community, Ayamelum LGA, Anambra State. Th attack was reportedly a revenge act after the destruction of cultivated farmlands by Fulani pastoralists. Furthermore, suspected Fulani pastoralists beheaded two people in Agatu LGA, Benue state on April 13. Two days later, on April 15, suspected Fulani pastoralists raided Hwra village, Plateau State, killing nine and destroying at least 22 houses. The reasons for the latter attack were reportedly cattle rustling and land disputes.

The security situation further deteriorated with peaking violence in May with at least 174 deaths. The most fatal attack occurred on May 26, when at least 100 Fulani pastoralists armed with guns invaded five villages in Sabon Bini region of Sokoto state, killing 74 people. Two days later, about 80 Fulani pastoralists armed with guns invaded villages in Kajuru LGA, Kaduna state, killing 14 people. In the following three months, at least 274 additional people were killed. On July 19, Fulani pastoralists with guns attacked a wedding party at Kukum Daji village, Kaura LGA, Kaduna state, killing 21 people and injuring 29. One day later, pastoralists killed 18 people at Gora Gan village, Zangon Kataf LGA, Kaduna state. Furthermore, they torched several houses and a church. On August 5, pastoralists killed 33 people and torched 40 houses in Apaishyim, Kibori, Atakmawei and Apyiako villages, Zangon Kataf LGA, Kaduna state. In what is suspected to be a revenge action by Fulani pastoralists, eleven people were killed in Ungwar Gankon and Maro village, Kajuru LGA, Kaduna state, on August 16.

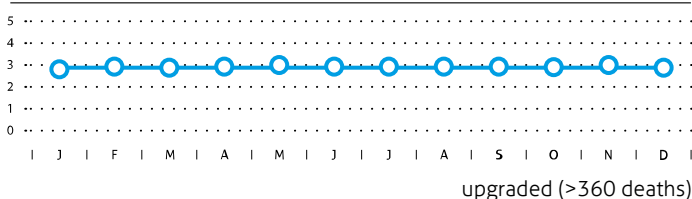
Despite peace talks between farmer and pastoralist communities in Zangon Kataf LGA, Kaduna state, starting from August 22, violent attacks continued, yet decreased causing at least 95 fatalities from September to December. For instance, in an attack on Rasat village, Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau state, Fulani pastoralists killed eight people, including a community leader, on September 21. On October 6, Fulani pastoralists killed six people during an attack on Wereng community, Riyom LGA, Plateau state. In Wurma community, Kurfi LGA, Katsina state, farmers killed eleven Fulani herders after accusations of banditry, on October 13. In an attack on December 17, Fulani pastoralists killed seven people, injured one and razed several houses in Gora, Zangon Kataf LGA, Kaduna State.

cba, rkr

NIGERIA (FARMERS – PASTORALISTS)

Intensity: **4** | Change: • | Start: **1960**

Conflict parties: farmers vs. pastoralists
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The limited war over subnational predominance and re-sources between farmers and pastoralists continued. While the original conflict items were the control of arable land

NIGERIA (ISLAMIC MOVEMENT)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1991**

Conflict parties: IMN vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent conflict over the orientation of the political system between the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) and the government continued. The IMN aims to establish an Islamic state using a non-violent approach. In 2019, the IMN was classified as a terrorist organization by the government and consequently banned in Nigeria on the alleged reason of being extremists employing violence.

Throughout the year, IMN members held peaceful protests in the cities of Abuja, Kano, and Kaduna, eponymous states, demanding the unconditional release of their leader El-Zakzaky, who had been arrested in 2015 by the Nigerian army.

On January 14, IMN members clashed with Nigerian police in the capital Abuja, while protesting for the release of El-Zakzaky. Subsequently, police forces shot five members of the IMN with small arms. Seven days later, police dissolved an IMN demonstration in Abuja and killed a bystander. On March 24, IMN protesters threw stones at the police and demolished a police car in Abuja. The police dispersed the demonstration. On August 30, police forces killed two IMN members in a clash in the city of Kaduna with guns.

On April 27 in Abuja, IMN protesters demanded the extradition of six bodies of IMN members by the Nigerian police, who had died in a clash with police forces on 07/22/19 and have been held in custody since.

On September 29, IMN leader El-Zakzaky pleaded not guilty in court to eight charges of alleged homicide. The trial is expected to last until mid-2021. rkr

NIGERIA (PRO-BIAFRA GROUPS / BIAFRA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1967**

Conflict parties: pro-Biafra groups vs. government
 Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis over the secession of southeastern parts of the country between pro-Biafra groups, such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), one the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Across southeast Nigeria, members of pro-Biafra Groups reiterated their demand for an independent Biafra state. Membership in IPOB and MASSOB remained illegal. On April 4, the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization, an international NGO promoting peoples' right to self-determination, granted membership to MASSOB and another pro-Biafra organization, the Biafra Independent Movement. The Biafra Remembrance Day on May 30 remained peaceful this year, on the 50th anniversary of the end of the civil war.

Throughout the year, at least 53 people died in clashes between pro-Biafra groups and Nigerian security forces. On February 13, IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanus claimed that the passengers aboard two buses were abducted by security forces on their way to a burial in Umuahia LGA, Abia state. On July 24, over 100 members of IPOB and MASSOB clashed with security forces in Owerri North LGA, Imo state, leaving

at least two people dead. Another clash between IPOB and security forces in Enugu City, eponymous state, on August 23, resulted in the deaths of 21 civilians and two police officers. 47 people were arrested and others injured.

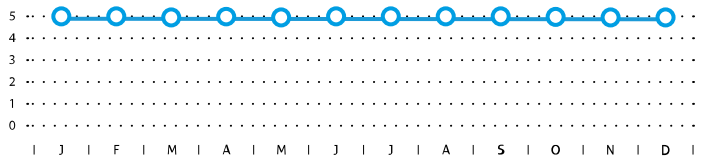
Members of IPOB were also involved in clashes around the #EndSARS protests, which were intended to alert people to the extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) [→ Nigeria (EndSARS)]. For instance, suspected IPOB members attacked a SARS office in Oyiabo LGA, Rivers state, on September 30, killing one officer and burning vehicles. 22 suspects were arrested in the aftermath. Between October 21 and October 30, clashes between police forces and IPOB left at least 24 people dead in Rivers and Ebonyi states. Most of the fatalities were registered in Oyiabo LGA, Rivers state, where IPOB protesters burned down several police stations, a courthouse, a hospital, and police vehicles, and security forces engaged in a manhunt thereafter.

On December 12, IPOB founded a militia group, the Eastern Security Network, to provide protection against Islamists, kidnappers, and Fulani herdsmen [→ Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)]. However, the government considered the militia a threat to their integrity and announced military actions against it. yme

NIGERIA, CHAD ET AL. (JAS-BOKO HARAM)

Intensity: **5** | Change: • | Start: **2003**

Conflict parties: Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria vs. JAS
 Conflict items: system/ideology



The war over the orientation of the political system between Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS), also known as Boko Haram, and the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger continued for the tenth consecutive year. The group is opposed to secular and liberal values, in particular Western education and democratic systems, seeking to establish an Islamic caliphate in the region. Throughout the year, the Nigerian government received intelligence, material support and military training from the USA, the UK, France, Germany, Israel, and Russia.

JAS emerged as a separate group after Boko Haram had split into two factions in 2016. Following the extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, by Nigerian security forces in 2009, Abubakar Shekau became the leader of the group until 2016. In May 2015, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau had officially sworn allegiance to the so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. In 2016, Boko Haram became a province of IS and was renamed Islamic State West Africa Province. Internal disagreements over Shekau's leadership style led to a split of the group into two factions later that year. Following the split, IS designated Abu Musab al-Barnawi, son of Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf, the new leader of Islamic State West Africa Province [→ Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)]. The faction led by al-Barnawi was recognized by the IS as its official affiliate. Nevertheless, Shekau renewed his pledge of allegiance to IS but also stated that his group would not follow al-Barnawi's leadership. In a book written by Shekau, published in 2017,

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

he reverted to calling his faction JAS. According to various reports, no command structures or communication links between JAS and IS were maintained.

In 2020, the conflict accounted for at least 1,000 fatalities. As a consequence of the ongoing violence [→ Mali, Nigeria et. al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)], approx. 1.9 million people were displaced in the North East of Nigeria. Borno State was most affected with approx. 1.57 million displaced people. Furthermore, approx. 320,000 were displaced in the Far North Region of Cameroon, approx. 335,000 in the Lac Region of Chad and 260,000 in the Diffa Region of Niger.

JAS operated mainly in the South East of Borno State, in the area of the Sambisa Forest, in the Northern parts of Adamawa State, and in the Mandara Mountains in the border area of Nigeria and Cameroon. In Cameroon, JAS mostly operated in the Far North Region's departments of Mayo-Sava and Mayo Tsanaga. Fighters loyal to JAS also remained active on islands in Lake Chad in Chad.

Alongside troops of the affected countries in the Lake Chad Basin, comprising Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, forces from Benin contributed to the AU-mandated Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). In 2013 the Nigerian government had authorized a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) to counter JAS, consisting of 26,000 local vigilantes.

In August 2019, the government had implemented a strategy to create so-called 'super camps', highly fortified bases, in order to create safe zones in strategically important cities. This involved retreating from rural areas of northern Borno and Yobe, thus leaving large areas of the states without a permanent military presence.

Under Operation Lafia Doyle, the Nigerian Air Force frequently conducted airstrikes on JAS hideouts in the Sambisa Forest. Drones and reconnaissance platforms were often deployed to detect JAS training camps and other facilities to attack them with various types of fighter aircraft and helicopter gunships. While airstrikes targeting JAS increased in 2020, clearance operations by ground forces decreased.

JAS attacked security forces throughout the year, often in small scale hit and run attacks or ambushes. In addition, JAS frequently raided villages and kidnapped civilians for ransom, during which civilians or security forces were often killed. In 2020, such attacks were reported multiple times a week.

Over the course of the year, JAS attacks in Cameroon increased by up to 90 percent. Various sources reported over 300 attacks in the area where JAS operates. Meanwhile the number of attacks in Borno remained on the same level as in the previous year.

Shekau commanded a group of up to 1,500 fighters in the Sambisa Forest and the Mandara Mountain range in the border area of Nigeria and Cameroon. From their bases, JAS regularly staged raids on villages to loot food and other supplies.

Shekau's group continued to conduct suicide attacks, often using young girls. In 2020, those attacks mostly took place in the second half of the year, following an increase of abductions. For instance on August 2, two female suicide bombers attacked an IDP camp near the town Nguetechewe, killing 17 and injuring 16. In addition, JAS systematically attacked schools in Cameroon's Far North region and reportedly destroyed 13 schools in July and August, kidnapping up to 200 people. Consequently, the Cameroonian government closed over 60 schools in the affected departments of Mayo Sava, Mayo Tsanaga and Logone-et-Chari.

JAS also targeted civilians in reprisal attacks for cooperating with security forces. After civilians had captured and

handed over a JAS militant to security forces on November 28, JAS militants ambushed a group of farm workers in Garin Kwashembe village, Jere LGA, Borno. According to the UN, JAS executed 110 people.

Following internal disagreements with ISWAP, a group led by Ibrahim Bakura, a long-time Boko Haram commander in the Lake Chad region, split from ISWAP. In a video message released on 09/24/19 Bakura's new group swore allegiance to JAS.

In this message, the group claimed responsibility for various attacks, among them the attack on a military base on Darak Island, Cameroon on 06/11/19, which resulted in the death of 24 Cameroonian soldiers. The group led by Bakura used islands on Lake Chad and the shoreline of Lake Chad in Diffa region, Niger, as its hideouts.

Over the course of this year, the group carried out various sophisticated attacks around Lake Chad, hitting targets in Chad and Niger.

On March 23, the group attacked a Chadian military base in Boma, Chad, on an island in Lake Chad. During the attack, hundreds of militants arrived by boat, attacking soldiers with rocket propelled grenades and machine guns and looting the military base. 98 Chadian soldiers were killed, the highest death toll the Chadian army has suffered in the region to date. Consequently, on March 29, President Idriss Déby of Chad announced the beginning of operation Wrath of Boma, a large-scale military operation in the Lac Region of Chad and neighboring parts of Nigeria and Niger, deploying hundreds of soldiers and heavy weapons. Following the conclusion of the operation on April 9, the Chadian military claimed to have killed approx. 1,000 militants and lost 52 soldiers. According to the UN, the operation caused 20,000 people to flee their homes. While the operation was in response to JAS' attack, it was conducted in an area known to be a stronghold of ISWAP. Hence, the impact that the operation had on JAS could not be determined.

On July 7, JAS released a video message allegedly showing fighters in Zamfara State and Niger State, thereby supporting media reports claiming the emergence of jihadist cells in the northwest of Nigeria. On December 11, 344 school boys were abducted in Kankara, Katsina State. From 2014 to 2020, no JAS or ISWAP attack had been recorded in the state. In a video message on December 15, Shekau claimed responsibility for the abduction. The school boys were released on December 17. According to various sources the abduction was not carried out by JAS, but by a criminal gang acting on behalf of JAS. This was attributed to a broader network of support for JAS in the northwest of Nigeria. nre

RWANDA – UGANDA

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2018**

Conflict parties: Rwanda vs. Uganda

Conflict items: international power

The non-violent crisis over regional power between Rwanda and Uganda escalated to a violent crisis. However, in spite of sporadic instances of violence along the border, early in the year, the crisis was marked by considerable diplomatic efforts. For example, several meetings between the heads of state and ministerial delegations were held, as well as multiple prisoners exchanged, in an attempt to ease tensions and strengthen cooperation between the two countries. From January to November, with the mediation of Angola and DR

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Congo, the Ugandan and Rwandan heads of state held three quadripartite summits and organized two ad-hoc commission meetings, at which Ugandan and Rwandan ministers discussed bilateral relations.

On February 14, the ad hoc commission met in Rwanda's capital Kigali, and agreed to resume collaboration between Ugandan and Rwandan security institutions. Additionally, on February 21, at the fourth quadripartite summit at the Gatuna/Katuna border crossing, in Northern Province, Rwanda, and Western Region, Uganda, the heads of states signed an extradition treaty and issued a joint statement on their willingness to work together to resolve bilateral issues. Furthermore, throughout the year, at least 160 Rwandans detained in Ugandan prisons and 17 Ugandans detained in Rwandan prisons were released. For example, between June 8 and 9, Ugandan police forces repatriated 132 previously detained Rwandans, at the Kagitumba and Cyanika border posts, in Eastern Province and Northern Province, Rwanda. On October 7, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Rwandan President Paul Kagame resumed virtual quadripartite talks together with the Angolan president and the president of the DR Congo to resolve their border dispute and normalize relations.

Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, both countries paused their diplomatic efforts and closed their borders. In an alleged attempt to prevent the spread of Covid-19, Ugandan police forcefully repatriated around 350 Rwandans residing in Uganda to Rwanda's Northern Province, between March 23 and 29. Several Rwandans were injured.

Additionally, Rwandan police used force against people who allegedly trespassed across the border to smuggle goods. For example, on January 19, in Northern Province, Rwanda, Rwandan security forces shot dead one Ugandan and two Rwandans for allegedly smuggling goods after they crossed into Rwandan territory from Uganda. Similarly, on June 1, Rwandan police forces killed a Ugandan close to Sebeya village, Northern Province, Rwanda, on similar grounds.

SOMALIA (ISS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2015**

Conflict parties: ISS vs. al-Shabaab vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and system/ideology between the so-called Islamic State in Somalia (ISS), the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab, and the federal government of Somalia, supported by security forces of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland and US AFRICOM, continued. Compared to last year, the number of violent confrontations and activities between ISS militants and the Puntland Security Forces (PSF) decreased. However, ISS continued to clash frequently with its rival group, the al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab [→ Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)]. According to reports, ISS recruited at least 30 fighters in February, five of whom are believed to be foreign fighters.

Throughout the year, PSF took action against ISS. On March 22, a PSF operation led to the arrest of several ISS and al-Shabaab members in Bosaso town, Bari region, Puntland. The PSF also recovered detonators and other weapons. In another operation, on May 9, PSF killed at least one ISS militant and injured another in Bosaso, Bari. In another incident on July 20, PSF killed eight ISS militants and injured several others after

targeting them in the Iskushuban area, Bari region, Puntland. Two trucks carrying food and explosives for the militants were also seized.

On July 21, AFRICOM carried out an airstrike targeting ISS near Timirshe town, Puntland, which left at least seven ISS militants dead. Around the same time, PSF launched a ground offensive against ISS in the Cal Miskaat mountain range of Puntland, which left at least 20 militants dead. PSF also reported the killing of a senior local militant and a senior foreign fighter during this operation.

On October 25, ISS claimed an attack on the Somali National Army base in Qansahdere town, Bay region, which left at least one soldier dead and three others injured.

In December, tensions between ISS and al-Shabaab further exacerbated, after ISS issued a declaration of war against al-Shabaab. ^{lob}

SOMALIA (SOMALILAND – PUNTLAND)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1998**

Conflict parties: regional government of Somaliland vs. regional government of Puntland
Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between the self-declared state of Somaliland and the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, supported by the federal government of Somalia, continued. Since the beginning of the conflict in 1998, the border region between Somaliland and Puntland, comprising the regions Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn (SSC), have been subject to recurring and opposing territorial claims by the two states as well as by different clans inhabiting the region.

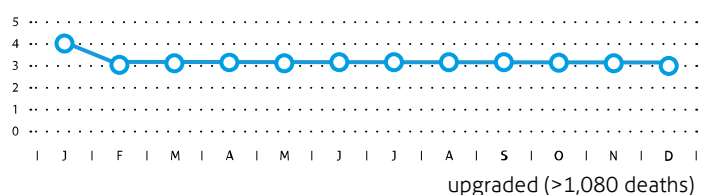
Throughout the year, at least five soldiers of the respective armies were killed in clashes. On February 25, Somaliland and Puntland forces clashed near Yubbe town in Sanaag, resulting in the death of at least one soldier. Subsequent skirmishes between both forces in the same area on the following day left four more soldiers dead. The causes of both incidents remain unclear.

Furthermore, at least three incidents without casualties occurred over the year. Somaliland and Puntland troops clashed again on February 29 and March 3 in Tukaraq town, Sool, and once more on September 28 in Laasqoray town, Sanaag. ^{mmp}

SOMALIA, KENYA (AL-SHABAAB)

Intensity: **5** | Change: • | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: al-Shabaab vs. Kenya, Somalia
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power



For the fifteenth consecutive year, the war over national power and the orientation of the political system between the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab on the one hand, and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) as well as the

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Federal Government of Kenya (FGK) on the other, continued. The FGS and FGK were supported by the international African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces and US AFRICOM. The number of militants fighting for al-Shabaab remains unclear, with estimates ranging from 3,000 to 10,000 militants. Throughout the year, al-Shabaab attacked civilians, as well as convoys and posts of police and security forces, killing a total of at least 1,185 people. The southern Somali regions of Hiraan, Middle Shabelle, Bay, Lower Shabelle, Gedo, and Lower Juba, as well as the capital region of Banadir were most affected by attacks. On average, al-Shabaab carried out more than five attacks a month in the capital Mogadishu.

Al-Shabaab continued to conduct suicide attacks using IEDs, especially VBIEDs, to target government officials as well as military and police forces. For instance, attacks on restaurants in Mogadishu, frequented by military or police, on March 25, July 4, September 9, November 17, and November 27 left at least 20 civilians and six police officers dead. Al-Shabaab also targeted police officers at their stations and off duty in Banadir and Lower Shabelle, killing a total of 23 police officers.

This year, al-Shabaab carried out 25 attacks on government officials, killing 18, among them high ranking officials like the governor of the Mudug region. In many of the attacks, al-Shabaab also killed security personnel and civilians. The most lethal complex attack in Mogadishu occurred on August 8, when a VBIED exploded at a hotel known for hosting politicians, followed by armed al-Shabaab militants entering the hotel. The attack left 17 people dead, among them two government officials, and 30 injured. On November 2, al-Shabaab also fired anti-aircraft weapons at an airplane carrying the President of Galmudug, without causing any damage.

Between March and May, al-Shabaab militants attacked the Halane base in Mogadishu, which holds foreign embassies, four times with mortars but without causing casualties. In total, al-Shabaab clashed at least 144 times with local and federal security forces, which left 22 regional security forces, 80 federal soldiers, and at least 450 al-Shabaab militants dead.

Al-Shabaab still controls large areas in southern Somalia. While security forces recaptured a number of villages at the beginning of the year in Lower Shabelle and Lower Juba, al-Shabaab took control of the area around a military base in Farlibaax village, Hiraan, and El-Ade village, Lower Shabelle, in January. On March 16, the Somali military also recaptured the strategically important town of Janaale, Lower Shabelle. In an operation on May 26, they also restored state power over Aborey village, Hiraan, killing several al-Shabaab militants. In another operation in Hiraan, the security forces also regained control over a former al-Shabaab stronghold in Luuqjelow village on June 16. Jubaland security forces managed to take over Jana Cabdalle village, Jubaland, on September 5 in a security operation with AMISOM forces. In return, Al-Shabaab was able to recapture the strategically important village on September 9. On October 24, al-Shabaab seized several villages in Sanaag region, which were previously controlled by Somaliland. Between December 9 and 12, al-Shabaab captured around 20 civilians, including the mayor, in Milxa village, Bari region. However, despite the ongoing efforts of al-Shabaab to gain more territorial control, overall it lost territory, albeit the loss of ground did not impact al-Shabaab significantly.

In May 2020, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2520, re-authorizing a nine-month AMISOM deployment in Somalia with close to 20,000 personnel. Al-Shabaab attacks

frequently targeted AMISOM convoys and posts. Throughout the year, 28 armed clashes between AMISOM forces and al-Shabaab took place, killing around 60 militants and 58 AMISOM soldiers.

Over the year, US AFRICOM flew 42 confirmed airstrikes on suspected al-Shabaab militants, killing at least 95 militants. The airstrikes were concentrated on Lower Shabelle and Middle Juba. On several occasions, activists accused the US forces of killing civilians, which the US denied. However, they released a statement on April 27 acknowledging the previous killing of civilians in an airstrike in 2019. Thousands fled the regions affected by the airstrikes.

Al-Shabaab also conducted attacks in Kenya, mostly in the north-eastern counties Lamu, Mandera, Garissa, and Wajir. Throughout the year, approx. 60 people were killed, among them civilians, security forces as well as al-Shabaab militants. For example, on January 5, suspected al-Shabaab militants attacked a Kenyan soldier and the US airbase on Manda Island, Lamu, killing approx. four soldiers and five militants. Overall, educational facilities were often targeted by al-Shabaab which led to hundreds of schools being closed. On March 19, Kenyan soldiers killed twelve suspected al-Shabaab militants in a raid on a camp at Boni forest, Garissa county, the group's largest stronghold. krp

SOUTH AFRICA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2015**

Conflict parties: civil rights groups, DA, EFF, IFP vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political and social system between antagonistic factions of the ANC, civil right groups as well as opposition parties, such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) on the one hand, and President Cyril Ramaphosa and his ruling party African National Congress (ANC) on the other, continued.

Disputes between the ANC and opposing parties were reported throughout the year. For example, on February 13, EFF MPs disrupted the president's annual State of the Nation Address, due to the presence of controversial former president Frederik Willem de Klerk. The EFF members were later ordered to leave parliament. Similarly, on February 21, two local EFF leaders were forced to leave the State of the Province Address in Mmabatho, North West province, after several points of order for interrupting the speech. Illustrating intra-party tensions, on September 10, ANCYL members marched to the Walter Sisulu House in East London, Eastern Cape province, demanding the replacement of older members of the ANC with members of the ANCYL to remove 'old structures'.

Moreover, the government's pandemic containment strategy also sparked diffuse resistance among societal and political actors. For instance, on July 2, about 50 residents in Johannesburg, Gauteng province, protested against the conduct of initial human vaccine trials on Africans. In a different vein, the largest opposition party, Democratic Alliance (DA), expressed its discontent with the government's decision to implement a nationwide alcohol ban, which was imposed on July 12 and lifted on August 17. On August 27, it announced that a further alcohol ban would be met with strong resistance from the DA.

Additionally, unknown armed groups killed at least 7 ANC

members. The killings were reportedly politically motivated. For instance, on March 17, unknown perpetrators killed an ANC member and stabbed another during a branch general meeting in Kabokweni, Mpumalanga province. On May 25, two armed men shot and killed an ANC member at his home in Mtubatuba, KwaZulu-Natal province. Moreover, unknown assailants shot three ANC leaders outside a local college in Umbumbulu, KwaZulu-Natal, on October 21. Among them was the chairperson of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL), who subsequently died of his injuries.

Following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA, mostly peaceful protests against police violence were staged across major cities under the label #BlackLivesMatter. For example, on June 7, the EFF led protests at the US Embassy in Pretoria, Gauteng, and consulates in Johannesburg, Gauteng, and Cape Town, Western Cape province [→ USA (racial tensions)].

hek

SOUTH AFRICA (SOCIOECONOMIC PROTESTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2018**

Conflict parties: residents of informal settlements vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political and economic system between residents of informal settlements and the government continued. As in previous years, the conflict was marked by decentralized and spontaneous protests over the provision of basic public services, such as housing, electricity, water, sanitation, and infrastructure. Protests were held across most regions of the country.

Throughout the year, protesters blocked major roads to disturb traffic and gain visibility. For example, on February 20, participants of a services delivery protest threw petrol bombs at an ambulance in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape province. On February 25, at least 200 residents of Bayland informal settlement, Port Elizabeth, blocked the nearby R75 in Uitenhage with rocks and burned tyres in protest of water, electricity, and sanitation shortages. Similarly, residents of Boipatong township, Gauteng province, demanded access to electricity while closing-off a road on July 7. Furthermore, on July 9, protesters barricaded the R102 near Verulam, KwaZulu-Natal province, demanding access to electricity. During the blockade, a truck and two other vehicles collided, injuring several people. About 150 residents from Kuyga township, Eastern Cape, blocked two main roads nearby with debris and burned tyres on July 29, while expressing solidarity with residents from Polar Park over electricity cut-offs. During another service delivery protest, on August 17, around 70 residents in Philippi, Western Cape province, blocked a road and set fire to two public transport buses. On September 22, residents of Pomeroy, KwaZulu-Natal, demanded access to electricity and water, excavating parts of the R33, thereby disrupting local traffic. On September 26, residents of the Kanana informal settlement in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, demolished 18 neighboring shacks due to electricity cut-offs, accusing newly arrived people of overloading local electricity capacities.

hek

SOUTH AFRICA (XENOPHOBES)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1994**

Conflict parties: immigrants vs. xenophobes

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over cultural hegemony, labor market shares and access to the social security system between groups of immigrants and xenophobic South African nationals continued.

The ongoing dispute over a refugee settlement in Cape Town, Western Cape province, persisted. Hundreds of refugees had started the six-month-long occupation after deadly xenophobic riots re-erupted across South African cities in 2019. On March 1, police forces evicted refugees camping outside the Central Methodist Church in Cape Town, while dismantling the informal camp. One police officer was injured during the expulsion. Furthermore, on April 2, police forces carried out a second eviction, forcibly transferring about 500 refugees from the Central Methodist Church to new camps outside the city of Cape Town. No injuries were reported.

Throughout the year, Gauteng province was especially affected by anti-immigrant protests. On July 7, in Johannesburg, Gauteng, the All Truck Drivers Foundation (ATDF) organized a national shutdown to protest against migrant drivers being hired at the expense of South African nationals. The group of ATDF supporters later moved to Thokoza, Gauteng, where residents joined the march, chanting xenophobic songs. As part of the protest, several trucks were burnt or hijacked. For instance, on July 8, two trucks were set alight on the N1 highway near Cape Town and several roads were barricaded, disrupting traffic in the area. Another anti-foreigner protest was staged by the ATDF in alliance with the National Truck Drivers Federation (NTDF) and the uMkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province, on November 23. Hundreds of protesters gathered, calling on foreign truck drivers and business owners to leave South Africa.

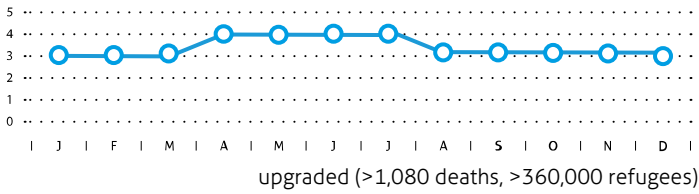
Especially in November attacks on suspected migrant truck drivers by unknown groups spread across different regions. For example, on November 21, unidentified individuals petrol-bombed five trucks between Sasolburg and Parys, Free State province, and opened fire on the truck drivers. Similarly, on November 25, armed men set alight two trucks on the N12 highway between Kingsway and Holfonstein, Gauteng, which was subsequently closed to traffic. Local media attributed these incidents to the national truck protests staged by the ATDF and NTDF. However, ATDF distanced itself from the attacks.

cde

SOUTH SUDAN (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: 5 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: Murle vs. Dinka vs. Nuer
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The limited war between various local communities over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and land, escalated to a war. Compared to last year, violent confrontations between and within local communities, such as Dinka, Nuer, and Murle communities, as well as their various subgroups, increased significantly with the states of Jonglei, Lakes, and Warrap being most affected. In total, at least 1,847 people were killed compared to 750 reported deaths in 2019, and more than 680,900 people were displaced.

The actual figures are presumed to have been substantially higher but the region’s fragile security situation and the rurality of the conflict hamper comprehensive media coverage. According to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the increased level of violence was driven by the local power vacuum due to the implementation delay of the 2018 peace accord [→ South Sudan (opposition)], humanitarian threats such as drought, flooding, and severe food insecurity, as well as widespread proliferation of small arms in the region. Furthermore, UNMISS warned that fighters in uniform were spotted during raid attacks, indicating that organized forces may be involved in the fighting.

Cattle, which plays a crucial socio-economic role to sustain livelihood and as a prerequisite for marriage, remained the most contentious issue. At least 190 raid attacks on local communities or cattle camps were conducted. More than 100,000 heads of cattle were stolen, often combined with abductions of women and children, destruction of houses, and raids on local infrastructure, such as warehouses or hospitals. Moreover, land disputes between pastoralists and farmers over grazing land and water intensified amidst last year’s devastating flood that destroyed crops and livestock, especially in Jonglei.

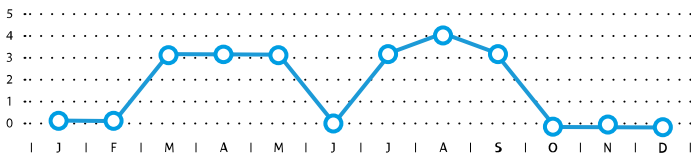
In Jonglei state, tensions intensified between local communities, mainly between Murle on the one hand, and Lou Nuer and Bor Dinka on the other. During the course of the year, at least 694 people were killed and more than 261,300 displaced with violence peaking from May to July and dropping again during the height of the rainy season, when flooding significantly impairs movement. For instance, at the beginning of March, intense fighting between the Murle and Lou Nuer communities erupted in the counties of Pibor and Akobo, Jonglei State. After a series of retaliatory attacks, more than 8,000 people fled to the UNMISS base in Pibor town, while several thousands more were assumed to have taken refuge in adjacent swamp areas. Several towns, among them Manyabol and Likuangole, were reportedly destroyed. In mid-May, fighting between the Murle and Lou Nuer communities further escalated when allegedly 1,000 armed Murle militias, along with people wearing military

uniforms, carried out organized attacks at various locations in Uror county, including Tangnyang, Thardiok, Guangchat, Pankyok, Pieri, and Pamai. At least 242 people, among them many civilians, were killed and more than 300 injured. In June, members of Bor Dinka and Lou Nuer fought against Murle, who allegedly operated alongside so-called “outside people” at various sites in Pibor county, which reportedly killed more than 100 people and left 20,000 displaced. In reaction, President Salva Kiir initiated a communal peace conference to resolve the ongoing inter-communal violence. On August 13, the government declared a three-month state of emergency in Jonglei after the wide-scale flooding and violence that displaced more than 150,000 people. To prevent violence during the dry season, in which pastoralist cattle herders move southwards, UNMISS announced the deployment of UN peacekeepers at various locations in Jonglei on November 17.

Lakes state had the second-highest fatality record, mainly due to infighting between various Dinka subgroups. In total, 413 people were killed, with the counties of Rumbek East and Cueibet being most affected by violence. For instance, on March 14, subgroup members of the Agar Dinka community, namely from Kuei, Pakam, Gony, and Dhiei, clashed with members of the Ruop community in Marial Bek area in Rumbek East, which reportedly killed 41 people and injured 60. On May 18, members of the Waat and Panyar subgroups of the Gok Dinka communities clashed in Pagor Payam, Cueibet, after a Panyar member had allegedly raped a woman of the Waat subgroup. At least 15 people were killed.

In Warrap state, at least 362 people were killed in inter-communal clashes and more than 378,000 people were reportedly displaced. Especially during the cattle migration months from December to April, farming communities and herding communities clashed repeatedly over scarce resources such as water, cattle, crops, and land. For instance, in mid-March, clashes between cattle keepers and farmers in various locations in western areas of Tonj South county over grazing land belonging to the Lou Nuer community displaced 6,149 people. As in previous years, disputes between the subgroups of the Rek Dinka community turned violent on several occasions. For instance, on March 2, members of the Thiik, Akook, and Jalwau subgroups clashed in Tonj East county, leaving 26 killed and 22 injured. Allegedly due to land disputes, the Thiik community of Ananatak Payam clashed repeatedly with the Jalwau and Konggor communities of Wunlit Payam in April. For instance, on April 12, the infightings left at least eight people dead and eleven injured, including eight women who had been raped. Subsequently, local security forces intervened and arrested 15 of the suspected attackers. Reportedly, at least 30,500 people fled to adjacent areas in April and houses and shops were looted. An unspecified number of children were abducted, imprisoned, or killed, and an unspecified number of cattle were stolen. Kiir on July 8 announced a disarmament campaign to stop the inter-communal violence as outlined in the 2013 peace agreement. When the campaign started a month later, civilians and security forces clashed in different locations, resulting in at least 148 deaths in Warrap. The government halted the campaign at the end of August. In November, it announced it would resume the activities as soon as the floodwaters receded. fii

SOUTH SUDAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2011**Conflict parties: SSOA vs. government, SPLM/A-IO
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups, mostly aligned in the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), on the one hand, and the government of President Salva Kiir, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), as well as the former major opposition group Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), on the other, escalated to a limited war.

Most SSOA groups had joined The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) between SPLM and SPLM/A-IO in 2018 and thus 2020 was marked by a continuation of processes to fully enforce the R-ARCSS. However, the opposition groups South Sudan United Front (SSUF), People's Democratic Movement (PDM), and National Salvation Front (NAS) refused to sign and the NAS continued to fight the government. The UN thus extended their arms embargo on South Sudan and the mandate of the UNMISS for another year.

On February 20, Kiir agreed with SPLM/A-IO leader Riek Machar to form a unity government, dissolved the cabinet, and named new cabinet ministers, among them members of formerly armed opposition groups. On March 12, the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity was announced, officially re-instituting Machar as vice-president. Moreover, on February 15, Kiir reinstated the former ten-state system, which was welcomed by 13 political parties and the UN. Nonetheless, the R-ARCSS signatories disagreed over how further to divide the states into counties and fill the gubernatorial positions. On July 14, UNSC urged the government to implement the pending points of the peace deal such as the dissolution of the current parliament, as again demanded by IGAD on July 16, and the implementation of 35 percent political representation for women.

While no longer directly fighting each other, both the army South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and the SPLA-IO continued to engage in violence. In March, SSPDF and SPLA-IO started to conduct military offensives against NAS. Subsequently, NAS dispersed its units and intensified its military operations against SSPDF. On 5 August, for instance, NAS claimed responsibility for an attack on an SSPDF camp close to the capital Juba, which left at least nine people dead, among them civilians. On August 19, NAS ambushed and killed six SSPDF bodyguards of Vice-President James Wani Igga in the outskirts of Juba, close to the village Karpeto.

Moreover, both SSPDF and SPLA-IO repeatedly attacked civilians. For instance, on May 31, SPLA-IO forces killed 15 civilians in Central Equatoria state in the villages of Loguni, Panyume Payam, and Morobo County. On August 8, SSPDF clashed with armed civilians in north-central Tonj, Warrap state, sparked by a disagreement over a disarmament exercise. More than 70 people were killed and more than 70 injured. Moreover, NAS claimed that the joint forces car-

ried out cross-border attacks on a South Sudanese refugee camp in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo on September 9. lvo, fyk

SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY / ABYEI)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2011**Conflict parties: Ngok Dinka vs. Misseriya
Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources in the border region Abyei between the Ngok Dinka community and the pastoralist Misseriya community continued. Due to its significant oil reserves, the region has also been of high strategic interest to the governments of Sudan and South Sudan, who both claim the territory [→ South Sudan – Sudan]. Even though relations between both countries have improved, the final status of Abyei remains unresolved. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, UNISFA has administered the area. The mandate was extended until 05/15/2021 due to the persistently unstable security situation in the area. The UNSC stressed the need to demilitarize the area except for UNISFA forces and the Abyei Police Service. On February 19, UNISFA organized a meeting in South Sudan's capital Juba with the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence of both South Sudan and Sudan, and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. The parties agreed to establish checkpoints and deploy joint military observer teams. However, further diplomatic efforts were impeded by restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Especially throughout the first half of the year, tensions between Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities continued to increase. Two consecutive clashes between both groups led to a total of 36 fatalities: on January 19, three Misseriya members died in an attack allegedly perpetrated by Ngok Dinka members and in reaction to this, a large number of armed Misseriya members attacked the Ngok Dinka village Kolum close to Abyei town and killed 33 people. Five Misseriya members were arrested by UNISFA and handed over to the Sudanese government. Further incidents of inter-communal rivalry were reported over the year, including the abduction of people, especially of children, carjacking, fatal shootings, and cattle raiding.

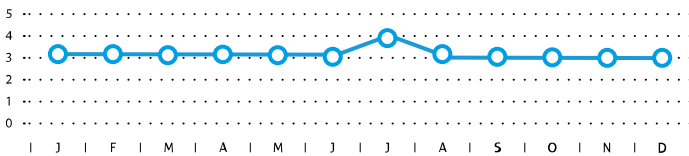
The inter-communal dialog between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, consisting of weekly meetings of a joint community peace committee, was put on hold for almost a month after the clashes in January. Meetings resumed on February 6, only to be suspended again nine days later, following the statement of South Sudan's government to restore the former ten-state system, which would include the administrative area of Abyei as one state of South Sudan. Moreover, Ngok Dinka representatives were reluctant to meet with Misseriya authorities, demanding their commitment to past agreements as a premise for further engagements. However, both groups came together for three ad hoc joint peace meetings set up by UNISFA in order to form an action plan to prevent the spread of Covid-19. mta

SUDAN (DARFUR)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2003**

Conflict parties: SRF vs. government, RSF

Conflict items: autonomy



The violent crisis over autonomy of the Darfur region in western Sudan between the opposition alliance Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and especially its member group Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur (SPLM-AW), on the one hand, and the government as well as government-backed paramilitary groups, such as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), on the other hand, escalated to a limited war. Having de-escalated from a war to a violent crisis in 2019, the Darfur conflict intensified to a limited war in 2020 as attacks against civilians caused high numbers of fatalities and IDPs. Before 2019, the conflict was conducted on war-level for 15 years. The AU-UN hybrid operation UNAMID, formally approved in 2007 to stabilize Darfur region, ended with the end of the year.

The armed groups of the SRF were predominantly recruited among the Fur, Zaghawa, and Massalit communities, who also constitute the majority of Darfur’s population. The SRF has been fighting the government since 2003, accusing it of oppressing the Darfur population and of cooperating with Arabic-speaking armed groups. The SRF comprises the SLM and its two main factions led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur (SLM-AW) and by Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM), the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council (SLM-TC), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) [→ Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile). The government recruits RSF fighters from among different groups of nomadic Arabic-speaking fighters who have been involved in the Darfur conflict since 2003.

The number of clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), backed by the RSF, and the SLM-AW decreased significantly. This was also fighting between different factions of the SLM-AW. As in previous years, clashes focused on Jebel Marra, a mountain range in the three states of Central, North, and South Darfur. On June 11, fighting erupted between two factions of the SLM-AW in Wegi area, Central Darfur, resulting in an unknown number of casualties and the displacement of thousands of people living in Wegi, Fara, Katiro, and Daya. On September 28, government forces and the SLM-AW accused each other of instigating a clash in Western Jebel Marra, Central Darfur. SLM-AW claimed to have injured an unspecified number of SAF soldiers.

In comparison to 2019, paramilitary groups, especially the RSF, more frequently attacked civilians, hindered IDPs from returning to their villages, and systematically conducted sexual violence. For instance, on January 1, alleged Janjaweed fighters raided Terinja village in North Darfur, displacing about 150 people. In February, three girls were raped by paramilitaries in Sirba locality, West Darfur, in Kass camp, South Darfur, as well as in Nierteti, Central Darfur. On May 11, militiamen killed three civilians and seized their livestock in Katur, Northern Darfur. In July, at least 100 civilians were

killed by paramilitaries. For example, on July 13, militiamen attacked a sit-in at Fata Borno IDP camp in North Darfur and looted the camp market, killing at least ten people and injuring 17 others. On July 23, an unknown militia group riding on camels and horses attacked and raided Abdoze village, South Darfur, killing approx. 20 people, injuring 25, and displacing more than 1,000 recently returned IDPs, who then again fled back to the IDP camps. On July 25, in Misterei town, West Darfur, between 500 and 1,500 armed militiamen, and reportedly also members of the RSF, attacked the town with tanks and machine guns. More than 60 people, mostly from the Masalit community, which identifies as ethnic African, were killed, about 80 people were injured, and almost 20,000 were displaced from Masterei town and the surrounding area. As in the previous year, the dynamics of the conflict were highly affected by the ongoing political transition phase in the Sudan [→ Sudan (opposition)] and the peace negotiations in Darfur between the SRF and the government, mediated by South Sudan. Due to their involvement in the peace negotiations, the JEM, SLM-MM, SLM-TC, and SPLM-N led by Malik Agar adhered to the cessation of hostilities. Claiming that it would only join peace negotiations after security and stability were realized in Darfur, the SLM-AW was the only armed group involved in violence in 2020. On October 3, following the peace negotiations, the government, SRF, and SLM-MM signed the Juba Peace Agreement. The parties agreed on federalism, power-sharing, and democratic reforms, as well as on the establishment of a joint security force. However, SLM-AW and the SPLM-N faction Al Hilu did not sign the agreement.

svb

SUDAN (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↘** | Start: **2007**

Conflict parties: Beni Amer vs. Nuba vs. Zaghawa vs. Hadendawa et al.

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The limited war over subnational predominance and resources such as cattle and pastureland between various communities de-escalated to a violent crisis. The conflict line was for the most part set between either farming or herding communities as well as between communities that identify either as ethnic Arab or ethnic African.


Most of the inter-communal violence occurred in Red Sea state and Kassala state. For instance, eight people were killed and at least 60 injured in clashes between members of pastoralist Beni Amer and farming Nuba communities on January 2 in the city of Port Sudan, Red Sea. Subsequently, both groups signed a reconciliation agreement in the city of Kassala, eponymous state, on March 2 in the presence of Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok. However, members of Beni Amer and Nuba clashed again on May 10 in Kassala state, leaving ten people dead and at least 80 injured. The Government deployed security forces to the region and leaders from both communities engaged in mediation efforts. Another clash between Beni Amer and Nuba took place on July 5 in New Halfa, Kassala. One person was killed and 46 were injured. Clashes between Beni Amer and Nuba members reignited on August 9 in Port Sudan and lasted for six days. 30 people were killed and at least 100 were injured. On August 13, the transitional government deployed the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces

(RSF) to Port Sudan to end the violence. According to the government, 85 people accused of involvement in the violence were arrested. However, the clashes continued the following day, resulting in another four fatalities and 35 injured people. On August 2, a group of people originally from Halfa, Northern state, and members of the pastoralist Zaghawa community clashed in New Halfa, Kassala, leaving two people dead and 28 injured as well as several houses and vehicles destroyed. The appointment of a member of the Beni Amer community as the new governor for Kassala State sparked protests and clashes between Beni Amer and Hadendawa members in Kassala and Port Sudan. Between August 25 and 27, five people were killed and at least 18 injured. The market of Kassala was destroyed during the protests, which resulted in food shortages over the following days. The Prime Minister removed the new governor from office on October 14, which again led to violence in Kassala, leaving 25 people dead and 112 injured over the following days.

Inter-communal violence also occurred in the state of South Kordofan. On May 12 and 13 in the state's capitol Kadugli, at least 26 people were killed and 19 injured in a clash that had reportedly erupted between different armed groups affiliated with two tribes, allegedly Beni Amer and Nuba. According to the UN, 20,400 people were displaced. On June 27, a fight over cattle broke out west of Kadugli, which left six people dead.

The region of Darfur was also affected by inter-communal violence. For instance, on May 5, members of the Fallata and the Rizeigat communities clashed in Tullus, South Darfur state, leaving at least 30 people dead and dozens injured. On August 3, leaders of both groups signed a reconciliation agreement. Fallata and Masalit members clashed on July 27 in Gireida, South Darfur, leaving 15 people dead and at least 25 injured, as well as between October 19 and 22, which left at least 14 people dead and 27 injured. Both groups signed a reconciliation agreement on November 30. However, violence erupted again in Gireida on December 26, resulting in 15 fatalities. mge

SUDAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **2011**

Conflict parties: FFC vs. RSF, transitional government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The limited war over national power and the orientation of the political system between different opposition groups, especially the coalition Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), one the one hand, and the transitional government led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis. The transitional government deployed the paramilitary force Rapid Support Forces (RSF) which has close ties to the infamous Janjaweed militia and the commander of which is vice-president of Sudan. The year was marked by continuing protests and the ongoing political transition, which had been initiated by the ousting of Omar al-Bashir in April 2019.

The protests were mainly organized and coordinated by the trade union Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), a member of FFC, as well as by informal neighborhood networks called Sudanese resistance committees.

After the main demands of the 2019 protests had been met by the formation of the current transitional government under the Sovereign Council of Sudan in August 2019, protest

issues in 2020 broadened. The demands included, inter alia, the dismissal of military governors and the replacement with civilian ones, the dismantling of the militias in Sudan, the provision of basic services and goods, as well as the protection of civilians against attacks by armed militias in numerous parts of Darfur [→ Sudan (Darfur)]. Following sharp price increases and the shortages of bread and fuel, from October on, people protested most notably against the government's handling of the worsening economic crisis.

On January 11, during a counter-rally against a protest march criticizing the forced dismantling of al-Bashir's National Congress Party in Wad Madani, El Gezira, police killed one protester and injured ten. On February 10, people took to the streets in Kosti, White Nile state, and demanded the appointment of civil state governors. The police used tear gas to disperse the protesters and injured eleven people. On February 20, in Khartoum, El Gedaref, and Kassala, thousands of protesters condemned the dismissal of army officers who had supported the mass protests of 2018/19. 57 protesters were injured in Khartoum when security forces used live ammunition, tear gas, batons, and iron pipes. On June 30, the year's largest protests were staged to commemorate the protesters killed during the 2019 mass protests, with hundreds of thousands of people in various states across Sudan taking part. Police dispersed the "march of the millions" using tear gas and live ammunition, killing one person and injuring more than 60 others. The months of July and August were marked by new demonstrations and sit-ins in various states. For instance, on July 13, militiamen attacked a sit-in at Fata Borno IDP camp in North Darfur, killing ten people and injuring 17 others. Protesters terminated several sit-ins when state governments announced they would respond to the protesters' demands.

Between August 17 and 20, mass protests were staged in several cities across Sudan to mark the anniversary of the adoption of the Constitutional Declaration in 2019, reiterating the main opposition demands. Police used tear gas, rubber bullets, and batons to disperse the protests, injuring several people and detaining around 80. On September 1, a joint force of army troops and RSF members clashed with civilians in Port Sudan, Red Nile, when the joint force searched the district for weapons, which left one person dead and 25 injured. In two different incidents on September 5 and 10 in El Doma, South Darfur, and Nierteti, government forces and the police used live ammunition, batons, and tear gas to disperse protesters. Two people, who had been protesting the insecurity in the region, were killed and ten injured.

On October 15, a joint force of policemen, army troops, and RSF paramilitaries used live ammunition in Kassala to disperse protesters who objected to the dismissal of the governor. Eight people were killed, 31 injured, and dozens detained. Between October 12 and 17, mass protests erupted for the same reason in Red Sea. Security forces violently dispersed these protests as well, killing twelve protesters and injuring almost 50 in Port Sudan. On October 21, security forces opened fire in northern Khartoum when thousands of protesters commemorated the anniversary of the 1964 revolution in Sudan, killing one person and injuring 14.

The incorporation of the Juba peace agreement reached on October 3 into the 2019 Constitutional document enabled the establishment of the temporary Sudan's Transitional Partners Council which comprised the FFC, Sudan's military forces SAF and RSF, as well as the armed movements that signed the Juba Peace Agreement. svb

TOGO (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1963**

Conflict parties: MPDD, ANC vs. government
 Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between various opposition parties, such as the Patriotic Movement for Democracy and Development (MPDD), and the National Alliance of Change (ANC), on the one hand, and the government of President Faure Gnassingbé and his Union for the Republic (UNIR), on the other, continued.

On February 22, Togo held its first presidential elections since passing a constitutional amendment in 2019, which limited the number of presidential terms to a maximum of two. Since the new provisions did not apply retrospectively, they allowed Gnassingbé to pursue re-election in this year's elections and again in 2025. Gnassingbé had repeatedly been accused of corruption since taking over the presidency in 2005 after the death of his father, the former president Gnassingbé Eyadema who had ruled almost uninterruptedly since 1967.

In the run-up to elections, the government prohibited campaigns by ANC candidate Jean-Pierre Fabre. Furthermore, UNIR allegedly bribed people to vote for Gnassingbé during their rallies.

Gnassingbé ultimately won the election with a majority vote. However, the primary opposition leader Agbéyomé Kodjo of the MPDD contested the results on allegations of election fraud and called on the president to relinquish his position. Subsequently, opposition protesters gathered outside Saint Joseph College in the capital Lomé on February 28 to dispute the election results. Security forces used batons and tear gas to disperse the group, injuring several protesters and arresting one. Furthermore, security forces arrested Kodjo, on April 21, after he had publicly declared himself president, contrary to the formal results of the electoral commission. President Gnassingbé was officially sworn into office on May 3 to serve his fourth term.

eha

UGANDA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2001**

Conflict parties: DP, FDC, Jeema, NUP, UPC vs. government
 Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between various opposition parties, such as the Forum for Democratic Change, the Democratic Party, the Uganda People's Congress, the Justice Forum, and the National Unity Platform (NUP), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. In 2017, incumbent President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, introduced a bill to abolish presidential term limits, allowing him to run for a fifth term in the 2021 presidential elections. Subsequently, in 2020, the different opposition parties decided to collaborate to defeat Museveni. In the run-up to the elections, severe violent clashes broke out between security forces and supporters of the opposition.

Throughout the year, authorities repeatedly continued to arrest opposition members. The police arrested the leader of the NUP Robert Kyagulanyi, known as Bobi Wine, on January 6, while he was holding a public meeting in preparation of his presidential campaign. Police forces used tear gas to dissolve the gathering, claiming that Wine and his team did not meet some requirements of the Public Order Management Act. On April 19, the police arrested an opposition MP as he distributed food to people affected by the Covid-19 restrictions. On March 30, Museveni had directed that food donations should be distributed only by a governmental task force. The opposition MP alleged having been tortured by security forces. On November 3, Wine was arrested after submitting his nomination papers to the election body, but was released later that day. On November 16, the police again arrested Wine for violating Covid-19 restrictions. He claimed to have been beaten and tortured by the police.

Since Wine announced his participation in the presidential election, the police repeatedly dispersed his rallies, violently cracking down on his supporters. For instance, following Wine's arrest on November 3, violent clashes between security forces and his supporters erupted in the capital Kampala. The police injured at least 15 people and arrested another 49. On November 18, protests over his repeated arrest intensified in Kampala and surrounding areas. In response to protesters burning tires and erecting barricades, security forces used live ammunition, tear gas, and water cannons. At least 37 protesters were killed, 65 injured, and several hundred arrested. Finally, on December 27, the military police allegedly killed a member of Wine's security team and injured two journalists amidst violent confrontations between security forces and Wine's followers. The authorities denied the allegations. *sag*

ZIMBABWE (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2000**

Conflict parties: MDC vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the main opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) continued.

Throughout the year, MDC staged protests in the capital of Harare. For instance, on January 21, hundreds of people protested against the government in the suburb of Mbare, Harare, alongside MDC leader Nelson Chamisa. Similarly, on February 19, hundreds of MDC supporters protested in Harare against the economic and political situation in the country. The police intervened and dispersed the crowd with tear gas. The day after, 47 suspected protesters were arrested by the police. After opposition groups and activists announced plans for a mass protest in Harare for July 31, police and military forces shut down most of the city and arrested at least 60 opposition activists on that day.

Members of ZANU-PF and Zimbabwean police forces clashed with MDC members on several occasions. For example, on January 23, fighting broke out between ZANU-PF and MDC youth activists in Mbare, during which three members of MDC were arrested and three members of ZANU-PF injured. On May 13, during a protest over a Covid-19 lockdown in Harare, the police arrested three MDC youth leaders. Two days later,

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

on May 15, the arrested persons were found severely injured around 95 km south of the capital. They claimed to have been sexually assaulted by the police, which the government denied. Consequently, police re-arrested them on June 10 for allegedly making false accusations. They were released on June 26. On August 21, police forces arrested the MDC vice chairperson in Tynwald, Harare, who had been hiding from the public since police forces were searching for initiators of the planned protests on July 31.

Within the MDC, two factions, the MDC Alliance (MDC-A) under Nelson Chamisa and a splinter group under the lead of Thokozani Khupe (MDC-T), vied for power. On March 31, the

Supreme Court ruled that Chamisa was not the legitimate leader of the MDC and ordered the opposition party to elect a new leader within the next three months. By the end of the year, the leadership remained legally contested.

Clashes also occurred between the MDC factions. For instance, on June 4, security forces clashed with MDC supporters at MDC headquarters in Harare. The MDC-T splinter group occupied the headquarters. Police used tear gas to prevent supporters of the Chamisa faction from entering the HQ to retake it, and arrested five high-ranking MDC members.

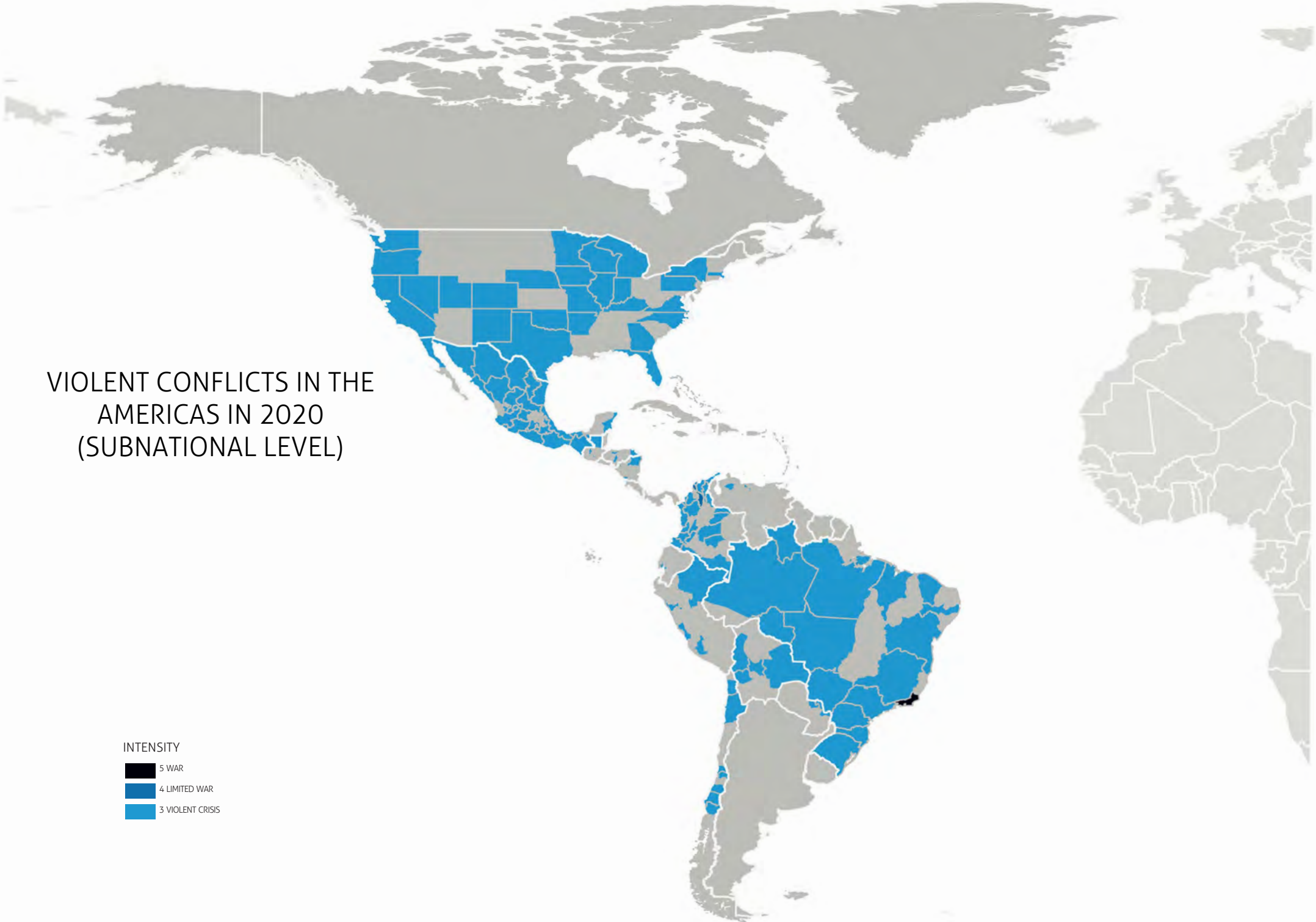
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THE AMERICAS

VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN THE AMERICAS IN 2020 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)

INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Numbering 58, active conflicts observed by HIIK in the Americas region increased by two in comparison to last year. This year 37 conflicts were fought violently, which marks an increase of three compared to 2019. One war and one limited war de-escalated by one intensity level respectively, while one violent crisis escalated to a limited war. Overall, one war and four limited wars were observed.

In Mexico, the war between various drug cartels, vigilante groups, and the government de-escalated to a limited war [→ Mexico (drug cartels)]. However, the country's homicide rate remained high, declining by less than one percent compared to last year's record high. Despite having announced the end of the war on drugs last year, the government continued to deploy the army to fight against drug cartels, contributing to increased fragmentation of cartels and heavy clashes over local predominance [→ Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)]. In Brazil, the war between several drug trafficking organizations (DTO), militias, and the government continued on a highly violent level. Violence was particularly prevalent in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas, where several military police operations took place.

In Colombia, violence remained high, as armed groups, drug cartels, splinter groups of the demobilized FARC-EP, and other guerrillas continued turf wars over subnational predominance and resources [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. Despite its efforts, the Colombian government continued to struggle to control the areas previously dominated by the FARC-EP. In repeated attempts to exert control over drug trafficking routes, armed organizations such as Los Caparros, ELN, the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC), and several FARC dissident groups intensified their violent operations, particularly in the departments of Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Córdoba, and Norte de Santander. Furthermore, the conflict between ELN and the government escalated to a limited war. President Ivan Duque called off peace talks in 2019 and has since called on the group to declare a unilateral ceasefire to resume the negotiations. [→ Colombia (ELN)].

Armed conflict throughout Colombia continued to have a devastating impact on the lives of the civilian population. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, armed organizations introduced curfew and lockdown measures, enforcing these by violent means [→ Colombia (FARC dissidents, left-wing militants); Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. Furthermore, violence against political activists and community leaders remained a contentious issue for the country. According to the Institute for Peace and Development (INDEPAZ), 310 social leaders and political activists were killed throughout the year.

Gang violence continued to affect Central American countries, namely El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. In El Salvador, the violent crisis between the country's main gangs, Barrio 18 and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), and the government continued [→ El Salvador (Maras)]. Inter-gang violence persisted as well [→ El Salvador (inter-gang rivalry)]. Nevertheless, in comparison to last year, El Salvador's homicide rate dropped by roughly 45 percent, numbering 1,322 homicides. Violence also slightly decreased in Honduras, with authorities recording a total of 3,482 homicides. Still, the violent crisis, involving various drug trafficking organizations, such as Barrio 18 and MS-13 on the one hand, and the government on the other, continued [→ Honduras (drug trafficking organizations, organized crime)].

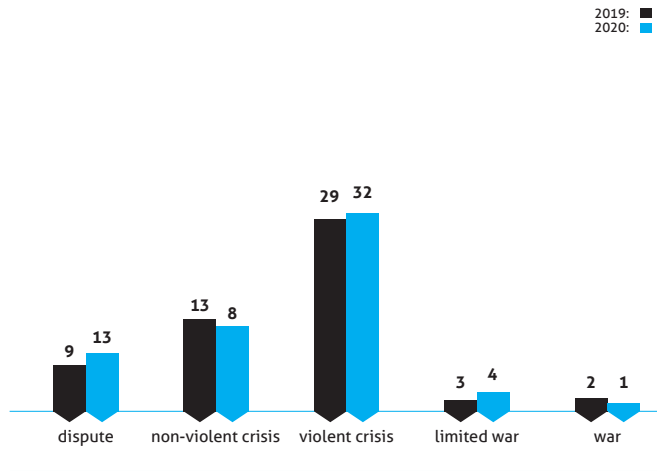
In several Central and South American countries, ongoing opposition conflicts were conducted violently. In Bolivia, however, violence decreased compared to last year's highly violent post-election protests. Although some violent clashes occurred between supporters of various parties, this year's presidential elections sparked no further violence as Luis Arce took office in November [→ Bolivia (opposition)]. In Chile, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, students and other social organizations decided to pause a series of protests scheduled for International Women's Day. Nevertheless, demonstrations resumed as cases of police brutality were reported across the country and protesters took to the streets calling for police reform [→ Chile (social movements)]. In Guatemala, the violent crisis between opposition as well as indigenous groups and the government continued. During a demonstration with more than 10,000 participants on November 21, protesters in the capital Guatemala City entered the congressional building and set it on fire [→ Guatemala (opposition)]. In Haiti, the violent crisis between opposition and the government continued. Several opposition protests called for the resignation of President Moïse. Peru experienced a severe political crisis. Following the ousting of President Martín Vizcarra and the appointment of Manuel Merino as interim president, police forces killed two protesters and injured more than 100 in clashes in the capital Lima [→ Peru (opposition)]. In the context of the ongoing violent crisis between the Venezuelan government and the opposition, the deep humanitarian, economic, and political crisis worsened. Tensions ran high in light of a failed coup-attempt by military dissidents and mercenaries in May.

Several conflicts involving indigenous groups and environmental activists continued violently. In Nicaragua, for instance, settlers killed 13 indigenous persons in clashes throughout the year, according to the Centre for Legal Assistance for Indigenous People. In Colombia, nearly 5,000 indigenous people staged a week-long protest calling for their rights and the protection of indigenous communities from armed actors [→ Colombia (indigenous groups)]. In Chile, the conflict between Mapuche indigenous people and the government deepened, as Mapuche activists carried out several arson attacks targeting forest and corporate farming companies. Unlike in previous years, the attacks resulted in civilian casualties [→ Chile (Mapuche / Araucanía)].

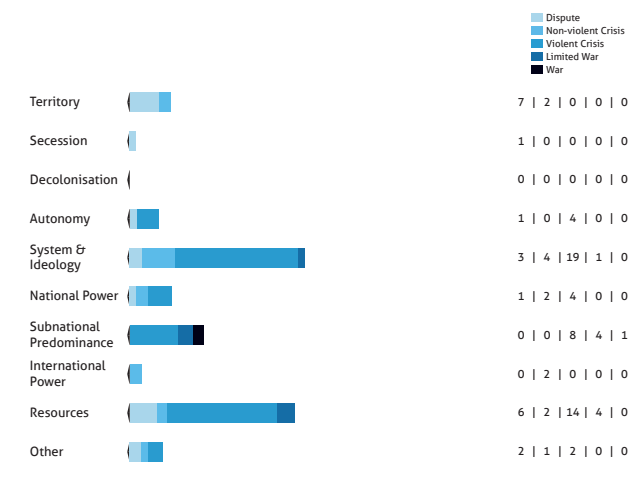
In Paraguay, the violent crisis over resources and the orientation of the political system continued between the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP), the Armed Peasant Association (ACA), and the government [→ Paraguay (EPP, agrarian movements)]. A military operation against EPP leaders triggered a diplomatic crisis between Paraguay and Argentina.

In the USA, the non-violent crisis over structural discrimination and institutionalized racism in the law enforcement and justice system as well as in society between anti-discrimination protesters and the government of President Donald Trump escalated to a violent crisis. A video showing a police officer killing the Black man George Floyd by suffocation on May 25 sparked the largest protest movement in US history. In the US alone, an estimated 15 to 26 million protesters participated in over 4,700 demonstrations under the hashtag "BlackLivesMatter" [→ USA (racial tensions)]. In addition, the violent crisis between various right-wing extremist groups and the government continued [→ USA (right-wing extremists)].

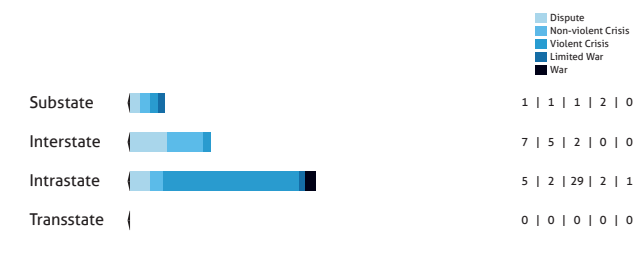
CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN THE AMERICAS
IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM
IN THE AMERICAS IN 2020



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE
IN THE AMERICAS IN 2020



THE AMERICAS

Overview: Conflicts in the Americas in 2020

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Argentina – United Kingdom (Falkland Islands / Islas Malvinas)*	Argentina vs. United Kingdom	territory, resources	1833	•	1
Belize – Guatemala*	Belize vs. Guatemala	territory	1981	•	2
Bolivia (opposition)	opposition parties and groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2017	•	3
Bolivia (socioeconomic protests)*	various social groups vs. government	system/ideology, resources	1983	•	3
Bolivia – Chile (access to sea)*	Bolivia vs. Chile	territory, resources	1883	•	1
Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)	drug trafficking organizations, militias vs. government	subnational predominance	2008	•	5
Brazil (indigenous groups)	indigenous groups vs. government	autonomy, resources	1985	•	3
Brazil (MST, MTST)	MST, MTST vs. government	resources	1996	•	3
Brazil (social protests)	BLM et. al. vs. government	system/ideology	2014	•	3
Chile (anarchist groups)*	anarchist groups, government	system/ideology	2014	•	3
Chile (Mapuche / Araucania)	CAM, Mapuche, WAM vs. government	autonomy	2008	•	3
Chile (Rapa Nui / Easter Island)*	Rapa Nui vs. government	secession	2010	•	1
Chile (social movements)	ACES, CONES, CONFECH vs. government	system/ideology	2006	•	3
Chile – United Kingdom (Antarctica)*	Chile vs. United Kingdom	territory	2007	•	1
Colombia (artisanal miners / Antioquia)*	local miners, Mesa Minera vs. government, Gran Colombia Gold	resources	2017	•	1
Colombia (ASCAMCAT / Catatumbo)*	ASCAMCAT vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources	2013	↗	3
Colombia (Cumbre Agraria)*	Cumbre Agraria vs. government	system/ideology	2013	↘	1
Colombia (ELN)	ELN vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1964	↗	4
Colombia (FARC dissidents, left-wing militants)	FARC dissidents vs. EPL, government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	2017	•	3
Colombia (indigenous groups)	indigenous groups vs. government	resources	2005	•	3
Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)	AGC vs. Los Caparrapos vs. ELN vs. FARC dissidents vs. EPL vs. Los Rastrojos	subnational predominance, resources	2013	•	4
Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)	drug cartels, neo-paramilitary groups vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	1983	↘	3
Colombia – Nicaragua (sea border)*	Colombia vs. Nicaragua	territory, resources	1825	↘	1
Colombia – Venezuela (border security)	Colombia vs. Venezuela	other	2015	•	2
Colombia – Venezuela (Monjes Islands)*	Colombia vs. Venezuela	territory, resources	1871	•	1
Cuba – USA (Guantanamo)*	Cuba, USA	territory	1959	•	1
Cuba – USA (system)*	Cuba vs. USA	system/ideology, international power	1960	•	2
Dominican Republic (anti-corruption)*	Marcha Verde, social protest groups vs. government	system/ideology, other	2017	↘	1
Dominican Republic – Haiti	Dominican Republic vs. Haiti	other	2009	•	3
Ecuador (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, resources	1980	•	3
El Salvador (inter-gang rivalry)	Barrio 18 vs. MS-13 vs. MS-503	subnational predominance	2003	•	3
El Salvador (Maras)	Barrio 18, MS-13 vs. government	subnational predominance	2003	•	3
El Salvador (opposition)*	opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2020	NEW	2
Guatemala (drug cartels)*	drug cartels vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2009	•	3
Guatemala (opposition)	indigenous groups et al., opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	1985	•	3
Guyana – Venezuela*	Guyana vs. Venezuela	territory	2015	•	2
Haiti (opposition)	anti-government protesters, Fanmi Lavalas, Pitit Dessalines vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1986	•	3

THE AMERICAS

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Honduras (Bajo Aguán)*	MUCA, MARCA, farmers of Bajo Aguán vs. landowners	resources	2012	↘	2
Honduras (drug trafficking organizations, organized crime)	drug trafficking organizations, criminal organizations vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2012	•	3
Honduras (opposition)*	opposition movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power, resources	2009	↘	2
Honduras – El Salvador (Isla Conejo)*	Honduras vs. El Salvador	territory	2013	↘	1
Jamaica (drug gangs)	drug gangs vs. government	subnational predominance	2010	•	3
Mexico (CNTE)	CNTE vs. government	system/ideology	2006	↗	3
Mexico (drug cartels)	drug cartels vs. vigilante groups vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2006	↘	4
Mexico (EZLN / Chiapas)*	EZLN vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources, other	1994	NEW	1
Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)	CDG et al. vs. CDN et al. vs. CDS et al. vs. CJNG et al. vs. CSRL et al. vs. LNFN et al.	subnational predominance, resources	2005	•	4
Mexico (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	national power	2006	•	1
Mexico (public security)	normalistas et al. vs. government	system/ideology	2014	•	3
Mexico – USA (border security)*	Mexico vs. USA	other	2005	↗	3
Nicaragua (indigenous groups)	Mayangna, Miskito groups, Rama, YATAMA vs. government, non-indigenous settlers	autonomy, resources	2015	•	3
Nicaragua (militant groups)*	FASN-EP, CGN, FDC 3-80 vs. government	system/ideology	2012	END	1
Nicaragua (opposition)	opposition groups, anti-government protesters vs. paramilitary groups, government	system/ideology, national power	2008	•	3
Paraguay (EPP, agrarian movements)	agrarian movements, EPP vs. government	system/ideology, resources	1989	•	3
Peru (opposition)	opposition movements vs. government	system/ideology, resources	2008	•	3
Peru (Shining Path)	SL vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1980	•	3
USA (racial tensions)	BLM, local protesters et al. vs. government	system/ideology	2014	↗	3
USA (right-wing extremists)	right-wing extremists vs. government	system/ideology	1990	•	3
USA – Venezuela	USA vs. Venezuela	system/ideology, international power	2001	•	2
Venezuela (opposition)	opposition (MUD) vs. government, pro-government militias	system/ideology, national power	1992	•	3

¹ Conflicts marked with * are without description

² Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

³ Change in intensity compared to the previous year: ↗ or ↘ escalation by one or more than one level of intensity; ↘ or ↙ deescalation by one or more than one level of intensity; • no change

⁴ Levels of intensity: 5 = war; 4 = limited war; 3 = violent crisis; 2 = non-violent crisis; 1 = dispute

BOLIVIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2017**

Conflict parties: opposition parties and groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and resources between various social groups and the government continued.

After the annulment of the 2019 election results and incumbent President Evo Morales from the Movement for Socialism (MAS) having fled the country, the provisional government under the leadership of Interim President Jeanine Añez from the Democrat Social Movement announced new elections for May 3. Over the course of the year, the government repeatedly postponed the election date, citing Covid-19 related health concerns. This caused several protests at which participants accused the government of using Covid-19 as a pretext for holding on to power.

On May 15, protesters erected several roadblocks in the departments of Cochabamba and La Paz, demanding both the repeal of the measures taken against the pandemic and Añez's resignation. This led to violent clashes with security forces. Protesters threw stones and petrol bombs while police used tear gas.

In another incident on July 14, thousands of people participated in a protest march against policies of the interim government. The march was organised by the Bolivian Workers' Center (COB) and passed from El Alto city to La Paz city, eponymous department.

In the wake of another postponement of the election date on July 23, COB in conjunction with the Pact of Unity, an umbrella organisation for indigenous and small-scale farmers' associations, called for a general strike including roadblocks. The strike was also supported by coca farmers' unions. Between July 28 and August 16, multiple protests each involving thousands of participants and more than 80 roadblocks were reported in all departments of the country.

Leading up to the election on October 18, violent clashes throughout the country between supporters of various parties were reported, leaving an unknown number of people injured. Political representatives of several parties, mainly the MAS, the Comunidad Ciudadana, and Creemos, were threatened and attacked with rocks during various election campaign events. For instance, on September 21, an event of the MAS youth organisation in El Alto was attacked with tear gas grenades by unknown perpetrators.

On October 23, the election results were announced, with MAS candidate Luis Arce reaching the absolute majority and the MAS winning the absolute majority in both chambers of the Plurinational Legislative Assembly. Shortly after, new protests began, especially in the department of Santa Cruz. Between October 20 and November 7, thousands of protesters gathered in the city of Santa Cruz daily, demanding an annulment of the results due to alleged election fraud. However, international election observation missions reported no irregularities. Responding to accusations of electoral fraud, several civil and indigenous organisations pledged to defend the MAS victory with force if necessary.

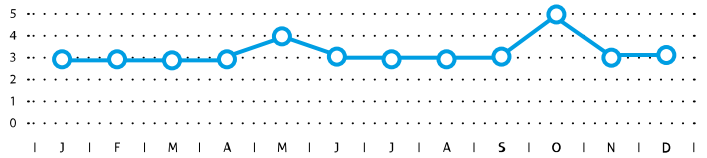
jha

BRAZIL (DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS)

Intensity: **5** | Change: • | Start: **2008**

Conflict parties: drug trafficking organizations, militias vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance



The war over subnational predominance between the main drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) Comando Vermelho (CV), Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), Família do Norte (FDN), and various militias, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. While the power bases of CV were the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, FDN dominated in the Amazonas state. According to the NGO Brazilian Forum on Public Security, the first six months of the year saw 25,712 intentional homicides, a seven percent increase on the same period last year.

In January and February, confrontations between FDN and CV escalated in Manaus city, Amazonas state. According to the authorities, at least 161 people died as a consequence.

The favelas of Rio de Janeiro, eponymous state, remained hotspots for interventions by the Military Police (PM) to combat drug trafficking. For example, on April 27, during a police operation in the favela Complexo do Alemão, controlled by CV, PM killed five men using grenades, rifles, and guns. In another raid in Complexo do Alemão on May 18, PM killed 13 suspected DTO members while one police officer was injured. In addition, on March 16, about 1,300 DTO members escaped from four prisons in São Paulo state. The day after, PM recaptured 517.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected conflict dynamics. Militias and DTOs extended their de-facto governance over favelas. For instance, in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro DTO members introduced a strict curfew to slow the spread of Covid-19 in March. On June 5, the Supreme Court limited PM interventions into Rio de Janeiro's favelas during the lockdown, allowing intervention in exceptional cases only. Subsequently, the number of PM operations significantly decreased, but increased again at the end of August. For instance, on August 27, a violent confrontation between different DTOs, including CV, took place in the favela of São Carlos, which led to a PM intervention. PM killed four DTO members and one civilian. On August 31, the Federal Police (PF) conducted a major operation called Caixa Forte aimed at DTO's financial structures. The government deployed 1,100 police officers to execute arrest warrants against suspected PCC members in 90 Brazilian cities of 19 federal states. As a result, police officers arrested 400 suspects and froze bank accounts holding USD 45.3 million belonging to PCC members. During the operation in the city of Cuiabá, Mato Grosso state, a PCC member shot and injured a police officer. In mid September, a similar nationwide police operation was carried out against the CV. In a separate incident, on September 22, a leader of CV was found dead in his prison cell under unclear circumstances.

The violence against political leaders intensified in the context of nationwide municipal elections on October 15. Members of criminal organizations killed 85 candidates from

January to November. In response, the government initiated massive police operations. For instance, on October 15, police killed 17 suspected members of Bonde do Ecko, a militia operating in eastern Rio de Janeiro. In a different operation on October 27 in the same area, at least 300 police officers were deployed in an operation against the same DTO, leaving one injured and five suspects arrested. azh

BRAZIL (INDIGENOUS GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1985**

Conflict parties: indigenous groups vs. government
 Conflict items: autonomy, resources

The violent crisis over autonomy and the demarcation of indigenous territories between various indigenous groups and the government continued.

Several indigenous groups continued to urge the government to delimitate indigenous lands, ensure their rights, and stop illegal mining and farming. The most prominent groups were the Kayapo, Kadiweu, Munduruku, Pataxó, Waimiri Atroari, Kraho, and Tabajara.

On February 6, President Jair Bolsonaro submitted bill 191/20 to the Congress. The bill permitted research into and exploration of mineral resources, hydrocarbons, and hydroelectric power on indigenous lands without consulting indigenous groups. Indigenous groups reacted with protests. On February 12, in the capital Brasilia, indigenous people from five different groups marched towards Congress to protest against the passing of the bill. Furthermore, from August 17 to 21, Kayapo indigenous people blocked a highway in Novo Progresso municipality, Pará state, to call attention to their demand for policies towards indigenous health, road infrastructure, land protection, and the suspension of illegal mining activities on indigenous land. According to the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), 72 percent of all the mining in the Amazon between January and April took place inside protected areas. Congress continued to preside over bill 191/20.

Over the course of the year, several members as well as leaders of indigenous groups were assassinated. For example, on March 31, the Guajajara indigenous leader, Zezico Rodrigues, was found dead on Arariboia Indigenous Land in the Brazilian state of Maranhão. 18 days later, a member of the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau people, who had been part of an indigenous watch group responsible for reporting illegal wood extraction in indigenous lands, was found dead. In a separate incident, on June 30, gold miners killed two Yanomami men in the Serra de Parima region, Roraima state, near the Venezuelan border. In addition to land and autonomy issues, indigenous people struggled with the Covid-19 pandemic, especially since they were expected to have a lower resistance to the virus. Bolsonaro was criticized for failing to take measures to protect indigenous communities from the virus. Several human rights organizations expressed concerns as the pandemic threatened many of the groups that live in isolation, far from hospitals. mvo

BRAZIL (MST, MTST)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1996**

Conflict parties: MST, MTST vs. government
 Conflict items: resources

The violent crisis over land and housing between several left-wing landless organizations, most notably the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST) on the one hand, and the government under President Jair Bolsonaro, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, MST and MTST repeatedly clashed with authorities over evictions. For example, during a 60-hour long clash between Military Police (PM) and 400 families in MST camp Quilombo Campo Grande in Minas Gerais state on August 15, PM used tear gas and evicted ten families. PM destroyed the school, crops, and the houses of the evicted families, while also injuring some of the camp occupants.

In addition to evictions, various other violent incidents occurred. For instance, on March 5, PM officers shot dead an MTST coordinator in Uberlândia town, Minas Gerais. On April 30, in the municipality Santa Rita de Cássia, Bahia state, unidentified armed men executed two MST settlers. On July 8, at Emílio Zapata camp, Rio de Janeiro city, eponymous state, clashes between camp occupants and off-duty PM officers left one camp occupant dead and two injured, as well as two PM officers injured. In addition, the state leader of MST was abducted on October 24 and found shot dead near the municipality of Ireno Alves dos Santos, Bahia, the next day. Moreover, in the south of Bahia, the federal government deployed 100 National Guard troops to an area of MST activity on September 2. However, after protest by Bahia's state governor, on September 17, the Federal Supreme Court ordered their withdrawal.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, MST and MTST refrained from public demonstrations, but used various virtual forms of protest and focused their efforts on large-scale food donation campaigns. pke

BRAZIL (SOCIAL PROTESTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2014**

Conflict parties: BLM et. al. vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between different social groups and the government continued. Throughout the year, protests against President Jair Bolsonaro intensified in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement [→ USA (racial tensions)].

Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, social protests flared up when supporters of President Jair Bolsonaro protested against the restrictions imposed by state governors and mayors. Meanwhile, anti-Bolsonaro protesters demonstrated against his policies and rhetoric. Bolsonaro opposed broad restrictions due to the predicted economic costs of a lockdown. In March and April, residents of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro cities, eponymous states, expressed their anger at Bolsonaro's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic by banging pots and pans on balconies and called for the president to

step down. Throughout April and May, in turn, Bolsonaro supporters took to the streets against the lockdown restrictions and in favour of a return to military dictatorship. During several of these anti-democratic protests, Bolsonaro joined in and called for an end to the social distancing rules. On April 19, for example, Bolsonaro joined hundreds of his supporters in Brasília, Distrito Federal, calling for the reinstatement of the AI-5 decree to close down the Supreme Court and Congress, which had been issued by the military dictatorship in 1968. However, other government representatives including military officials spoke out against the rhetoric and vowed to honor the constitution.

In 2020, the BLM movement emerged as a key actor in social protests in Brazil after a string of police violence against People of Color in the country's favelas and the killing of George Floyd in the USA. In May, multiple BLM protests in several large cities in Brazil took place. On May 18, for example, an adolescent was shot dead in a police raid in Rio de Janeiro. In a separate incident, on May 20, police killed another unarmed Black teenager in a police operation. Following these killings, people took to the streets to protest police violence against People of Color. In June, thousands of people took to the streets in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro to demonstrate against Bolsonaro, his handling of the pandemic, and systemic racism. During a protest in Rio de Janeiro on June 8, police dispersed the protesters using tear gas, rubber bullets, and batons. On November 19, protests erupted in several cities after security guards of a supermarket in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul state, beat a Black man to death. gro

CHILE (MAPUCHE / ARAUCANIA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2008**

Conflict parties: CAM, Mapuche, WAM vs. government
 Conflict items: autonomy

The violent crisis over ancestral territories and autonomy between the Mapuche indigenous peoples and the organizations Weichan Auka Mapu (WAM) and the Coordinadora Arauco-Malleco (CAM), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The Mapuche maintained their demand to return ancestral land to their communities and called for resistance in various ways.

Arson attacks, commonly attributed to the Mapuche by authorities, had been increasing over the past years, reaching an all-time high this year. The Asociación de Contratistas Forestales reported at least 40 attacks and 132 vehicles damaged throughout the year. Additionally, the number of road blockades increased drastically in comparison to previous years. For instance, in the first week of August alone, authorities claimed that indigenous groups had carried out 39 incidents of sabotage and road blockages. The attacks primarily targeted forestry machines and other properties of forestry companies. For example, on October 29, seven forestry machines and two trucks were set on fire in Cunco, Araucanía region. While Mapuche organizations did not claim responsibility for most of the attacks, on several occasions, pamphlets alluding to the Mapuche cause were found near the areas where the arson attacks took place. Furthermore, in other cases, the groups themselves released press statements claiming responsibility for attacks.

Unlike previous years, the attacks resulted in casualties. On February 8, suspected Mapuche set fire to two trucks on a

road in the rural area of Traiguén, Araucanía. Later, on March 4, media outlets reported that one of the drivers had died from burn injuries. In another incident on October 10, suspected Mapuche militants shot dead a worker from a logging company as he approached the location where they carried out an arson attack in the rural area of Collipulli, Araucanía. On September 8, armed individuals killed a resident of Cañete, Biobio region, in an incident related to an arson attack.

Additionally, the year was marked by violent incidents between Mapuche communities and the police. On May 13, police forces raided the We Newén Mapuche community, near Collipulli, Araucanía, using rubber bullets and tear gas, injuring 15 people. Less than a month later, on June 4, the same Mapuche community was targeted by unidentified armed persons. Three people were injured and the spokesperson of the community was killed. Another violent clash occurred on October 30, when a group of suspected Mapuche defended a road blockade with firearms near Padre Las Casas, Araucanía, following an eviction of a Mapuche community from private land. The incident left one police officer dead. cae

CHILE (SOCIAL MOVEMENTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: ACES, CONES, CONFECH vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and ideology between various social movements, such as the Coordinated Assembly of Secondary Students (ACES), and the government continued. Political unrest that had begun in October 2019 persisted, with protesters expressing discontent over social and economic inequality.

On January 6 and 7, ACES organized a boycott of the University Selection Test, claiming the process discriminated students based on socioeconomic status. When protesters blocked access to several exam centres and burned exam papers, preventing a quarter of students from completing the national exam, police arrested 81. On the three-month anniversary of the social outbreak on January 18, thousands of protesters took to the streets in Providencia commune, Metropolitana region, demanding an end to state repression. Furthermore, outside the presidential palace, protesters gathered to condemn police brutality that had frequently occurred since the start of the unrest.

Demonstrations demanding police reform increased following an event on January 28, when a truck of the police forces ran over and killed a protester outside the Estadio Monumental football stadium in Macul commune, Metropolitana. On March 18, the government declared a state of emergency due to Covid-19, imposing curfews and restrictions on gatherings which put an end to large protests. However, smaller demonstrations continued, including weekly Friday demonstrations in Providencia.

In October, the Public Ministry reported 4,600 open cases over excessive use of force by police, out of which only 75 agents had been charged. The organization was further scrutinized when a video of an officer pushing a protester from a bridge went viral on October 2, causing public outrage. On October 18, the one-year anniversary of the unrest, over 100,000 people protested across the country and 40,000 police personnel were deployed nationwide. The closure of

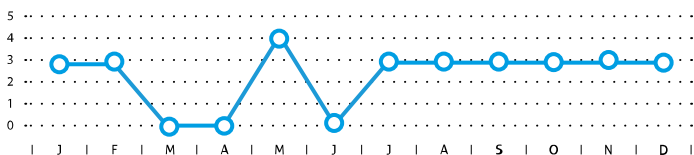
several metro stations, three fires, and looting were reported in Santiago. Meanwhile in Valparaíso, Valparaíso region, security forces used tear gas and pellets to disperse protesters, leaving two people injured.

On October 25, thousands gathered on the streets after 78 percent of Chileans voted in favor of rewriting the constitution dating back to the military dictatorship era. Interior Minister Víctor Pérez resigned on November 3 following the initiation of an impeachment process against him and increasing criticism of police brutality. Subsequently, on November 19, the General Director of the National Police resigned over similar allegations. Nevertheless, protests continued until the end of the year. Friends and relatives of arrested protesters requested the state to consider an amnesty law pardoning acts committed in the context of the uprising. On December 4, police used water cannons to disperse protesters in Santiago. Afterwards, dozens of protesters reported skin irritation and burns caused by an unknown chemical in the water. paj

COLOMBIA (ELN)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1964**

Conflict parties: ELN vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance, resources



The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, subnational predominance, and resources between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the government escalated to a limited war.

The Marxist-Leninist ELN financed itself predominantly through involvement in the production and commercialization of narcotics, extortion, illegal mining, and kidnapping, expanding these activities to Venezuela. The political crisis in Venezuela [→ Venezuela (opposition)] facilitated the ability of illegal armed groups, including the ELN, to enlist new recruits. Throughout the year, the conflict resulted in at least 64 deaths, an increase on last year. The number of airstrikes remained low. However, security forces continued to target ELN camps. For instance, on May 14, military forces bombed an ELN camp in Montecristo municipality, Bolivar department, killing 22 members of ELN.

ELN continued to target infrastructure with at least 27 attacks on pipelines. Furthermore, an energy tower was reportedly bombed in the outskirts of the city of Medellin, Antioquia department, on February 7. According to the UN, 37,000 civilians were displaced by the armed conflict in 2020, 71 percent of which were in the departments of Nariño, Chocó, Antioquia, and Norte de Santander.

On January 10, ELN attacked an air force base near Yopal municipality, Casanare department, with a mortar, and a military base in Tame, Arauca department, which left five security personnel wounded. Between February 14 and 17, ELN staged armed strikes in different departments, pressuring the government to resume the peace negotiations, which were suspended in 2019. The government declined to negotiate with ELN, but declared its willingness to do so if ELN halted their illegal activities. Furthermore, government officials continued to put diplomatic pressure on Cuba to

extradite ELN leaders that remain on the island.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, ELN declared a unilateral ceasefire in April and remained relatively inactive until July. Subsequently, on July 6, two soldiers were wounded in a skirmish in the municipality of Tibu, Norte de Santander. On August 15, suspected ELN members killed eight civilians in Samaniego municipality, Nariño, when they raided a private gathering. In another incident, an ELN ambush left four soldiers dead in the municipality of Sardinata, Norte de Santander, on August 30.

On October 26, in the frame of a military operation, security forces killed the commander of the Frente de Guerra Occidental, which is considered as one of the most active ELN divisions, accused of committing kidnappings, killings, and forcibly recruiting minors.

ELN was suspected of carrying out attacks and selective murders of activists and social leaders. Most notably, on November 3, an unknown group with suspected ELN association shot dead a social leader and human rights activist in Ocaña, Norte de Santander. The victim had reported multiple death threats by the armed group. In addition, ELN was involved in a conflict with other armed groups, such as dissident groups of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), which continued to affect the civilian population [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. smo

COLOMBIA (FARC DISSIDENTS, LEFT-WING MILITANTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2017**

Conflict parties: FARC dissidents vs. EPL, government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance, resources

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, subnational predominance, and resources between several dissident groups of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The militant dissidents of FARC remained active throughout the year, most notably in the departments of Cauca, Nariño, Meta, and Antioquia. The conflict was dominated by disputes over territorial control. FARC dissidents were among the groups vying for control over areas previously controlled by FARC-EP. Further issues central to the conflict were drug trafficking, disagreements over the political system, and illegal mining. According to the Foundation for Peace and Reconciliation (Pares), there are an estimated 2,500 to 2,600 dissidents from 23 different groups, operating in over 113 municipalities.

Despite the call from different civil society organizations for armed groups to agree on a ceasefire due to the spread of Covid-19, violence increased in regions historically affected by conflict. Moreover, FARC dissidents were reportedly among the armed groups that imposed lockdowns and further restrictions on the civil population. For example, on July 26 a media source reported the case of a family forced by a FARC dissident group to flee the municipality of Tumaco, Nariño, after a family member tested positive for Covid-19. Active fighting between dissident groups and the government continued throughout the year. On April 16, the army announced the death of four FARC dissidents, including the

leader of FARC 18th dissident Front, in a military operation carried out in the municipality of Ituango, Antioquia. In another incident on April 15, the military killed eight dissidents from the Dagoberto Ramos Front in a confrontation in Algeria, Cauca. Several arrests of prominent FARC dissident leaders were reported throughout the year. On November 20, the army captured a high ranking member of the 18th dissident Front during an armed clash in La Macarena, Meta. There were also several fatalities of security forces. For example, on June 17, suspected FARC dissidents ambushed a military patrol in the rural area of La Macarena. The confrontation left six soldiers killed and eight wounded.

In several departments, the security situation continued to deteriorate due to intense fighting over regional control related to drug trafficking between FARC dissidents and other armed groups [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. Moreover, the groups continued to target communal leaders. In November, Pares reported the killing of several local leaders, many either in areas with the presence of FARC dissident groups or regions under dispute.

The conflict caused further internal displacement during the year. In February, over 800 farmers were forced to leave their homes in the municipality of Ituango, Antioquia, because of confrontations between FARC dissidents, other paramilitary groups, and the government. In June, the military evacuated approx. 38 people from a rural area in Timbiquí municipality, Cauca, who were threatened by members of the 30th FARC dissident front. tmu

COLOMBIA (INDIGENOUS GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2005**

Conflict parties: indigenous groups vs. government
 Conflict items: resources

The violent crisis over resources between several indigenous groups including Nasa, Embera, Misak, and Pijao, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, indigenous communities called on the government to take action and adopt measures to protect indigenous groups from the increasing violence by armed groups. According to the Institute for Studies on Development and Peace, by December 23, at least 108 indigenous leaders had been killed by armed groups in Colombia [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. Indigenous groups claimed the government neglected to protect their communities.

On October 10, several indigenous communities from rural municipalities of the Cauca, Chocó, and Nariño departments, started a protest to raise awareness on the government's responsibility to fulfill the Peace Agreement of 2016. Between 4,000 and 8,000 indigenous Nasa, Embera, Pijao, and Misak, as well as Afro-Colombian communities, marched to the city of Cali, Valle del Cauca department. The group demanded a meeting with President Iván Duque, insisting on public debate on pressing issues such as the protection of social leaders, the violence in the rural regions, and land distribution. On October 12, a government commission met with indigenous representatives in Cali. However, as President Duque refused to meet with them in person, protesters continued to march towards the capital Bogotá, passing through the departments of Valle del Cauca, Quindío, Tolima, and Cundinamarca. The group reached the city on October 15, demanding to meet the

president. On October 21, more than 9,000 indigenous people protested in Bogotá. Various civil society organizations joined to show their dissatisfaction with government policies and living conditions in the country. One day later, members of the indigenous groups Misak, Pijao, and Nasa protested inside the El Dorado International Airport in Bogotá. Protests remained peaceful and were largely received as positive by the opposition and public opinion.

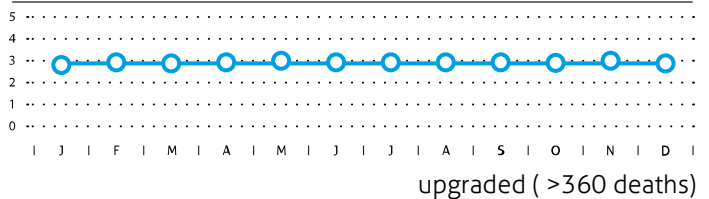
Furthermore, indigenous groups continued to demand the return of ancestral lands and autonomy to decide over the eradication of coca crops. On August 13, police forces killed two indigenous and injured three more during an eviction from private grounds in the rural area of Corinto, Cauca.

msc

COLOMBIA (INTER-CARTEL RIVALRY, NEO-PARAMILITARY GROUPS, LEFT-WING MILITANTS)

Intensity: **4** | Change: • | Start: **2013**

Conflict parties: AGC vs. Los Caparrapos vs. ELN vs. FARC dissidents vs. EPL vs. Los Rastrojos
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The limited war over subnational predominance and resources between several neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels, including the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC) also known as Gulf Clan, Los Caparros, Los Rastrojos, as well as the National Liberation Army (ELN), dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), continued.

Throughout the year, armed groups clashed, attempting to control lucrative regions for illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, resource exploitation, and extortion. The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic created new opportunities for territorial control as armed organizations introduced movement restrictions, strict lockdowns, and Covid-19 checkpoints for the civilian population. For example, on April 26, in Buenos Aires municipality, Cauca department, members of the FARC dissident group Jaime Martínez killed three civilians and injured four more as they gathered in a local park, breaking the curfew introduced by the armed group. Moreover, a local NGO reported an increase of over 113 percent of cases of recruitment of minors following the shutdown of schools due to the pandemic. In a report published on May 13, the organization described at least 128 cases of children recruited by armed groups.

Groups continued to fight over subnational predominance and drug trafficking routes. Violent incidents mainly took place in the departments of Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, and Norte de Santander. For instance, on June 21, a battle between two rival fronts of the FARC dissidents in the communities of Ricaurte and Playón, Nariño, left at least seven people dead. Later, on July 19, members of the Los Rastrojos killed seven people in the rural area of Tibú, Norte

Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



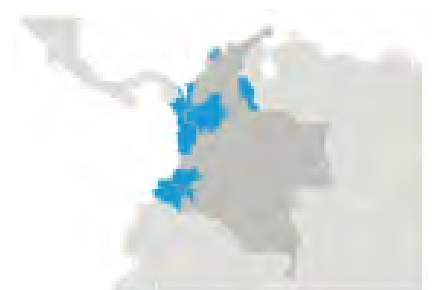
September



October



November



December



de Santander. In another incident, on December 11, suspected members of Los Caparros killed four people who were allegedly affiliated with AGC in Puerto Claver, Antioquia. Two days later, AGC members raided a rural house in a retaliatory act in Caucasia, Antioquia, killing four and injuring five.

The civilian population was specifically affected by armed clashes. The conflict resulted in forced displacements, confinements, intimidation, and extortions, among other human rights violations. Between 12/20/19 and January 9, several armed clashes between two unidentified armed groups led to the displacement of over 3,000 people in the rural areas of Tumaco, Nariño. In another incident, in early February, clashes between the AGC and the ELN led to 1,600 people being displaced in the rural area of Roberto Payán, Nariño. Turf war between ELN and other armed groups around May 22 displaced approx. 1,300 people and confined approx. 1,400 people in the municipality of Alto Baudo, Chocó.

In an effort to gain new recruits and hold control over drug production areas, neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels, and left-wing militant groups were involved in the killing of community leaders and political candidates, particularly those that focused their efforts on land restitution, reparation of victims, and substitution of illegal crops among their communities. According to the Institute for Studies on Development and Peace, also known as Indepaz, 310 social leaders were killed in 2020, the highest number of homicides since 2011. For example, on April 4, FARC dissidents of the 1st Front killed a social leader and his three children in Piamonte, Cauca. Moreover, drug cartels and other armed organizations continued to target demobilized FARC-EP fighters and members of the Comunes political party, killing at least 88.

The political crisis in Venezuela and the increasing flow of migrants into the country generated new sources of illegal economies for the armed groups, such as contraband and human-trafficking. Furthermore, authorities reported that AGC and Los Caparros received resources from the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, including guns and financial support, to carry out a turf war in Antioquia. ^{15c}

COLOMBIA (NEO-PARAMILITARY GROUPS, DRUG CARTELS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↘** | Start: **1983**

Conflict parties: drug cartels, neo-paramilitary groups vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The limited war over subnational predominance and resources between neo-paramilitary groups and drug cartels, including the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC), also known as the Gulf Clan; Los Rastrojos; and Los Caparrapos, also called Caparros, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis.

Armed clashes among illegal armed groups attempting to control drug trafficking routes and other illicit economies remained a contentious issue for national security [→ Colombia (inter-cartel violence, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. Security forces intervened in several of these clashes. For instance, on February 25, military forces intervened when a clash between AGC members and a dissident group of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia led to the displacement of more than 800 farmers from the rural

area of Ituango municipality, Antioquia department. On December 30, following a confrontation between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and Los Rastrojos, additional military forces were deployed in the rural area of Tibú municipality, Norte de Santander department. Subsequently, security forces clashed with members of Los Rastrojos. 300 civilians fled the area.

The civilian population was particularly affected by the conflict as the clashes often resulted in civilian casualties, forced displacement, and the destruction of infrastructure. For example, on March 7, in Tarazá municipality, Antioquia, armed clashes between military troops and members of Los Caparros, left one truck driver dead and two civilians injured. Involved members of Los Caparros used hand grenades and also shot at civilians in the area. Moreover, during the Covid-19 pandemic, neo-paramilitary groups and drug cartels imposed curfews and restricted the mobility of several communities.

Throughout the year, the government arrested members of the cartels and neo-paramilitary groups. For instance, on February 17, military and police forces captured a high-ranking member of Los Caparros in Tarazá, Antioquia. In another example, during a large-scale military operation that lasted over nine months and deployed nearly 300 security forces, 43 members of the AGC were arrested in several municipalities of the Montes de Maria sub-region, Bolívar department. Furthermore, security forces targeted finances and infrastructure that belonged to the groups. On July 1, for instance, members of the national navy carried out a search operation, seizing 7.5 tons of cocaine from the AGC hidden in a vessel.

Military analysts stated that this year, AGC was reduced by nearly 1,800 combatants due to arrests, desertions, and operations carried out by security forces. It was estimated that nearly 1,600 AGC members and at least 100 members of Los Caparros were still active. ^{ago}

COLOMBIA – VENEZUELA (BORDER SECURITY)

Intensity: **2** | Change: **•** | Start: **2015**

Conflict parties: Colombia vs. Venezuela

Conflict items: other

The non-violent crisis over border security between the governments of Colombia and Venezuela, amidst the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, continued [→ Venezuela (opposition)].

Throughout the year, tensions between the two governments over border security remained high. According to a report by the International Crisis Group, the Venezuelan government increased military drills along the border in February. On August 20, Colombian President Ivan Duque accused the government of Venezuela of seeking to acquire Iranian medium- and long-range missiles. On May 4, tensions between the countries increased when the Venezuelan army foiled a marine invasion by Venezuelan deserters, who had prepared and equipped themselves in neighboring Colombia, allegedly aiming to overthrow Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. After the incident had received international attention, the governments of Colombia and the USA [→ USA – Venezuela] distanced themselves from the incident, denying reports that their intelligence services had known about the plans. Another point of disagreement concerned the expansion of Colombian left-wing groups to Venezuela [→

Colombia (ELN)] as Duque accused the Venezuelan government of sheltering and supporting the groups. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela led to further refugee flows towards Colombia. Concurrently, Covid-19 related unemployment in Colombia resulted in the increased return of previously emigrated Venezuelans. Despite the seven border posts' closures, informal border crossings remained high, thus increasing the risk of rapid spread of Covid-19. In response, a very limited number of Colombian and Venezuelan state agencies re-opened bilateral relations. This marks the first official communication after Venezuela severed diplomatic ties in 2019.

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC – HAITI

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2009**

Conflict parties: Dominican Republic vs. Haiti
Conflict items: other

The violent crisis between the Dominican Republic (DR) and Haiti concerning immigration and racist sentiments continued.

The outbreak of Covid-19 led to a shift in migration flows as thousands of Haitian migrants working in DR were laid off and returned to Haiti. The return of Haitian migrants was a key factor in bringing Covid-19 to the country. In response, on March 16, Haiti closed its border with the DR. Nonetheless, border crossings into Haiti remained frequent. During the first half of the year, approx. 30,000 Haitian migrants returned.

On July 9, in the DR's capital Santo Domingo, anti-racism protests from the group Reconocido, which largely consists of people of Haitian descent, confronted counter-protesters from the ultranationalist organization Antigua Orden Dominicana. Police officers arrested Reconocido's leader and another activist. On August 3, Haitian nationals, claiming ownership over the land, lowered a Dominican flag along the border at Malpasse border post, Jimani town, Independencia, DR. Dominican border security personnel intervened and were confronted by protesters throwing stones and bottles. Shots were allegedly fired. The following week, the Haitian government expressed its regret over the incident.

On September 14, two Haitian nationals allegedly killed a Dominican lawyer in Santa Cruz de Mao town, Valverde Province, DR. As a reaction, on September 27, Dominican protesters in Mao demanded stricter border controls and the deportation of illegal Haitian migrants. From September to November, DR president Luis Abinader repeatedly stated that the crisis in Haiti [→ Haiti (Opposition)] was one of the DR's main problems. In this context, the DR deployed 9,748 military personnel to the border in October. swe

EL SALVADOR (INTER-GANG RIVALRY)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2003**

Conflict parties: Barrio 18 vs. MS-13 vs. MS-503
Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between Barrio 18, split in to Revolutionaries and Southerners, on

the one hand, and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and its splinter group MS-503, on the other, continued.

The rival gangs maintained de-facto control of their respective territories distributed over all 14 state departments. According to the National Police, the homicide rate, of which the majority was attributed to gang violence, dropped by roughly 45 percent on last year, numbering 1,322 homicides. President Nayib Bukele attributed the decrease in violence to his Territorial Control Plan launched on 06/20/19, which aimed to fight gang violence. However, the reasons behind this year's reduced homicide rate remained debated. Alleged negotiations between the government and gangs for electoral support in exchange for prison benefits as well as the Covid-19 pandemic served as possible causes for the overall decline in fatalities.

On March 30, MS-13 published a video voicing its support for the government's Covid-19 restrictions and initiated its own measures, such as curfews. Both groups of Barrio 18 followed this lead and simultaneously announced violent punishments for any misconduct. MS-13 and Barrio 18, however, disagreed over the execution of such measures and over the further collection of extortions from the communities in the gangs' respective territories. This resulted in Barrio 18 distancing itself from MS-13 on April 2 after MS-13 had published videos of their violent punishments for people allegedly violating the restrictions, using torture.

Violence spiked between April 23 and April 27, resulting in 77 killings of gang members as well as civilians living in gang-controlled territory. Despite a lack of conclusive evidence, MS-13 was alleged to be primarily responsible for those deaths. In reaction, Bukele ordered all prisons housing gang members to toughen their measures against prisoners despite the increased risk of infection [→ El Salvador (Maras)]. For the first time since 2004, officials mixed prisoners from different gangs in the same cell to prevent communication between members of the same gang. In that context, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights voiced their concerns, warning of a further eruption of violence between the gangs.

On October 11, six people, at least one of them being affiliated with a gang, were shot dead by alleged gang members in the capital San Salvador. Four persons were subsequently arrested, at least one of them being affiliated with a gang.

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EL SALVADOR (MARAS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2003**

Conflict parties: Barrio 18, MS-13 vs. government
Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between the country's main gangs, namely Barrio 18 and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The government continued to fight gang violence with repressive measures such as raids of homes and businesses, additional deployment of security forces, and isolation of imprisoned gang members. Throughout the year, the overall murder rate dropped significantly compared to last year, particularly during the first four months. In total, 1,322 homicides were recorded. The government attributed the majority of these homicides to in-fighting between gangs [→ El Salvador (inter-gang rivalry)].

On February 2, a gang member killed a soldier in a shoot-out with security forces in El Barro district, Ahuachapán department. On March 21, President Nayib Bukele ordered a national quarantine due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Spokesmen of both gangs also announced the enforcement of Covid-19 restrictions on the neighborhoods in their respective territories. Two months later, Bukele authorized the “use of lethal force” by security forces against gang members allegedly to restrict of gang activities and to ensure quarantine policies. On September 3, the El Faro media group reported on classified negotiations between government officials and imprisoned MS-13 gang members. According to the report, numerous meetings had taken place since October 2019, in which representatives of Bukele’s administration offered incentives for gang members in exchange for ceasing extortion, drug trafficking, and murder. Bukele later denied the negotiations.

By the end of the year, multiple raids and operations had led to the arrest of hundreds of gang members. For example, on November 22, police officers arrested 85 gang members of MS-13 and Barrio 18 in the capital San Salvador. Three days later, a transnational operation against extortion and drug-trafficking led to the arrest of 64 gang members in the border region of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala [→ Honduras (drug trafficking organizations, organized crime); Guatemala (drug cartels)]. On December 15, the Attorney General’s Office announced the arrest of 110 individuals during an operation in the departments of San Miguel, Usulután and La Unión. Of these individuals, 107 were members of MS-13, while a mayor and two municipal officers were also arrested for alleged collaboration with the gang. [see](#)

GUATEMALA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1985**

Conflict parties: indigenous groups et al., opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between opposition as well as Indigenous groups and the government continued.

Various oppositional groups, such as university students, feminists, and indigenous groups called for the government to end corruption in the country. Throughout the year, several current and former deputies were convicted of corruption. On January 15, riot police used tear gas and batons against people demonstrating at the swearing-in ceremony of congress deputies. On March 5, President Alejandro Giammattei declared a state of emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The state of emergency and the accompanying restrictions were criticized by the opposition. On April 7, three people broke into the home of the mayor of Chisec municipality, Alta Verapaz region, and injured his son with a thrusting weapon, allegedly protesting against the Covid restrictions. On June 16, tensions over a displacement of street sellers, who claimed their sales had declined due to Covid-19 measures, escalated in Ixcán municipality, Chimaltenango region. Riot police evicted merchants who protested against the disposition by throwing fruit and vegetables. Two journalists were injured during the incident.

On November 21, during student-organised protests, more than 10,000 people demonstrated against the approval of the state budget for 2021 in the capital Guatemala City, demand-

ing the resignation of Giammattei. During the demonstration, protesters entered the congressional building and set it on fire. Security forces arrested at least 22 people and injured 44, using tear gas and batons.

[apv](#)

HAITI (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1986**

Conflict parties: anti-government protesters, Fanmi Lavalas, Pitit Dessalines vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between several opposition parties on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Over the course of the year, protests against President Jovenel Moïse’s alleged increasingly autocratic governance continued. On January 13, Moïse dismissed the Chamber of Deputies and two thirds of the Senate via Twitter, ruling largely by decree since. He also appointed an advisory committee to draft a new constitution and created the National Agency of Intelligence, which human rights activists, international observers, and several opposition leaders criticized for its lack of judicial oversight. Protesters and police clashed on several occasions towards the end of the year. For instance, on October 17, the Haitian Police (PNH) injured several protesters with tear gas and rubber bullets during a protest calling for the president’s resignation in the capital Port-au-Prince. During demonstrations in Port-au-Prince on November 18, protesters threw rocks at the PNH, who in turn used tear gas, leaving two injured, and allegedly shot dead a protester.

Further public outrage was sparked by gang violence, kidnappings, high levels of corruption, and a worsening economic situation. [swe](#)

HONDURAS (DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS, ORGANIZED CRIME)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: drug trafficking organizations, criminal organizations vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The violent crisis in Honduras over subnational predominance and resources between various drug trafficking and other criminal organizations on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Compared to last year, violence decreased, as police forces recorded a total of 3,482 homicides. The clearance rate of homicides remained low. However, the government attributed the majority of these homicides to gang crime. There were strong indications that drug trafficking operations and production significantly increased. Up to the end of September alone, security forces were able to seize an estimated 2.83 tons of cocaine, significantly exceeding the total amount of 2.2 tons in 2019. Meanwhile, the capacity of security forces to carry out anti-drug operations decreased in the face of

the Covid-19 pandemic as they were deployed on missions concerning public health, such as the distribution of state supplies.

Gangs and cartels, among them Barrio 18 and the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), continued to fight over territory in cities like Tegucigalpa, Francisco Morazán department, to extort protection money and sell drugs [→ El Salvador (inter-gang rivalry)]. Additionally, drug-related activities also took place in some rural areas, such as the region La Mosquitia, department of Gracias a Dios. On December 3, for instance, a shootout between security forces and members of a drug cartel in Barra de Patuca municipality, left one cartel member dead and one soldier injured.

On February 11, a heavily armed group of approx. 20 persons stormed a court building in El Progreso municipality, Yoro department, where a trial was being held against a senior leader of MS-13, Alexander Mendoza. They managed to free Mendoza, killing at least four police officers and injuring two. Violence continued to affect national prisons. On July 20, for instance, imprisoned gang members allegedly belonging to MS-13, opened fire against prison guards in Támara high security prison, Francisco Morazán department. One officer was injured in the attack.

On June 25, Congress passed a new penal code, which significantly reduced the sentence for bribery as well as for drug trafficking. Furthermore, the OAS Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras was dissolved in January.

In recent years, key trials against leading members of drug trafficking organizations had taken place in the USA, among them high-ranking current and former government officials such as members of the Honduran Congress. On April 30, US prosecutors accused a former chief of the Honduran National Police of drug trafficking. He denied all charges. In March, US prosecutors had already accused President Juan Orlando Hernández of taking bribes from drug cartels. jhu

JAMAICA (DRUG GANGS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2010**

Conflict parties: drug gangs vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis between various drug gangs and the government over subnational predominance continued. By March, police statistics reported more than 300 homicides, attributing about 80 percent of killings in the country to gangs. According to data provided by the Independent Commission of Investigation, security forces were responsible for 104 fatal shootings. In this context, Amnesty International criticized the high number of extrajudicial killings.

On January 9, the leader of the Clansman gang was sentenced to prison for 38 years and nine months. The Clansman is one of the major criminal gangs operating predominantly in Spanish Town, Saint Catherine Parish. According to the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF), authorities arrested around 60 Clansman gang members over the course of the year.

The government increased its efforts to tackle gang violence and established a special anti-gang task force to support the JCF this year.

Gang members and the JCF clashed mainly in the Kingston Metropolitan area, Saint Andrew, and Saint Catherine parishes. During the year, Prime Minister Andrew Holness declared states of emergency in the parishes of Saint Andrew

and Saint Catherine, as well as in Saint James, Westmoreland, Hanover, and Clarendon following spikes in violence. JCF stated that they had arrested ten of the most wanted criminals throughout the year. On July 22, security forces killed the leader of the Prekeh gang in Amity District, Saint James. In a separate incident on August 2, a police raid left six members of a drug gang dead and two injured. On August 20, another gang leader was shot dead during a confrontation with police in the Kingston Metropolitan area.

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MEXICO (CNTE)

Intensity: **3** | Change: ↗ | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: CNTE vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The non-violent crisis over the orientation of education policies between the teachers' union National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE) and the government led by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador escalated to a violent crisis.

CNTE members accused the government of violating labor guarantees, not honoring contractual benefits as well as implementing continuous budget cuts. Members of CNTE and at least 3,000 members of the Union of Professors of the University of Michoacán staged a protest in Morelia town, Michoacán state, on January 27.


On March 10, CNTE members blocked train tracks in the municipalities of Caltzontzin, Pátzcuaro and Uruapan, Michoacán, demanding the release of 25 detained union members.

On July 27, members of the CNTE blocked railways in Morelia, opposing the bankarization of their payment.

Expressing opposition to a homeschooling programme introduced amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, CNTE members staged a sit-in protest on August 11 in front of the National Palace in the capital Mexico City. Their main concerns expressed were the lack of access in rural areas and missing interaction. These CNTE members further demanded that 1,390 graduates of normal schools in the state of Michoacán receive job guarantees and that outstanding salaries be paid.

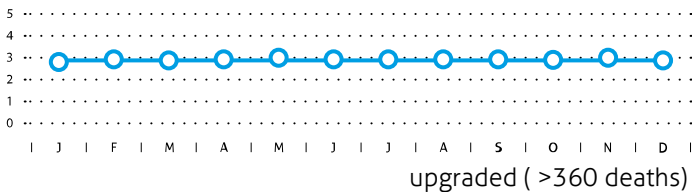
From September 21 to September 30, CNTE members blocked train tracks in the municipalities of Pátzcuaro, Uruapan, Múgica and Maravatio in Michoacán, protesting against late payments of scholarships and for the allocation of guaranteed placements for normalistas. In the municipalities of Uruapan and Pátzcuaro the blockage ended with a confrontation between the teachers and security forces, resulting in 14 injured officers and seven arrests. Security forces found seven Molotov cocktails, a pyrotechnical rocket, and an improvised firearm among the teachers of CNTE. Blockages in the other municipalities continued until October 8, when Obrador agreed to release outstanding payments to CNTE teachers. bho

MEXICO (DRUG CARTELS)

Intensity: **4** | Change:  | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: drug cartels vs. vigilante groups vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The war over subnational predominance and the production, trade, and trafficking of illegal drugs and other illicit activities between various drug cartels, vigilante groups, and the government, de-escalated to a limited war.

The most active and comprehensive drug cartels were the Gulf Cartel (CDG), Northeastern Cartel (CDN), Sinaloa Cartel (CDS), Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), and Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel (CSRL), as well as their respective splinter groups.

Despite having announced the end of the war on drugs and the "Kingpin Strategy" last year, the government continued to deploy the army to fight drug cartels. On May 11, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador published a decree expanding the role of the military in policing operations until 2024.

On October 15, former defence minister Salvador Cienfuegos Zepeda was arrested in the USA and charged with drug trafficking and money laundering. On November 18, US prosecutors dropped all charges against Cienfuegos. He was sent back to Mexico where, according to the US Department of Justice, he was supposed to be investigated and possibly charged. On arrival in Mexico, Cienfuegos was set free without charge. On December 7, Mexico confirmed that it had asked the US to extradite Genaro García Luna, the country's former security chief, who was awaiting trial for drug trafficking and money laundering. On December 9, the government approved an amendment to its National Security Law, removing foreign agents' diplomatic immunity and requiring them to share all information gathered in Mexico with Mexican authorities. Critics said the law endangered foreign agents as well as their informants and might end Mexican-US cooperation.

Heavy fighting over local predominance between drug cartels continued [→ Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)]. The country's homicide rate declined by less than one percent compared to last year's record high. Moreover, more than 6,000 people disappeared over the course of the year.

Throughout the year, Tamaulipas state remained a hotspot of violence as CDG, CDN, and their respective splinter groups violently contested public security. For instance, on February 16, members of CDN attacked a convoy of the National Guard (GN) in the city of Nuevo Laredo. Eight cartel members died in the attack. On February 25, members of CDG ambushed a military patrol in Valle Hermoso municipality. Six attackers were killed in the shootout. On August 21, in a clash between alleged CDN members and soldiers, eight cartel members died and one soldier was injured.

In Guanajuato state, the authorities continued to crack down on CSRL activity. On June 20, security forces arrested 26

alleged CSRL members, including high-ranking members, in the town of Celaya. In connection with the operation, burning roadblocks and gunfire were reported in 14 of the state's 46 municipalities. On August 2, security forces arrested the cartel's leader José Antonio Yépez Ortiz, alias "El Marro". Subsequently, drug cartel-related violence in the state increased.

In Guerrero state, vigilante groups and drug cartels continued to fight for local predominance. For instance, on August 3, about 30 armed civilians attacked a command post of the communitarian police and killed five people in Filo de Caballos municipality.


In Zacatecas state, in the municipality of Calera, on October 12, armed civilians attacked a state police convoy, which led to a shootout leaving 14 attackers dead and three police officers as well as one attacker injured.

High profile assassinations continued throughout the year. On February 20, a police commander was shot dead in Acapulco city, Guerrero state. On June 16, a federal judge specializing in organized crime and his wife were shot dead in their home in Colima city, eponymous state. On August 20, a coordinator of the office of public prosecution was shot dead in the city of San Luis Potosí, eponymous state.

On June 26, about 30 members of CJNG ambushed the convoy of Mexico City's public security chief Omar García Harfuch in Mexico City, using assault and Barrett rifles, as well as grenade launchers. Two of his bodyguards as well as one bystander were killed and Harfuch was injured. Following the incident, security forces detained 19 suspects.

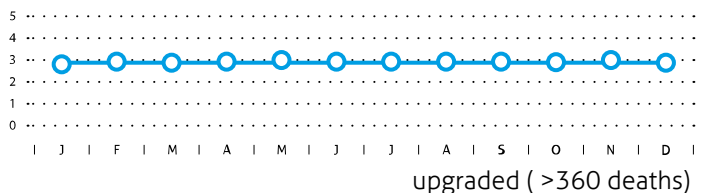
As in the previous year, Mexico remained one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists. According to Reporters Without Borders, eight journalists were killed in 2020. cib, mbr, mah, apv

MEXICO (INTER-CARTEL RIVALRY, PARAMILITARY GROUPS)

Intensity: **4** | Change:  | Start: **2005**

Conflict parties: CDG et al. vs. CDN et al. vs. CDS et al. vs. CJNG et al. vs. CSRL et al. vs. LNFM et al.

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The limited war over subnational predominance and the production, trade, and trafficking of illegal drugs, as well as gasoline theft and other illicit activities between various drug cartels and their respective splinter groups continued.

The most involved groups were Gulf Cartel (CDG), Northeastern Cartel (CDN), Sinaloa Cartel (CDS), Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel (CSRL), and New Michoacán Family (LNFM).

As in previous years, targeted killings by state forces [→ Mexico (drug cartels)] or rivaling cartels led to internal fights over succession and increased fragmentation of the criminal groups. This led to a high variety of alliances between different cartels. At least 480 deaths related to inter-cartel

violence were confirmed this year.

CJNG continued to be the most powerful cartel, controlling the largest territory and being involved in the most violent fights. The fight over resources and territory continued, involving gasoline pipelines between CJNG and CSRL in the state of Guanajuato, the latter group's traditional heartland. For instance, on April 4, alleged members of the rivaling cartels clashed in the town of Celaya. Seven people were killed and another two injured in the incident. While the number of violent clashes decreased compared to previous years, violence increased from the beginning of August, when José Antonio Yépez Ortiz alias "El Marro", the alleged leader of CSRL, was arrested by authorities [→ Mexico (drug cartels)]. CJNG also carried on its operations in the state of Michoacán, where the alliance Carteles Unidos, consisting of affiliated groups of LNFМ, CDG, Valencia Cartel and Milenio Cartel, tried to stop CJNG expansion. For instance, on March 16, about 60 gunmen of CJNG and Carteles Unidos clashed in the municipalities of Aguililla and La Huacana, leaving 18 persons dead. On July 21, hundreds of refugees fled from the town of El Aguaje, after repeated shootings between CJNG and Los Viagras, an armed branch of LNFМ. At least ten alleged cartel members were killed in the confrontation. Five days later, in a similar incident which took place on 08/30/2019, more than a hundred alleged members of CJNG stormed the municipality of Tepalcatepec, with armed trucks and makeshift tanks, searching for the alleged leader of the Valencia Cartel. No killed or injured persons were reported. At the beginning of August, ten teenagers were abducted in the municipality of Aguililla by members of Carteles Unidos. They were reportedly forced to fight with the alliance against CJNG.

Furthermore, CJNG and LNFМ fought over subnational predominance in Mexico State, where members of LNFМ interrogated, tortured and killed an alleged member of CJNG, as displayed in a video published on March 16; and in Guanajuato, where for instance on April 8, a video appeared showing members of CJNG executing a leader of Los Viagras in Guanajuato.

Fights over subnational predominance and drug trafficking routes continued between CJNG and CDS throughout the year. Clashes between the groups in Guerrero state led to several thousands of IDPs in April. Towards the end of the year, clashes between CJNG and CDS intensified in the state of Zacatecas. On October 3, a video released on social media showed three alleged CJNG members interrogating, torturing and killing two alleged CDS members. Another incident took place on October 9, when alleged members of the two rivaling groups clashed in Jerez de García Salinas municipality, Zacatecas, killing two. Besides, CJNG was also involved in turf wars in the states of Aguascalientes, Baja California, Jalisco, Mexico City, Morelos, San Luis Potosí, and Veracruz.

CDS continued turf wars with other cartels besides CJNG. In Zacatecas, CDS fought with CDG over predominance. For example on February 2, five bodies were found in plastic bags in Rio Grande town along with a narco message signed by CDG addressing CDS. Salazar Cartel, a subgroup of CDS, was involved in fights with the Caborca Cartel in Sonora state. For instance, on September 9, the dismembered bodies of two men were found together with a narco message in an area where the two cartels were fighting over the control of mining activities in Pitiquito municipality. CDS was also active in the capital Mexico City, where a former high-ranking member who was part of a witness protection program was killed. In the cartel's traditional stronghold, Sinaloa state, factions of the group fought over succession of the leadership

of Joaquín Guzmán Loera, alias "El Chapo". CDS was active in at least 17 Mexican states.

CDG continued to fight over subnational predominance with CDN in the states of Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. Especially the municipality of Miguel Alemán, Tamaulipas, continued to be contested due to its strategically valuable location on the border to the US. For example, on July 12, about 60 alleged members of CDN and CDG clashed in this municipality, leaving reportedly two persons killed and one injured. apv, hst

MEXICO (PUBLIC SECURITY)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2014**

Conflict parties: normalistas et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the political system and the handling of public security between teacher trainees, so-called normalistas, and associated social movements, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The conflict had been triggered by the abduction of 43 normalistas traveling in three buses as well as the killing of six and the injuring of 25 on 06/26/2014, in Iguala town, Guerrero state, with the alleged involvement of municipal police forces and a local cartel offshoot. The case remained largely unsolved. However, on June 6, the Attorney General of Mexico discarded the findings delivered in the so-called "Historical Truth" speech by a former attorney general, held on 01/27/15, which had stated that local cartel members had incinerated the bodies at a garbage dump. On July 7, tests conducted by the University of Innsbruck, Austria, identified the mortal remains of one of the 43 disappeared normalistas, found 500 meters outside Cocula's municipal dump site, also in Guerrero state, contradicting the official version. These findings and other inconsistencies casted doubts on the integrity of the whole investigation, as parents and social movements had already claimed before.

Normalistas, parents of the 43, and associated social movements protested throughout the year, demanding new investigations. On February 2, 200 state security forces violently dissolved a protest organized by the victims' families in Tuxtla Gutierrez town, Chiapas state, using tear gas. According to the Chiapas State Attorney, demonstrators used rocks, fireworks, and molotov cocktails. At least six people were injured, among them two police officers, according to the authorities. On July 17, a group of Ayotzinapa students vandalized the Guerrero State Congress building to protest against the slow progress of the investigation. On September 26, 5,000 people marched in the capital Mexico City to commemorate the sixth anniversary of the disappearance of the 43 students. Two protesters and four police officers were injured.

On January 16, March 4 and November 26, Normalistas hijacked private vehicles in Guerrero state in order to transport personnel to protests. Furthermore, at least 24 times, groups of students took over toll collection booths to finance protest activities, according to their own statements. Those takeovers concentrated along the Federal Highway 95D, specifically in the municipalities of La Venta, Palo Blanco, Paso Morelos, Guerrero state, and Tlalpan municipality, Mexico City. On several occasions, these takeovers led to violent confrontations. On October 1, a shootout ensued between presumed normalistas and unknown individuals in the municipality of Ecatepec de Morelos, Mexico state, leaving two people in-

jured. On July 29, a vehicle ran over and injured a normalista at a toll collection booth in Paso Morelos, Huitzucó municipality, Guerrero.
run

NICARAGUA (INDIGENOUS GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2015**

Conflict parties: Mayangna, Miskito groups, Rama, YATAMA vs. government, non-indigenous settlers

Conflict items: autonomy, resources

The violent crisis over resources and autonomy between several indigenous groups and the government continued. Specifically, the Miskito, Mayangna, and Rama groups as well as the indigenous party Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Aslatakanka (YATAMA) continued to reclaim their historic land from settlers who were supported by the government. Settlers continued to invade and violently attack indigenous communities to exploit the natural resources found on indigenous land. As in previous years, this led to the migration and displacement of several indigenous communities. Despite its legal obligation imposed by laws 28 and 455, the government did not help indigenous communities gain back control of their land by relocating settlers. According to the Centre for Legal Assistance for Indigenous People, settlers killed 13 members of indigenous groups this year. The conflict was further aggravated by natural circumstances. A YATAMA speaker criticized lacking government support for indigenous communities in the Covid-19 pandemic, alleging that more than half of the infected persons in the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN) died from the virus. The hurricanes Eta and Iota also hit indigenous communities hard. Community leaders of Bilwi municipality, RACCN, criticized the government for allegedly not evacuating the area prior to Eta.

On January 4, a Miskito leader was killed by an unknown perpetrator after repeatedly criticizing the government in Bilwi. In another incident on January 29, over 80 armed settlers equipped with guns, machetes, and knives invaded a Mayangna community in the Bosawás Biosphere Reserve, Jinotega state. According to police, this resulted in the death of two indigenous persons. However, Mayangna leaders claimed that six persons were killed. Furthermore, two indigenous persons were injured and 16 houses burnt down, according to witnesses. Several families belonging to the Mayangna community fled. In Rosita municipality, RACCN, six persons were killed on March 26 and 27. First, settlers shot three Mayangna and injured two. Police arrived five hours later, but refused to investigate at night. The next day, settlers killed three Miskito. On September 2, an argument amongst settlers led to one fatality. The settlers blamed the adjacent Miskito community in Sagni Laya, RACCN, which resulted in the displacement of at least 30 families who stated to fear revenge. On September 27, the Nicaraguan Army searched and arrested 18 members of the Rama Kriol Territorial Government when finishing an assessment of the Indio Maíz Biological Reserve, South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCS).

Following a report by the Oakland Institute, various human rights organizations as well as international news outlets urged the government to protect indigenous rights. However, the government failed to take action. On October 15, the

government passed a law on the regulation of foreign funds, which, according to the head of YATAMA, hinders NGOs and media from receiving foreign funds, therefore increasing the struggle to support indigenous communities.

rra

NICARAGUA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2008**

Conflict parties: opposition groups, anti-government protesters vs. paramilitary groups, government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and anti-government protesters on the one hand, and the government of President Daniel Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front on the other, continued.

The government continued to restrict the work of the opposition as well as freedom of expression. Throughout the year, state forces and pro-government groups carried out raids against members of the opposition and the press. The government continued to inhibit and detain persons belonging to independent press organizations and members of the opposition. For instance, on January 23, a police officer injured a journalist who was covering an opposition protest in the capital Managua. On February 10, pro-government supporters followed an opposition politician's car and fired their guns into the air in La Libertad municipality, Chontales department. In Rivas city, eponymous department, riot police and residents reportedly clashed on April 19 after protests demanding the release of individuals critical of the government. This led to five arrests and several injured persons on both sides. On July 19, local government officials in Estelí city, eponymous department, passed through a neighborhood in celebration of the 41st anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution, and shot dead a man who publicly expressed his disapproval of the government. On the following day, during the victim's funeral, unidentified individuals set fire to the house of one of the victim's relatives located in the same neighborhood.

In October, the government passed two laws which restricted political space. One sought to hamper foreign humanitarian organizations by controlling their financial operations, whereas the other criminalized publishing any distorted or alarmist information online. This prompted immediate rejection by the opposition.

gbl

PARAGUAY (EPP, AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1989**

Conflict parties: agrarian movements, EPP vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis over resources and the orientation of the political system between the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP) and its splinter groups, such as Agrupación Campesina Armada (ACA) and Ejército del Mariscal López (EML), landless

peasants, and indigenous peoples on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued for the 32nd consecutive year. The non-government groups continued to demand political, societal, and agrarian reforms.

Throughout the year, peasants and armed groups carried out several attacks on different ranches in northern parts of the country, occasionally destroying farm machinery. On January 8, peasants occupied private property, which resulted in an armed confrontation with police forces in the Yasy Cañy district, Canindeyú department. Furthermore, on May 8, alleged armed EPP members assaulted a farm in Yby Yaú district, Concepción department, burning four tractors. According to the authorities, peasants burned down a farmhouse and several vehicles, temporarily holding seven farmworkers captive, in Canindeyú, Yasy Cañy, on July 8.

Throughout the year the Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta (FTC), a conjunction of military and police, carried out several operations, resulting in six fatalities. During a police operation on June 12 in Loreto district, Concepción, FTC forces killed a former EPP militant and leader of ACA. During a raid in Yby Yaú on September 2, FTC forces killed two EPP leaders' family members with Argentinian citizenship. Subsequently, the representative of the UN High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) in South America questioned the actions of the FTC. International concerns were raised, especially by Argentina, accusing the authorities of covering up the security operation. In response, the government declared it no longer had confidence in the OHCHR representative.

On September 9, members of EPP kidnapped former vice president Óscar Denis Sánchez and one of his employees. After several protests of citizens demanding their liberation, the group released the employee on September 25 while Denis Sánchez remained in captivity.

On October 1, EPP members killed a farm worker during an attack in Bella Vista Norte town, Amambay department. On November 20, during an operation in Cerro Guasu National Park, Amambay, FTC forces killed three members of EPP.

PERU (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2008**

Conflict parties: opposition movements vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis between various opposition movements and the government over the orientation of the political system and resources continued.

Throughout the year, indigenous communities protested against the government claiming it failed to respond to environmental contamination caused by the oil industry and to implement social and infrastructure programs. In early August, indigenous protesters took over a pumping station in the Loreto region. As a result, the government dispatched about 40 police officers to protect the surrounding oil industry infrastructure. On August 8, an activist group of about 70 residents of an indigenous Kukama community armed with spears arrived at an oil field belonging to a Canadian company in Bretaña, Loreto region. They demanded a stop to oil production, urging the state to address environmental contamination, and to provide basic services and assistance to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. In the ensuing clash, police forces killed at least two protesters. 17 persons were

injured, among them six police officers. Subsequently, the government sent a delegation led by the Minister of Culture Alejandro Neyra to negotiate with the Kukama community, which led to an agreement that enabled the company to resume its operations.

Peru experienced a severe political crisis when, on November 9, Congress ousted President Martín Vizcarra in an impeachment vote over corruption allegations and his handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Prior to his impeachment, Vizcarra had increased anti-corruption efforts and attempted to curb parliamentary immunity for lawmakers. As Manuel Merino took office as Peru's interim president, protests emerged all over the country and turned increasingly violent. Protesters, opposition parties, and civil society groups described the ousting as a parliamentary coup, accusing lawmakers, many of them being under investigation for corruption and other crimes, of seeking to protect themselves from prosecution. On November 14, police killed two and injured more than 100 protesters in clashes in the capital Lima. Following the violent protests, Merino resigned after just five days in office. Francisco Sagasti, a member of the party that had voted against the ousting of Vizcarra, succeeded him in office, putting an end to the protests.

In December, agricultural workers protested against the enduring Agricultural Promotion Law and demanded better wages. They erected roadblocks at different locations along the Pan-American Highway with the largest protests in Virú and Chao districts, La Libertad region, and in Ica city, eponymous region. On December 3, police clashed with protesters whilst attempting to clear roadways in Virú, killing one person. After the protests, parliament repealed the Agricultural Promotion Law. At the end of December, protests flared up with farm workers protesting against new regulations proposed by Congress. On December 30, police killed two during protests in Chao district. mgm

PERU (SHINING PATH)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1980**

Conflict parties: SL vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources

The violent crisis over subnational predominance, resources, and the orientation of the political system between the left-wing Maoist rebel group Shining Path (SL) and the government continued.

SL remained a fighting force of approx. 450 armed members, according to the Counter-Terrorist Directorate (DIRCOTE). The group was predominantly active in Apurímac, Ene, and Mantaro river valley (VRAEM), the main coca growing region in the country, covering parts of the regions Ayacucho, Cusco, and Junín. On various occasions, the government accused SL of protecting and cooperating with coca growers and drug traffickers, stating that it was increasingly difficult to differentiate between SL and drug traffickers.

The government continued its efforts to regain control over VRAEM. Over the course of the year, police and military forces in VRAEM arrested drug traffickers, confiscated chemicals used for drug production, seized drugs, and destroyed clandestine landing strips. For instance, on August 27, the Interior Ministry reported the seizure of 750 kilograms of illegal drugs in VRAEM.

On March 4, SL killed two civilians, accusing them of guiding

a police patrol, and injured two police officers near the community Águas Verdes, Ayacucho region. In another incident on August 24, four SL members as well as two security forces were shot dead in a clash in Anchiuay district, Ayacucho region.

On December 2, the National Police carried out the “Operation Olimpo” with more than 750 employees of DIRCOTE and the Department of High Complexity Investigations. They arrested 71 members of the Movement for Amnesty and Fundamental Rights (MOVADef), which the government accused of being the political wing of the SL structure. mgm

USA (RACIAL TENSIONS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2014**

Conflict parties: BLM, local protesters et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The non-violent crisis over structural discrimination and institutionalized racism in the law enforcement and justice system as well as in society between anti-discrimination protesters and the government of President Donald Trump escalated to a violent crisis.

A video showing a police officer killing the Black man George Floyd by suffocation on May 25 in the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota state, sparked the largest protest movement in US history. In the USA alone, an estimated 15 to 26 million protesters participated in over 4,700 demonstrations under the hashtag “Black Lives Matter” (BLM). Protesters criticized the ongoing discrimination of People of Colour (PoC), police brutality, and called for just punishment for the latter as well as defunding the police and investments in alternate community-based security services. Trump repeatedly labeled the protesters “terrorists”, called for the National Guard to be deployed, and denied the existence of racial bias in the law enforcement and justice system. At the same time, Trump did not condemn the actions of various extremist right-wing groups, such as the so-called Proud Boys, that interfered in protests, regularly clashing with BLM protesters. Over the course of the year, several people were killed in connection with the protests and more than 14,000 were arrested. In addition to the murder of George Floyd, at least 15 PoC were killed in allegedly arbitrary shootings by the police throughout the year, fueling the protests.

One day after Floyd’s killing, on May 26, the first protest took place in Minneapolis and the day after in the cities of Los Angeles, California state and Memphis, Tennessee state. In the following days, protests erupted in over 2,000 cities across the country. The vast majority of the protests remained peaceful. However, violent clashes between protesters and security forces as well as incidents of rioting and looting occurred. For example, protesters damaged several cars in front of the CNN building and the building itself in Atlanta city, Georgia state, on May 29 and torched several stores and shops in downtown Minneapolis the same day. Subsequently, at least 200 cities in at least 27 states invoked nightly curfews, starting the night of June 1. By June 2, at least 17,000 members of the National Guard were deployed in at least 31 states as well as the District of Columbia.

On June 1, security forces cleared Lafayette Square of protesters in Washington, District of Columbia, using flash-bang grenades, rubber bullets, and tear gas, so Trump could cross the square on foot to St. John’s Church. On June 6,

protests peaked with over half a million people partaking across the country. On June 8, the Democratic Party introduced a bill to Congress adopting demands of the protesters. On several occasions, protesters removed statues of former slave owners, for instance, on June 10, when protesters toppled the Statue of Christopher Columbus in St. Paul city, Minnesota, and on June 23, when protesters tried to remove the statue of former president Andrew Jackson from its pedestal in Washington D.C. In response, Trump signed an executive order for the protection of statues.

Following repeated clashes between protesters and security forces in Portland city, Oregon state, Trump deployed troops of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on July 2. However, clashes continued. For instance, on July 27, DHS repelled protesters trying to storm the Hatfield federal courthouse. During their deployment to Portland, DHS officers were accused of arresting protesters using unmarked vehicles and operating without name badges.

On August 17, a member of a local right-wing militia shot dead two BLM protesters in the town of Kenosha, Wisconsin state. After the shooting, both presidential candidate Joe Biden and incumbent President Trump visited Kenosha. Following the events in Kenosha, protests re-erupted. For instance, during a demonstration on August 22, around 50 Antifa and BLM protesters clashed with a group of at least 40 Proud Boys and Trump supporters in Portland, leaving several injured.

In the weeks leading up to the presidential election on November 3, protests receded. However, local protests continued following allegedly arbitrary shootings of PoC by the police, for instance, on September 13 in Lancaster town, Pennsylvania state, on October 26 in Philadelphia city, Pennsylvania, and on December 24 in Columbus city, Ohio state. Protests in support of the BLM movement also took place in many other countries [→ (Germany (xenophobes); Sweden (xenophobes); South Africa (opposition); Brazil (social protests)]. lvd

USA (RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1990**

Conflict parties: right-wing extremists vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over ideology and the orientation of the political system between various right-wing extremist groups, such as the boogaloo movement, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The US Department of Homeland Security issued their Homeland Threat Assessment report in October, stressing that “racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists – specifically white supremacist extremists – [. . .] remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the Homeland.” According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, right-wing extremists and white supremacists accounted for 67 percent of “terrorist plots and attacks” in the US within the first eight months of the year. During that period, members or affiliates of right-wing extremist groups attempted or carried out at least 41 attacks leading to at least five fatalities and leaving several injured.

In late May and early June, adherents of the boogaloo movement, a loosely organized extremist and anti-government movement which aims to foment a second American Civil War, carried out two attacks against security forces in California state, killing two members of the security forces and

injuring three others. On May 29, an assailant fired a rifle out of a van at a federal building in the city of Oakland, killing one officer and leaving another one severely injured. On June 6, another assailant killed a local sheriff's department deputy in Santa Cruz County and injured two others using an AR-15 rifle and IEDs.

On October 8, authorities arrested and charged 14 suspects as members of a domestic terrorist group referred to as the "Wolverine Watchmen". They were accused of plotting to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and violently overthrow the state government. The group was allegedly linked to the boogaloo movement.

Over the course of the year, authorities managed to prevent several terrorist attacks. For instance in mid-January, six members of a white supremacist group were arrested in the states of Georgia, Maryland, and Delaware for plotting to attack prominent members of Antifa. On November 10, a man was arrested following threats to kill, inter alia, Democratic Party politicians and members of law enforcement. The suspect had called for violence in online posts on social media and had indicated the use of explosives in retaliation for the results of the 2020 US presidential election. ^{ssa}

USA – VENEZUELA

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **2001**

Conflict parties: USA vs. Venezuela
 Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over international power and ideology between the USA and Venezuela continued.

The US government ramped up sanctions targeting Venezuelan state-owned enterprises. On February 12, the US government announced sanctions against the Venezuelan national airline Conviasa and the Russian oil company ROSNEFT, which subsequently suspended its operations in Venezuela.

On March 26, the US Department of Justice filed a lawsuit against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, accusing him of having led a drug cartel. The US State Department offered a reward of USD 15 million for information on Maduro and an additional USD 15 million for four of his close allies. Six days later, the US government presented a "democratic transition plan" for Venezuela, proposing a transition government and the preparation of democratic elections. The plan was accompanied by an expansion of the US Navy presence off the Venezuelan territorial waters. The Venezuelan government immediately rejected any interference in its domestic affairs. On April 22, the US Department of the Treasury instructed US financial institutions to transfer the frozen assets belonging to the Venezuelan state to opposition party accounts. On December 7, the US and other countries refused to recognize the Venezuelan parliamentary elections, calling the electoral process undemocratic [→ Venezuela (opposition)].

mwo

VENEZUELA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1992**

Conflict parties: opposition (MUD) vs. government, pro-government militias
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition parties led by the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), on the one hand, and the government under President Nicolás Maduro, backed by pro-government militias, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, the government continued to undermine the opposition and gained control over the opposition-held legislative National Assembly (AN) in the December elections. On January 7, the Bolivarian National Guard blocked the opposition leader and self-declared interim president Juan Guaidó from entering the parliament building to attend his re-election. After a scuffle, he entered the parliament building and was elected and sworn in with the support of the MUD. On July 2, the government-dominated Supreme Court nominated an Electoral Tribunal for the organization of the upcoming legislative elections. While Guaidó and parts of the MUD boycotted the elections, other opposition parties and MUD candidates decided to participate, which divided the opposition. On December 7, the governing party of Maduro and its allies won 257 of the 277 seats in the AN. A group of American and European states declared that the elections did not meet democratic standards and would therefore not be recognized as legitimate.

On May 3, heavy clashes took place between Venezuelan security forces and a coalition of around 60 Venezuelan military dissidents and two mercenaries of a US private military company in Makuto municipality, La Guaira state. Eight Venezuelan dissidents were killed and 17 captured by security forces. The dissidents had aimed to infiltrate the country to capture Maduro and several high level officials. Guaidó was accused of collaborating with the coalition and admitted to having participated in preliminary negotiations but claimed to have withdrawn in March.

A report released in September by the UNHRC accused Venezuelan police and pro-government militias of severe politically motivated human rights violations such as extrajudicial detainment, torture, and executions. In comparison to previous years, opposition protests diminished, but thousands still attended throughout the year. Riot police and pro-government militias confronted the protesters. For example, on February 29 in Barquisimeto, the capital of Lara state, an opposition march of approx. 2,000 persons attended by Guaidó was assaulted by approx. 200 armed members of a pro-government militia. Militia members pointed a gun at Guaidó while also injuring other protesters. On March 10, thousands of protesters marched with Guaidó in the capital Caracas and were stopped by police forces using tear gas.

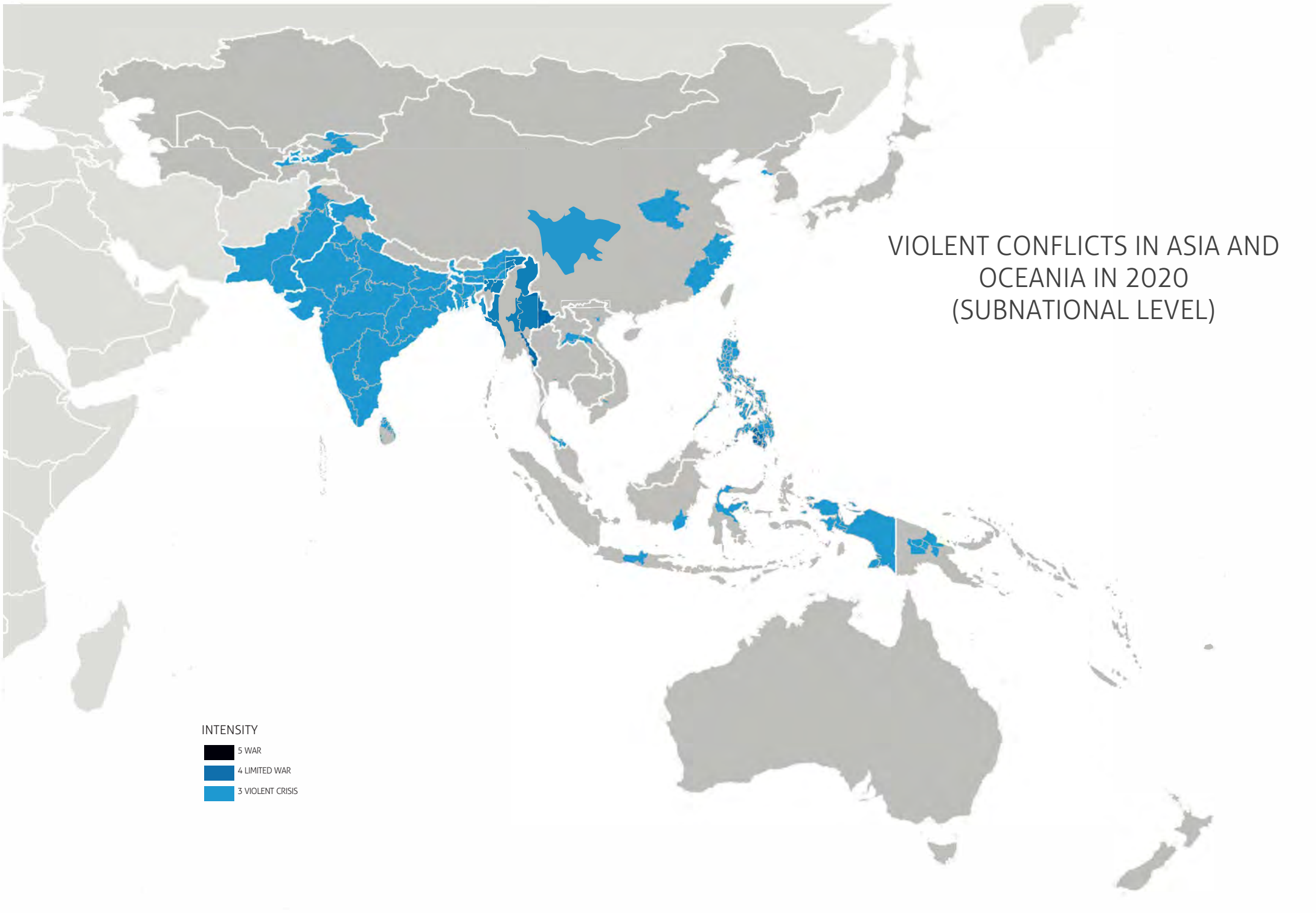
According to the NGO Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social, September and October both saw more than 1,000 protests nationwide, in which people mainly protested against a further deterioration in the provision of basic services and goods. According to the WFP, a third of the Venezuelan population is food insecure and in need of assistance. From 2015 to the end of 2020, the estimated number of Venezuelans to have left their home country has risen to 5.45 million. mwo

ASIA AND OCEANIA

VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2020
(SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)

INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With 101 active conflicts observed by HIIK in 2020, Asia & Oceania remained the region with the highest number of conflicts. However, compared to 2019, the number of active conflicts decreased by seven. This year, 58 conflicts were fought on a violent level, an increase by seven compared to 2019. As in the previous year, no conflict was fought on war-level in 2020. Three limited wars de-escalated to violent crises, while two violent crises escalated to limited wars respectively. Including two ongoing limited wars, overall four limited wars were observed this year, one less than last year.

In China, the government continued to carry forward its policy of surveillance, repression, and assimilation towards religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities. Echoing previous years, local authorities across the country sought to remove religious symbols and identity markers from public settings, targeting both Christian and Muslim communities. For instance, at least 74 mosques were subjected to construction works in order to remove the star and crescent or other Islamic symbols, while several churches were demolished throughout the year [→ China (Hui); China (Christians)]. Moreover, in an effort to encourage the “sinicization” of regional ethnic groups, the government further limited education in minority languages, such as Tibetan and Mongolia. In Inner Mongolia, the decision to suspend teaching in Mongolian sparked a wave of protests in late August [→ China (Inner Mongolia)]. The situation in Xinjiang remained largely unaltered, with reports emerging about thousands of Uyghurs subjected to forced labor across China [→ China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)]. Furthermore, the establishment of military-like training centers, holding up to 543,000 ethnic Tibetans, in Tibet Autonomous Region, suggested the potential diffusion of Xinjiang-style policies to other peripheral regions [→ China (Tibet)]. In Hong Kong, Covid-19-related restrictions resulted in an initial decline in protest activity. However, in June, the publication of a controversial new National Security Law sparked a resurgence of dissent as pro-democracy and pro-independence activists accused the Chinese government of supplanting the city’s autonomy [→ China (Hong Kong)].

Beyond an increasingly oppressive domestic policy, China also grew considerably more assertive in its external affairs. Starting in May, a series of violent clashes erupted along the Sino-Indian border, leaving at least 20 soldiers dead on both sides [→ China – India]. In the South China Sea, tensions also persisted as Chinese authorities continued to push territorial claims in the region [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. Similarly, relations between China and the US deteriorated as both sides engaged in a series of political and economic retaliatory measures and the US drew increasingly close to Taiwan° [→ China – USA; China (Taiwan°)].

In India, protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed on 12/11/2019, continued in several states [→ India (Hindus – Muslims)]. The CAA aims to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, who have been living in India for at least six years. Ethnic Assamese continued to protest the CAA and the publication of the National Register of Citizens, while opposing the government’s decision to grant citizenship to Bangladeshi immigrants [→ India (inter-ethnic rivalry / Assam)]. Multiple clashes broke out during the protests, leaving at least 53 injured and four dead in the states of Assam and Meghalaya as well as in New Delhi, National Capital Territory. Protests in Meghalaya resulted in clashes between ethnic Khasi groups and non-tribal groups. The Khasi Students’ Union protested against the CAA, and in favor of the introduction of an Inner-Line Permit (ILP) system to regulate entry into the protected areas. The Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) remained the most active actor in Meghalaya, carrying out at least three IED attacks [→ India (GNLA et al. / Meghalaya)].

Various actors continued to pursue autonomy or secession. The conflict between Sikh groups and the government escalated to a violent crisis [→ India (Sikhs)]. Furthermore, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) factions and security forces clashed in Nagaland, leaving at least seven militants dead. Peace talks between the central government and NSCN factions continued without significant results [→ India (Nagalim)]. Over the course of the year, NSCN-Khaplang (NSCN-K) and the United Liberation Front of Asom Independent faction (ULFA-I) carried out joint attacks. The number of violent encounters between security forces and ULFA-I decreased. In January, 1,550 National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) militants laid down their weapons as a result of a peace agreement signed between NDFB and the central government [→ India (ULFA-I et al. / Assam)]. The non-violent crisis between Naga groups and Kuki groups escalated to a violent conflict. Throughout the year, NSCN factions and Kuki groups clashed in violent encounters [India (Nagas – Kukis)]. Violent clashes between security forces, Islamist militants, and local protesters in Jammu & Kashmir continued throughout the year [→ India (Kashmir)]. The limited war between India and Pakistan de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ India – Pakistan].

The conflict between left-wing extremist Naxalites and the government over the orientation of the political system continued. Confrontations between Naxalites and security forces left at least 237 dead. Throughout the year, Naxalites continued to surrender [→ India (Naxalites)].

Throughout the year, Hindu individuals and groups repeatedly clashed with Christian community members [→ India (Hindus – Christians)]. Also, the violent crisis over access to benefits under the reservation system between various communities such as the Marathas or Gujjars on the one hand, and the central and state governments of India on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis [→ India (Patels et al.)]. Sand and timber mafia members engaged in the illegal extraction of resources killed or attacked at least nine individuals opposing them (→ India (Mafia Raj)).

In Pakistan, the newly formed Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army carried out several attacks in Sindh province throughout the year, killing at least ten and injuring at least 61 people with IEDs and grenades [→ Pakistan (Sindh)]. Moreover, the violent crisis between Islamist militant groups and the government continued [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)]. The same groups continued to target religious minorities [→ Pakistan (Sunni militants – religious groups)]. In Balochistan, militant attacks continued, especially on projects and institutions related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor [→ Pakistan (Balochistan)]. Pashtuns organized in the Pakistan Tahafuz Movement continued to protest against brutality by security forces and ethnic discrimination [→ Pakistan (Pashtuns/PTM)].

In Bangladesh, at least 52 people were killed and 692 injured in the violent crisis between opposition parties and the government [→ Bangladesh (opposition)]. Also, workers in the ready-made garment industry continued to protest for better working conditions, social security, and pending wage payments in country-wide protests and factory-specific organised

actions [→ Bangladesh (RMG workers)]. The violent crisis between Islamist militant groups, the government, and religious minorities, such as Buddhists and Hindus, continued [→ Bangladesh (Islamist militant groups)].

In Indonesia, Islamist militant groups like Jamaah Ansharut Daulah and Mujahidin Indonesia Timur continued to carry out violent attacks against security forces and civilians alike. Fighting mainly occurred in Central Sulawesi with additional clashes between militants and security personnel taking place in Kalimantan and Central Java provinces, leaving at least 15 dead [→ Indonesia (Islamist Militant Groups)]. In Papua and Papua Barat, the limited war between indigenous Papuans and the central government over secession and natural resources de-escalated to a violent crisis. At least 30 people were killed throughout the year, as clashes intensified around the government-owned Grasberg mine and in Intan Jaya and Mimika regencies [→ Indonesia (Papua)].

In Papua New Guinea, the violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources continued between various local tribes. Throughout the year, at least 30 members of various tribes were killed in the provinces Enga, Eastern Highlands, Hela, Jiwaka, Southern Highlands and Western Highlands. The conflict continued to be characterized by retaliatory attacks [→ Papua New Guinea (tribal tensions)].

In Sri Lanka, the violent crisis over the political system between various religious groups such as Christians, Muslims, and Hindus continued. While 2019 had seen the biggest single coordinated attack in years, the Easter bombing attack, the clashes in 2020 led to less injuries and only one death. During the year, UNHCR published a report criticizing increased discriminatory measures by the government against Muslims in Sri Lanka in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic [→ Sri Lanka (religious tensions)].

In the Maldives, the opposition conflict escalated to a violent crisis. Tensions centered around the imprisonment of former president Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, leading to violent clashes, for instance between protesters and security forces in July [→ Maldives (opposition)].

In Thailand, the political parties Future Forward Party and Liberation Youth called for the resignation of the incumbent government of the Royal Thai Armed Forces and Prime Minister Chan-o-cha whilst several thousand protesters violently clashed with security forces on numerous occasions in Bangkok [→ Thailand (opposition)]. In the Southern Border Provinces, Islamist separatist groups continued to conduct violent attacks, primarily targeting security personnel, despite the Barisan Revolusi Nasional and government commencing peace negotiations [→ Thailand (Islamist separatists / Southern Border Provinces)].

In Myanmar, ethnic armed organizations continued to clash violently with the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) despite the renewal of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. In Rakhine State, clashes between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Tatmadaw resulted in 130 deaths and approx. 55,000 IDPs [→ Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State)]. In Kachin State, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Tatmadaw also continued to clash violently over the control of mining operations, which resulted in the cancellation of the national elections in eleven of the state's 18 townships [→ Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State)]. Meanwhile, in Kayah and Karen States, the conflict between the Karen National Union, its allies and the Tatmadaw escalated to a limited war with skirmishes occurring primarily in Hpapun township [→ Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)]. Similarly, in the Kokang region of Shan State, the conflict between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Tatmadaw escalated to a violent crisis [→ Myanmar (MNDAA / Shan State)]. In southern Shan State, resources such as poppy farms continued to be a source of conflict between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Tatmadaw [→ Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)]. Lastly, opposition Buddhist majority groups and the Tatmadaw continued to persecute the Rohingya, although the majority of violence shifted to the Kutapalong Refugee Camp in Cox's Bazaar. In a landmark decision, a government-appointed commission admitted that war crimes had been committed against the Rohingya by government forces [→ Myanmar (Rohingya)].

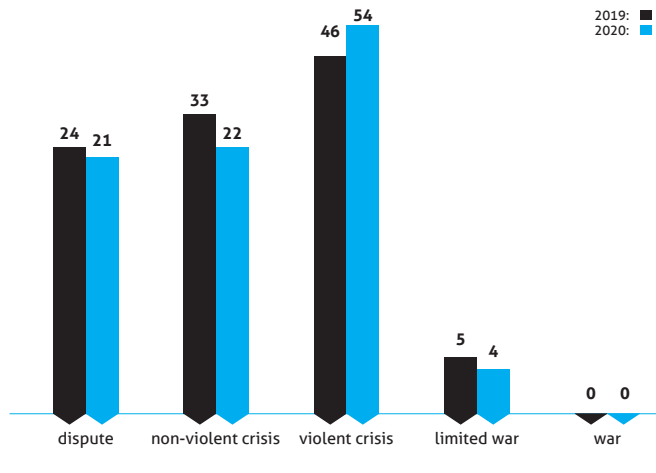
The non-violent conflict between various opposition groups and the Kazakh government continued. Activists staged multiple protests throughout the year, leading to the detainment of numerous participants [→ Kazakhstan (opposition)]. Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek border guards and villagers clashed repeatedly in the border region Fergana valley. Despite repeated confrontations, tensions between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan eased as leaders resumed talks about border demarcations [→ Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Tajikistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)].

Tensions in Northeast Asia persisted. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) continued its armament policy and announced the acquisition of various new weapon systems throughout the year. The USA reacted with punitive measures against the DPRK [→ Japan, South Korea, USA – North Korea]. Cooperation with regional partners was limited due to regional frictions, especially between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) [→ Japan – South Korea]. Inter-Korean relations continued to deteriorate. North Korea upended most channels of communication with ROK, including the Kaesong Inter-Korean liaison office, under the pretext of protesting ROK's policy towards DPRK [→ North Korea – South Korea]. The security situation also remained volatile for Japan. In addition to the worst relations with ROK in years, it also found itself threatened by Russian and Chinese influence in its waters [→ Japan – Russia]. In addition to economic tensions, relations with China were marked by an increasing number of Chinese ships entering Japanese-claimed waters [→ China – Japan].

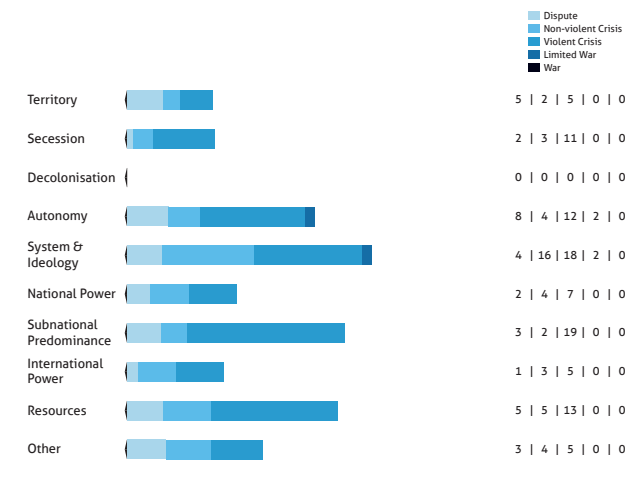
In the Philippines, some highly violent conflicts de-escalated, while others were marked by increased violence. The government's fight, particularly against Islamist groups and the Communist Party of the Philippines [→ Philippines (CPP, NPA); Philippines (Islamist militant groups)], resulted in several hundred fatalities and involved the use of heavy weapons. Other conflicts remained violent but de-escalated in intensity [→ Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – government)]. The conflicts were also characterized by a high fluidity of actor constellations. Local militias formed, some of which bore the names of superordinate groups without having any official connection. The impact of the emergence of new actors, such as Dawlah Islamiyah, is yet to be evaluated. In other conflicts, local family feuds were fought under the names of the conflict actors [→ Philippines (MILF, MNLF)].

ASIA AND OCEANIA

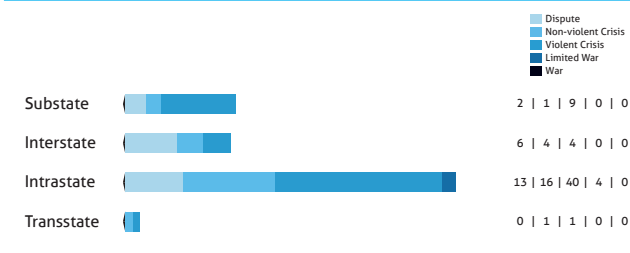
CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2020



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2020



ASIA AND OCEANIA

Overview: Conflicts in Asia and Oceania in 2020

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Bangladesh (Chittagong Hill Tracts)*	Larma, PCJSS, PCJSS-MN, UPDF, UPDF-Democratic vs. Bengali settlers vs. government	autonomy, subnational predominance	1971	•	3
Bangladesh (Islamist groups)	Aal, HuT, JMB, Allahr Dal vs. Buddhists vs. Hindus, government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	1971	•	3
Bangladesh (opposition)	BNP, Jel vs. AL government	system/ideology, national power	1991	•	3
Bangladesh (RMG workers)	RMG workers vs. factory owners, government	other	2006	•	3
Cambodia (opposition)	CNRM vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1997	•	2
Cambodia – Vietnam*	Cambodia vs. Vietnam	territory	1969	•	1
China (Christians)	Christians vs. government	system/ideology	1949	•	3
China (Falun Gong et al.)*	Falun Gong vs. government	system/ideology	1999	•	2
China (Hong Kong)	pro-democracy groups, pro-independence groups vs. HKSAR government, PRC government	secession, autonomy, system/ideology	1997	•	3
China (Hui)	Hui vs. government	system/ideology	1949	•	2
China (Inner Mongolia)	Mongolian ethnic minorities vs. government, Han Chinese	autonomy, subnational predominance, resources	1981	•	2
China (socioeconomic protests)*	environmentalists, factory workers, peasants, civilians vs. government	resources, other	1978	END	1
China (Taiwan ^o)	ROC vs. PRC	secession, system/ideology	1949	•	2
China (Tibet)	CTA, ethnic Tibetans vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources	1950	•	2
China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)	Uyghurs, WUC vs. government	secession, system/ideology	1949	•	2
China – India	PRC vs. India	territory, international power, resources	1954	↑	3
China – Japan (East China Sea)	Japan vs. PRC vs. ROC	territory, international power, resources	1971	•	2
China – USA	PRC vs. USA	system/ideology, international power	1949	•	2
China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)	PRC vs. Vietnam vs. Brunei vs. ROC vs. Malaysia vs. Indonesia vs. Philippines	territory, international power, resources	1951	•	3
Fiji – Tonga (Minerva Reefs)	Fiji vs. Tonga	territory	2005	•	1
India (Dalits / Adivasis)	Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes), Dalits (Scheduled Castes) vs. Upper Caste members	system/ideology, subnational predominance	1950	•	3
India (GJM et al. / West Bengal)	GJM vs. government	autonomy	1907	•	1
India (GNLA et al. / Meghalaya)	GNLA, AHAM, HNLC, KSU vs. government	autonomy	1992	•	3
India (Hindus – Christians)	BD, BJP, Hindu Munnani, Hindus, RSS, VHP vs. Christians	subnational predominance	1999	•	3
India (Hindus – Muslims)	BD, BJP, Hindus, RSS, VHP vs. JIH, Muslims, PFI, TJ	subnational predominance	1947	•	3
India (inter-ethnic rivalry / Assam)	Assamese, AASU, AJYCP vs. Bangladeshi immigrants, AABYSF vs. Adivasis et al. vs. government	subnational predominance, other	1979	•	3
India (Islamist militant groups)*	FIF, IS, JeM, JMB, LeT, SIMI vs. Government	system/ideology	2000	↗	3
India (Kashmir)	HM, IS, JeM, LeT, local protesters vs. Government	secession, autonomy	1947	•	3
India (Kukis – Nagas)	Kukis, KLA, KNA, KNO, KIM vs. Nagas, NSCN-IM, NNGPs	subnational predominance	1992	↗	3
India (Mafia Raj)	sand mafia, timber mafia vs. civil society actors, government	subnational predominance, resources, other	1986	•	3
India (Manipur)	KYKL, UNLF, KCP, PREPAK, PLA, KNF vs. government	secession, autonomy	1964	•	3
India (Nagalim)	NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, NSCN-KK, NSCN-KYA, NSCN-NK, NSCN-R, NSCN-U vs. government	secession, autonomy	1947	•	3
India (Naxalites)	Naxalites vs. government	system/ideology	1967	•	3
India (NLFT factions et al. / Tripura)*	NLFT, IPFT vs. government	secession, autonomy	1978	•	1

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Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
India (Patels et al.)	Dalits, Gujjars, Jats, Kapus, Marathas, Patels vs. government	other	1981	↘	2
India (Sikhs – DSS)*	Sikhs vs. DSS	subnational predominance	2007	NEW	3
India (Sikhs)	AISF, BKL, Dal Khalsa, KLF, SAD (Amritsar), SFJ, SLF vs. government	secession	1947	↗	3
India (TJAC / Telangana)*	TJAC, TJS vs. government	autonomy	1969	↘	1
India (ULFA-I et al. / Assam)	ULFA-I, ULFA-PTF, NDFB, NDFB-S vs. government	secession, autonomy	1979	•	3
India – Pakistan	India vs. Pakistan	territory, international power, resources	1947	↘	3
Indonesia (Aceh regional government – opposition / Aceh)*	opposition vs. Aceh regional government	subnational predominance, resources	2006	•	1
Indonesia (Aceh)*	Aceh regional government, PA, KPA vs. government	autonomy, resources	1953	•	1
Indonesia (Ahmadi)*	Ahmadi vs. Muslims	subnational predominance	1980	•	2
Indonesia (Christians – Muslims)*	Christians vs. Muslims	subnational predominance	1998	•	3
Indonesia (Islamist militant groups)	MIT, JAD et al. vs. government	system/ideology	1981	•	3
Indonesia (Papua)	OPM, ULMWP, KNPB, FRI-West Papua, TPN, AMP vs. government	secession, resources	1961	↘	3
Indonesia – Timor-Leste*	Indonesia vs. Timor-Leste	territory, other	2002	•	1
Indonesia, Philippines – Malaysia (immigrants)*	Malaysia vs. Indonesia, Philippines	other	1998	END	1
Japan – Russia	Japan vs. Russia	territory, international power	1945	↘	1
Japan – South Korea	Japan vs. ROK	territory, other	1951	•	2
Japan, South Korea, USA – North Korea	Japan, ROK, USA vs. DPRK	system/ideology, international power, other	1990	•	2
Kazakhstan (Islamist groups)*	al-Jihad al-Islami, Hiob ut-Tahrir, Jamaat Takfir, Jund al-Kilafah vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	1
Kazakhstan (opposition)	civil rights activists, DPK, DVK, independent trade unions, journalists, Oyan Qazaqstan vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2004	•	2
Kyrgyzstan (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2005	↗	3
Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Tajikistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)	Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz border communities vs. Uzbekistan, Uzbek border communities vs. Tajikistan, Tajik border communities	territory, international power	2000	•	3
Laos (Christians)*	Christians vs. government	system/ideology	1975	•	2
Laos (Hmong)*	Hmong vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1975	↗	3
Malaysia (eastern Sabah)*	Philippines, Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo vs. government	secession	2013	NEW	1
Malaysia (Malay – Chinese, Indian, Indigenous Malaysians)*	Malay Malaysians vs. Chinese Malaysians, Indian Malaysians, Indigenous Malaysian minorities	system/ideology, subnational predominance	1946	•	1
Malaysia – Singapore*	Malaysia vs. Singapore	territory	1963	•	1
Maldives (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	national power	2003	↗	3
Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State)	AA vs. Government	autonomy	2015	•	4
Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State)	KIO, KIA vs. government	autonomy, resources	1961	•	3
Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)	KNU, KNLA, DKBA, DKBA-splinter group vs. government	autonomy	1948	↗	4
Myanmar (MNDAA / Shan State)	MNDAA vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	1989	↗	3
Myanmar (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1962	•	3
Myanmar (Rohingya)	Rohingya, ARSA vs. government, Buddhists	subnational predominance, other	2012	•	3
Myanmar (socioeconomic protests)*	local protesters vs. government, resource companies	resources	2012	•	3
Myanmar (SSA / Shan State)*	SSA-N, SSA-S vs. government	autonomy	1953	•	3

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Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)	TNLA vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2013	•	3
Myanmar (TNLA – RCSS / Shan State)*	PSLF, TNLA vs. RCSS, SSA	subnational predominance	2015	•	3
Myanmar (UNFC et al.)*	UNFC vs. government	autonomy	2011	END	1
Myanmar (UWSA, NDAA / Shan State)*	government, UWSA, NDAA	autonomy	1988	↘	1
Nepal (Madhesis, Tharus / Terai)*	UDMF, JTMM, NLF, RJPN, JSPN vs. government	autonomy	2004	↘	2
Nepal (opposition)*	NCP, Nepali Congress, RPP vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2008	↘	2
Nepal (right-wing Hindu groups)*	RPP, SSN, RPP-D vs. government	system/ideology	2006	↘	2
North Korea – South Korea	DPRK vs. ROK	territory, system/ideology, international power	1948	↗	3
North Korea, China (defectors)	DPRK, PRC vs. defectors (networks)	system/ideology, other	2000	↘	2
Pakistan (Balochistan)	BLA, BLT, BNP-M, BRA, BRAS vs. government	secession, resources	1948	•	3
Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)	al-Qaeda, JuA, LeJ, TTP vs. Government	system/ideology, national power	2001	•	3
Pakistan (opposition)*	JUI-F, PML-N, TLP vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1973	↗	3
Pakistan (Pashtuns / PTM)	Pashtuns, PTM vs. Government	autonomy	2018	•	3
Pakistan (Sindh)	Mohajirs, MQM vs. Balochs, PPP, Sindhis vs. ANP, government, Pashtuns vs. Government	secession, subnational predominance, resources	1947	↗	3
Pakistan (Sunni militants – religious groups)*	IS, LeJ, TTP, JuA vs. Christians, Hindus, Shiites, Sufis, Ahmadis	subnational predominance	1985	•	3
Pakistan – USA*	Pakistan vs. USA	other	2003	•	1
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)*	civil society groups, MDF, Bougainville Hardliners vs. Meekamui Tribal Government, PMALA, MGU vs. ABG, BCL, government	autonomy, resources	1964	•	1
Papua New Guinea (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	↘	1
Papua New Guinea (socioeconomic protests)*	customary landowners vs. government, resource companies	autonomy, resources	1995	↘	1
Papua New Guinea (tribal tensions)	Okiru vs. Miape vs. Toria, various other tribes vs. Herebe	subnational predominance, resources	1975	•	3
Papua New Guinea (urban tensions)*	highlanders vs. lowlanders vs. Ethnic Chinese	subnational predominance	1975	↘	1
Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – government)	BIFM, BIFF vs. government	secession, subnational predominance	2008	↘	3
Philippines (CPP, NPA)	CPP, NPA vs. government	system/ideology	1968	↗	4
Philippines (Islamist militant groups)	Abu Sayyaf, Maute et al. vs. government	system/ideology	1991	•	4
Philippines (MILF – MNLF)	MILF vs. MNLF	subnational predominance	2009	↗	3
Philippines (MILF)	MILF vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources	1977	↘	2
Philippines (MNLF)	MNLF vs. government	secession, system/ideology, resources	1969	•	2
Sri Lanka (inter-religious tensions)	Sinhalese Buddhists vs. Muslims vs. Christians vs. Hindus	system/ideology	1948	•	3
Sri Lanka (Northern Province, Eastern Province)*	Sinhalese Nationalists, JHU, BBS, JVP vs. Tamils, TNA vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	2009	•	3
Tajikistan (Islamist groups)*	Islamist groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1997	↘	2
Thailand (Islamist separatists / southern border provinces)	BRN, PULO vs. government	secession, system/ideology	1902	•	3
Thailand (opposition)	FFP, Liberation Youth vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2006	↑	3
Vietnam (Montagnards)	Montagnards vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1958	•	1
Vietnam (socioeconomic protests)	factory workers, peasants, other civilians vs. manufacturing companies, government	resources, other	1986	↗	3

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Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³ Int. ⁴
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¹ Conflicts marked with * are without description

² Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

³ Change in intensity compared to the previous year: ↑ or ↗ escalation by one or more than one level of intensity; ↓ or ↘ deescalation by one or more than one level of intensity; • no change

⁴ Levels of intensity: 5 = war; 4 = limited war; 3 = violent crisis; 2 = non-violent crisis; 1 = dispute

⁵ HIIK considers statehood to be non-contested if the state is an official UN members state.

Disputed statehood is marked with a * if a territory is recognized by at least one other official UN member state ("limited recognition")

BANGLADESH (ISLAMIST GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1971**

Conflict parties: Aal, Allahr Dal, HuT, JMB vs. Buddhists vs. government, Hindus

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

The violent crisis over ideology, the orientation of the political system, and religious predominance between various Islamist militant groups, on the one hand, religious minorities, such as Buddhists and Hindus, on the other, and the government as a third party, continued.

Throughout the year, security forces such as the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) continued countrywide operations against Islamist militant groups such as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB) or its faction Neo-JMB, Ansar al-Islam (Aal), Hizbut-Tahrir (HuT), and Allahr Dal. Operations were mainly carried out in the divisions of Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Rajshahi.

In total, security forces arrested at least 129 alleged militants. On November 20, RAB forces exchanged fire with four Neo-JMB militants in Siraganj, Rajshahi, before arresting them. Two pistols, a machete, and explosives were found in the militants' house. On November 3, police arrested four Neo-JMB militants in Bogra, Rajshahi, recovering two pistols, three knives, a machete, and explosives. In other arrests, security forces found extremist publications, for example during the arrest of five alleged JMB members in Muktagachha, Mymensingh division, on June 1.

As in 2018 and 2019, no major militant attacks on government institutions or civilians were reported. On February 28, an IED exploded in a traffic police box in Chattogram, Chittagong, injuring two policemen and three civilians. On May 3, police arrested five Neo-JMB militants in connection with the attack and another militant on July 28. On November 20, 31 IEDs were recovered from a building under construction in Dhaka. One day later, police arrested four Neo-JMB militants in connection with the planned attack.

Bangladeshi Islamist militants were also active in India [→ India (Islamist militant groups)]. On February 28, a court in Kolkata, West Bengal state, convicted a Bangladeshi national for money laundering and terror financing in connection with a 2014 attack in Bangladesh. Furthermore, on May 29, Indian police arrested Abdul Karim, a JMB leader, in West Bengal. hen

BANGLADESH (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1991**

Conflict parties: BNP, Jel vs. AL government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition parties Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel), on the one hand, and the government, led by the Awami League (AL) on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, inter-party clashes as well as factional conflicts, in particular within AL, over local elections and

relief distributions related to the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic left at least 52 people dead and 692 injured. Most notably, opposition and government supporters engaged in violent protests across the capital Dhaka following the Dhaka North City Corporation election in February and the Dhaka by-poll election in November. On November 12, opposition activists carried out arson attacks, burning down at least nine buses in Dhaka. Police filed cases against more than 600 BNP leaders and activists in connection with the attacks. Meanwhile, BNP accused the government of involvement in the forced disappearance of a youth organization leader on November 18. BNP also questioned the legitimacy of the Dhaka-18 elections, continued to demand new general elections under an impartial government, and requested the release of all detained party activists. In another incident, two rival AL factions attacked each other in Faridpur, Dhaka, on February 19, injuring at least ten people. Campuses also remained a location for clashes, for example at Chattogram University, Chittagong, eponymous division, where Bangladesh Chhatra League factions clashed violently on March 4, injuring at least 20. Police afterwards arrested 52 activists.

Several clashes and arrests were also linked to irregularities in pandemic-related relief distributions. For instance, on May 2, hundreds of supporters of two rival AL factions attacked each other after allegations of rice hoarding by local politicians in Jamalpur, Mymensingh division. Two journalists and at least 18 activists sustained severe injuries. In addition to local clashes, irregularities in relief distributions also led to the arrests of several government officials, for example one AL official caught with 1,440 kg of rice on April 8 in Natore, Rajshahi division.

An increasing number of rape cases, some involving government officials, came to light throughout the year. This was followed by protests, for example on October 17, organized by student organizations and RMG workers [→ Bangladesh (RMG workers)]. Unidentified men assisted by police attacked the protesters, injuring 25. nsc

BANGLADESH (RMG WORKERS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: RMG workers vs. factory owners, government

Conflict items: other

The violent crisis over working conditions, social security, and pending payments between ready-made garment (RMG) workers, on the one hand, and factory owners and the government, on the other, continued. RMG workers' demands included the payment of due wages or benefits, the reinstatement of fired workers, and the reopening of closed factories. They protested, in some cases violently, and blocked roads and railways. Police intervened using tear gas, rubber bullets, and batons. Factory owners also hired armed people, who used iron rods or sticks to beat workers.

The year was marked by the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Credible estimates for the number of RMG workers laid off due to the pandemic reach one million. Throughout April and May, workers violated lockdown regulations to protest and block roads. On April 7, two RMG workers were run over and killed by a truck while escaping from a protest being dispersed by police in Bhaluka, Mymensingh division.

Furthermore, on May 7 and 9, RMG workers blocked highways in the capital Dhaka. Police dispersed the protests using tear gas shells, rubber bullets, and batons, while workers pelted stones. In total, 32 people were injured. In another case, RMG workers occupied a factory in Dhaka, blocked a highway in Chittagong, eponymous division, and protested in both areas on May 14. Police in Dhaka used a water cannon and tear gas shells to disperse protesters.

On June 28, the government announced the closure of state-owned jute mills in Khulna Division, laying off 25,000 workers, which led to a two-day protest. On November 11, the workers protested again in Khulna city, eponymous division, demanding the reopening of the mills.

In March, the company Dragon Sweater laid off 500 workers, who claimed this was due to their participation in wage protests. On October 4, protesting Dragon Sweater workers were attacked by unidentified assailants armed with iron rods in Dhaka, leaving twelve workers injured. On October 12, Dragon Sweater announced it would pay parts of the due wages, but did not. After negotiations led by the Labor Minister, a new agreement for partial payment was announced on December 15.

On October 19, a workers' representative announced his resignation from a ten-member committee which had been formed in 2019 by government, factory owners, and workers' representatives to evaluate and reform labour rules. He claimed that he had not been invited to previous meetings and threatened to intensify protests if labor rules were changed without consultation of workers.

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CAMBODIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1997**

Conflict parties: CNRM vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The non-violent crisis over national power and ideology between the Cambodia National Rescue Movement (CNRM), as well as other opposition parties and civil society groups, on the one hand, and the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP), on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, human rights violations were reported, such as the suppression of free speech and the intimidation of opposition parties and activists. One of these was a preliminary rape investigation against prominent opposition activist monk Venerable Luon Savath during the week beginning June 12. The allegations led to the monk being expelled from the clergy on June 3, prior to the official investigation. On July 31, the government arrested Rong Chhun, a prominent union leader, for accusing the government of irregularities in land demarcation at the Vietnamese border [→ Cambodia – Vietnam]. The arrests catalysed protests in the capital Phnom Penh and reportedly led to 24 arrests between July and September.

On April 27, the Constitutional Council passed a draft law declaring a state of emergency due to Covid-19, prompting widespread backlash. Activists criticized its potential to further erode basic freedoms and rights. During the first half of the year, more than 30 people were arrested for allegedly spreading fake news related to Covid-19.

There were several cases of the Cambodian government trying to intimidate opposition leaders with court cases. For example, on January 15, proceedings began against the for-

mer president of the banned Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) Kem Sokha who had been charged with treason in 2017. In response to ongoing human rights violations, the EU Commission announced the partial suspension of the Everything But Arms trade agreement on February 12. Further, Sam Rainsy, co-founder of CNRM, announced his intention to return from self-imposed exile in France on September 25. Following the announcement, the Phnom Penh Municipal Court ordered more than 100 former CNRM officials to appear before court for treason.

sov

CHINA (CHRISTIANS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

Conflict parties: Christians vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over ideology between unregistered Christian groups, such as Catholic underground churches and Protestant house churches, and the government, continued. Throughout the year, the government imposed tighter regulations on religious practices. Beginning in January, the government announced a new Bible-translation project to bring the Bible further in line with party doctrine. Furthermore, new restrictions came into force on February 1, requiring religious organizations to spread and ensure support for the government's socialist values. In June, a local education bureau in northeast China issued a notice for more intensive crackdowns on foreign-related organizations, such as Christian associations. Similarly, on June 18, the state-affiliated Two Chinese Christian Councils (TCCC) of Jiangxi province demanded public investigations into all texts published by official churches, in order to constrain the circulation of not officially sanctioned materials.

As a consequence of Covid-19, public and religious gatherings were highly curtailed during the first half of the year. On April 26, the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA) extended these measures throughout May. In response to congregations increasingly meeting online, the TCCC of Shandong province and the United Front Work Department of Jiaxing city, Zhejiang province, announced a ban on churches streaming their services live, on February 23 and 28 respectively.

The government's ongoing practice of church demolitions continued on a high scale. For instance, local authorities ordered the demolition of a Three-Self church in Weifang, Shandong province, on April 24. In Linyi city, Shandong province, local officials initiated the removal of crosses from church buildings on April 29, May 17, and May 20. On July 7, security forces clashed with congregants in Wenzhou city, Zhejiang province, leaving at least one person injured, while about 100 government officials were removing crosses from two state-run church buildings.

After the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, the government stepped up its efforts to crack down on illegal house churches. For instance, from April to July, police forces repeatedly raided house church gatherings in Xiamen city, Fujian province. On May 3 and June 11, these raids turned violent, as security forces left several people injured. Similarly, on July 28, police officers raided a Sola Fide house church in Nanchong city, Sichuan province, injuring one person and arresting about 50 congregants, including the pastor.

In the wake of the renewal of the Provisional Agreement

between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China on the appointment of bishops on October 22, 20 unregistered Catholic priests refusing to join the CPCA were detained. llg

CHINA (HONG KONG)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1997**

Conflict parties: pro-democracy groups, pro-independence groups vs. HKSAR government, PRC government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy, system/ideology

The violent crisis over autonomy or secession of Hong Kong (HK) and the orientation of the political system between HK pro-democracy and pro-independence groups, on the one hand, and the governments of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), on the other, continued. Compared to the previous year, the violence displayed on both sides periodically increased, particularly as pandemic-related restrictions on the freedom of assembly and the new National Security Law repeatedly exacerbated tensions between opposition activists and security forces. Nonetheless, Covid-19 related social distancing measures heavily impacted the scale of protests. Throughout January, several violent confrontations between riot police and protesters occurred. On January 1, a rally of 600,000 to 1,000,000 pro-democracy protesters in Victoria Park was followed by violent clashes between security forces and protesters across several HK districts. Whereas protesters reportedly threw bricks and petrol bombs, the police used tear gas and water cannons, ultimately detaining approx. 400 protesters. On January 3, approx. 20,000 peaceful protesters, most of them teachers, denounced government efforts to strengthen control over the education sector in the wake of the 2019 protests. On January 19, between 11,680 and 150,000 protesters gathered in Central district to call for the release of political prisoners and to denounce human rights violations by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The situation escalated when protesters started digging up bricks and building barricades. In turn, riot police reacted with tear gas and pepper balls in order to disperse the crowd. At least seven people were injured, including two police officers. Due to the severity of the Covid-19 pandemic, the size of protests throughout February fell considerably. However, on the six-month anniversary of the Prince Edward station incident on February 29, pro-democratic protesters engaged in a violent confrontation with the police, resulting in the arrest of over 115 persons. The event marked a renewed escalation, as protesters stepped up the level of vandalism and violence, for instance using petrol bombs, while security forces again resorted to tear gas and rubber bullets. Nonetheless, the number of physical protests continued to decrease during March and April. In turn, protesters focused on virtual protesting, for instance using the video game Animal Crossing as a platform. Throughout May, the police issued restriction orders, shutting down protests nearly on a daily basis. Following the PRC's May 21 proposal for a new National Security Law for Hong Kong, severely curtailing the city's autonomy, violent protests broke out on May 24. The clashes left at least four police officers and an unknown number of protesters injured and resulted in the arrest of approx. 180 protesters. Dur-

ing June, protests continued to focus mainly on the novel National Security Law, as more and more legislative details were released. Finally, on June 30, the National People's Congress Standing Committee passed the Hong Kong National Security Law, thus bypassing the Hong Kong legislative system and severely constraining civil liberties in the city. In response, various prominent pro-democracy organisations officially disbanded. Several countries sharply condemned the erosion of Hong Kong's statute of autonomy. On July 1, Taiwan^o opened the Taiwan-Hong Kong Services and Exchanges Office, offering support to Hong Kong citizens who have sought shelter in Taiwan [→ China (Taiwan^o)]. On the same day, the UK offered up to three million HK citizens a path to permanent residence and citizenship through its British National Overseas Passport system. Furthermore, the US imposed sanctions on various HK officials and Australia passed new visa and citizenship regulations for holders of HK passports [→ China – USA]. In spite of an intensification of dissent in July, the number of protests continued to fall throughout August, due to expansion of repressive measures and ongoing social distancing rules. Smaller protests for press freedom, labeled "Read With You"-protests, such as that on August 11 in Mong Kok district, were mostly peaceful. Due to the ban on group gatherings of more than two people, not many protests were reported during the rest of the year. The police shut down occasional protests, such as on September 6, when they arrested around 300 protesters; or on October 1 when security forces arrested 86 protesters. Accordingly, HK authorities also continued to reject most applications for mass rallies. Since the passing of the National Security Law so called "Blank Sheet Protests" have increased, in which pro-democracy protesters hold up blank sheets of paper as a way to continue protesting without breaching the law. Widespread arrests of pro-democracy activists, lawmakers etc. marked the rest of the year. spi

CHINA (HUI)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

Conflict parties: Hui vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The non-violent crisis over ideology between the predominantly Muslim Hui minority and the government continued. Tensions continued to increase as part of the broader Chinese crackdown on religious activities. The government continued to pursue the "Sinicization" of Islamic culture. For instance, after a visit by President Xi Jinping from June 6 to 8, the Communist Party Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region Committee published a report emphasizing its commitment to curbing "religious extremism" and eradicating "Arabization, Saudization and generalization of halal". On October 12, the Religious Affairs Bureau, the Foreign Ministry, and the Ministry of Public Security announced that future pilgrimages to Mecca would only be allowed if organized and approved by the China Islamic Association. In an effort to remove Islamic symbols and restrict the use of Arabic, authorities continued to remove written signs and calligraphy from public venues. For instance, on June 29, all "duas", prayer verses above the doors of homes and commercial buildings, were removed from a village nearby Xinle city, Hebei province. Throughout the year, the government continued to mandate the remodelling of at least 74 mosques or the removal of their star-and-crescent symbols in Gansu,

Henan, Ningxia, Jilin, Hebei and Shandong provinces. For instance, on April 4, the domes and star-and-crescent symbols were removed from a government-approved mosque in Shijiazhuang city, Hebei.

In some instances, Hui resisted the government's policies. In September, hundreds of Utsul students, a minority that is subsumed under the Hui, protested against a ban on hijabs in schools and workplaces in Sanya city, Hainan province, by refusing to remove their headwear and boycotting classes. In an unprecedented concession, local authorities responded by lifting the ban temporarily on September 22.

Hui Muslims, including outspoken activists who criticized the government's policy of mass internment in Xinjiang Autonomous Region (XUAR) and religious intellectuals, continued to be detained by the government. Furthermore, reports suggested that the government's mass incarceration of Muslim minorities in XUAR also involved significant numbers of Hui [→ China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)]. llg

CHINA (INNER MONGOLIA)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1981**

Conflict parties: Mongolian ethnic minorities vs. government, Han Chinese

Conflict items: autonomy, subnational predominance, resources

The non-violent crisis over autonomy, subnational predominance, and resources in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) between Mongolian ethnic minorities and the government, as well as the Han majority, continued. Whereas tensions over land expropriations and resources were less present this year, the conflict was primarily marked by clashes over linguistic and identity-based issues.

In June, officials from the Municipal Education Bureau in Tongliao city, IMAR, declared that subjects other than Mongolian would be taught in Mandarin instead of Mongolian, starting with the new academic year in September. Subsequently, on August 31, the Inner Mongolian Education Department officially announced its intention to further reduce the number of classes taught in Mongolian region-wide, intensifying nascent mass protests across IMAR. In response to the protests, the Chinese government stepped up repressive measures. For instance, on August 31, a curfew was imposed in Lubei city, IMAR. Several ethnic Mongolian families refused to send their children to school. In turn, many schools remained closed on the first day of the semester. Throughout the unrest, at least four ethnic Mongolians committed suicide as an act of protest.

During September and October, students continued to protest the government's policy to end Mongolian medium-level teaching. Reportedly, security forces detained a total of 8,000 to 10,000 ethnic Mongolians in the wake of the protests. For instance, on September 9, the police detained at least 23 people across eight IMAR banners for attempting to obstruct the implementation of the new national textbook policy by organizing petitions or sharing videos on social media.

Throughout November and December, the provincial government started recruiting secondary school teachers to teach in Mandarin in the northern region of IMAR. Furthermore, authorities reportedly ordered the replacement of ethnic Mongolian officials in educational and cultural institutions by Han Chinese officials. iha

CHINA (TAIWAN°)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

Conflict parties: ROC vs. PRC

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

The non-violent crisis over secession and the orientation of the political system between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China° (ROC), also known as Taiwan, continued.

On January 11, Tsai Ing-Wen of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party was re-elected as President of Taiwan°, having received 57 percent of the vote. In her inaugural address Tsai vowed to maintain her anti-mainland stance, emphasizing her rejection of the "one country, two systems' approach, pioneered in Hong Kong. Following the election, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sent his congratulations to Tsai in a rare high-level message from Washington. In turn, the PRC Foreign Ministry stated that Taiwan remained a part of China, regardless of its internal situation.

US-Taiwan relations were further aggravated as the US-Chinese trade war continued to intensify [→ China – USA]. For example, on May 20, the day of the inauguration of Tsai, the US State Department approved a USD 180 million sale of MK-48 Mod-6 torpedos to the ROC. Further armament deals occurred throughout the year, including the sale of a Harpoon Coastal Defense System on October 29. The PRC Foreign Ministry had previously announced sanctions targeting major US weapon manufacturers in response to the imminent transaction. Furthermore, on August 10, a US delegation, including the Health and Human Services Secretary, visited the capital Taipei, marking the highest-level visit of a US representative to Taiwan since 1979.

On September 19, another high-ranking US delegation attended the funeral of the late Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui, who had reformed Taiwan's political system into a democracy in the 1990s. On the same day, the People's Liberation Army held drills in the Taiwan Strait with multiple unidentified aircrafts entering Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone. In another milestone, November 20 saw the opening of the Taiwan-US Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue.

Moreover, for the first time in four years, the ROC government did not lose any additional diplomatic allies to the PRC. Instead, on July 1, the ROC established formal relations with Somaliland. Furthermore, the Czech senate president visited Taipei on September 3. In addition, Taiwan's push to join the World Health Assembly (WHA) as an observer garnered increasing support from several Western states amidst the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the country ultimately failed to gain sufficient endorsements to join a WHA meeting on November 9.

lja

CHINA (TIBET)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1950**

Conflict parties: CTA, ethnic Tibetans vs. government
 Conflict items: autonomy, system/ideology, resources

The non-violent crisis over autonomy, ideology and resources between ethnic Tibetans and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Mirroring developments in Xinjiang, satellite imagery showed that the government had established military-like training centers, also known as labor programs, in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) [→ China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)]. Reportedly, up to 543,000 rural Tibetans were held in such facilities which, according to authorities, were meant to provide professional formation and enhance Chinese language proficiency. Throughout the year, approx. 50,000 detainees were transferred to industrial jobs across TAR and the rest of China, prompting international observers to raise concerns of forced labor.

Furthermore, the TAR government also introduced tightened surveillance systems, covering over three million residents. Authorities divided communities into small units and promoted mutual surveillance. For instance, the government encouraged citizens to report illegal activities such as the distribution of unauthorized publications or advocacy for more autonomy, offering substantial financial incentives.

As part of its broader policy of ‘sinicization’, on January 5, the government’s new Ethnic Unity Law took effect in the region, encouraging especially the use of Mandarin in TAR. Authorities claimed this new law would enhance the government’s ability to combat terrorism and separatism. Furthermore, as part of a broader Chinese crackdown on minority languages [→ China (Inner Mongolia)], the ban on teaching in Tibetan was extended to primary schools.

International observers also expressed concern regarding developments in the region. On December 27, the US government signed the Tibet Policy and Support Act [→ China – USA] into law. The act expanded the US budget on Tibet-related programs to USD 27 million and committed the US to guaranteeing the succession process of the 15th Dalai Lama as well as establishing a US consulate in Lhasa. fyn

CHINA (UYGHURS / XINJIANG)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

Conflict parties: Uyghurs, WUC vs. government
 Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

The non-violent crisis over secession of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and ideology between the Uyghur minority and diaspora organizations, such as the World Uyghur Congress, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Chinese authorities continued to rely on a comprehensive policing, surveillance, and incarceration program in XUAR, severely constraining civil liberties of ethnic Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities. The key target of these policies is the crackdown on ‘backward’ and ‘extremist’ beliefs and prac-

tices, enforced by restrictions on language, worship, Islamic diets, and clothing. Uyghurs in the Makit county, XUAR, were allegedly ordered to report if someone adhered to Islamic law during Ramadan this year. Additionally, mosques were forcibly kept closed while restaurants were kept open during the fasting period. Reportedly, several mosques were destroyed in the last three years. For instance, authorities destroyed three mosques in the county of Atush since 2016. Furthermore, there were several accounts of mosques being modified in order to reflect traditional Chinese cultural tropes.

In an effort to shape the region’s demographics, Han Chinese settlers were encouraged to move to Xinjiang, for example by providing financial incentives. Especially the migration of teachers was heavily supported by the government; in 2018, 4,000 teachers had migrated to XUAR, while in 2019, another 3,180 had followed. Furthermore, recent reports exposed the use of forced sterilisation on Uyghur women since the start of the government’s crackdown in the region. Allegedly, hospitals in XUAR also developed family-planning units where detailed archival records on pregnancies were kept.

Authorities detained allegedly suspicious individuals in re-education camps. The number of detained ethnic Uyghurs remained constant compared to 2019, with approx. one million interned. According to several NGOs, the reason for detention could be minimal. Inside these camps any signs of religious affiliation were forbidden, as was speaking the Uyghur language. In an attempt to curb the flight of affected Uyghurs, the PRC pressured Kazakh authorities to deport individuals back to China. Furthermore, several studies outlined the persistent use of Uyghur forced labour throughout China. For this, detainees of the camps were relocated across China. Reportedly, an estimated 80,000 Uyghurs have been forced to work in 27 factories in nine provinces since 2017.

Western governments continued to react to these developments. The USA especially sought to increase pressure on PRC officials in the context of the general trade war between the two countries [→ China – USA]. The ‘Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020’ enabled the US to impose sanctions on three senior officials of the Chinese Communist Party for alleged human rights abuses targeting ethnic and religious minorities in XUAR. Additionally, the US added eleven Chinese companies to a trade blacklist over the alleged Xinjiang violations. In turn, the PRC announced retaliatory sanctions on US officials. hiik

CHINA – INDIA

Intensity: **3** | Change: ↑ | Start: **1954**

Conflict parties: PRC vs. India
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The dispute over territory, international as well as regional power, and resources such as water between China and India escalated to a violent crisis. Throughout the first half of the year, repeated violent clashes left at least 137 soldiers injured and 20 dead. Fighting occurred mainly around Pangong Tso Lake, Ladakh union territory/Tibet Autonomous Region and the Galwan Valley, Ladakh union territory/Xinjiang Autonomous Region along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as well as in Lhonak Valley in Sikkim state.

On May 5, an unknown number of Indian and Chinese soldiers engaged in hand-to-hand combat at Pangong Tso Lake,

Ladakh, leaving at least eleven injured on both sides. Other sources stated that approx. 250 Indian and Chinese troops clashed in fist fights, leaving at least 72 injured. Furthermore, during an altercation on September 7, both sides issued warning shots around Mukpari Heights along the shore of the Lake, the first shots fired by members of the respective armed forces along the LAC for over 45 years.

Moreover, on May 9, Indian army officials confirmed that 150 Indian and Chinese soldiers were involved in fist fights and rock-pelting in Lhonak Valley, Sikkim, leaving four Indian and seven Chinese servicemen injured.

Tensions intensified on May 22, when at least 2,400 Chinese soldiers transgressed into Indian controlled territory at three points in the Galwan valley, Ladakh. On May 26, Chinese President Xi Jinping called on the Chinese military to "scale up training and battle preparedness" while addressing a delegation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during a session of the National People's Congress. Reportedly, India stationed several infantry battalions along the LAC in May, responding to the Chinese deployment of several thousand PLA units along the eastern Ladakh border. The situation then escalated on the western part of the border, when Indian and Chinese forces engaged in a violent brawl in the Galwan Valley on June 15. While Chinese border patrols killed at least twelve Indian soldiers with makeshift weapons, such as wired clubs, Indian news outlets reported that Indian forces further killed and injured a total of 43 Chinese soldiers, a number which was not confirmed by Chinese officials. On June 18, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the clashes in a televised speech, stating that India wanted peace but, if provoked, would reply accordingly.

In an attempt to resolve the clashes, China and India held numerous rounds of military and diplomatic talks. Most notably, on July 5, following a call between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval as well as ongoing military talks at the Corps Commander level, both sides agreed to move troops 1.8 km away from Patrol point 14. However, not all issues were resolved and talks continued throughout the year. lja

CHINA – JAPAN (EAST CHINA SEA)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1971**

Conflict parties: Japan vs. PRC vs. ROC
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The non-violent crisis over international power, territory, and resources between the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China^o (ROC), and Japan continued.

In March, Japan announced it would provide roughly USD 2.2 billion to encourage Japanese companies to move their production out of China and reduce the country's economic dependence on China. As a result, in July, 57 firms agreed to open factories in Japan, while 30 others moved their production to other Southeast Asian countries.

Throughout the year, all parties continued to claim authority over the Senkaku/Diaoyu/Tiaoyutai islands. In its annual defense review published on July 14, the Japanese Ministry of Defense accused China of pushing forward its territorial claims. Chinese vessels were spotted near the disputed islands 333 times in 2020. One month earlier, the city assembly of Ishigaki had voted to change the name of the area of the disputed islands from "Tonoshiro" to "Tonoshiro Senkaku",

sparking protest from both the PRC and ROC.

Tensions grew particularly when a Japanese destroyer accidentally collided with a Chinese fishing boat within the Chinese exclusive economic zone near Zhoushan on March 30. On a similar occasion, a Japan Coast Guard vessel accidentally collided with a Taiwanese fishing boat in Japanese waters near the disputed islands on September 27. On August 4, the Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kono stated that the Japanese Self-Defense-Forces would respond if Chinese vessels continued to intrude. Kono then described China as a "security threat" on September 9.

Two weeks later, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to cooperate more closely. However, on November 4, the PRC unveiled a bill, allowing its coast guard to use weapons if foreign vessels involved in illegal activities failed to obey orders in waters under PRC control [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South Chinese Sea)]. On November 24, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that China would "absolutely" defend its sovereignty. On several occasions, the US emphasized its support for Japan. On July 29, the US asserted its commitment to the alliance with Japan, which was underscored by joint military exercises on August 15 and over several days in mid-December. On November 14, the defense chiefs of both countries reaffirmed that the disputed islands fall within the scope of their security treaty. jwl

CHINA – USA

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

Conflict parties: PRC vs. USA
 Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over international power and ideology between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the USA continued.

The US government repeatedly stressed the threatening nature of the PRC in its public statements. The South China Sea (SCS) being a particular point of dispute, the US government repeatedly declared the Chinese territorial claims in the region unlawful [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. For the first time since 2017, two US aircraft carrier groups operated simultaneously in the Philippine Sea around June 21. Furthermore, on July 4, two US aircraft carriers conducted military exercises in the SCS within sight of PRC naval vessels. Overall, the US conducted 23 "freedom of navigation operations" in the SCS and the Taiwan Strait in addition to several aerial maneuvers and naval support missions.

Trade tensions initially decreased. Despite recently having accused the PRC of currency manipulation, US President Donald Trump signed a preliminary trade deal with the Chinese government on January 15. On a similar note, throughout February, the PRC announced several tariff exemptions on American imports. However, on multiple occasions, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned third countries about strengthening economic ties with China.

Tensions increased when the Covid-19 virus reached the US. In March, both countries announced mutual restrictions on media entities. They accused each other of having caused and mishandled the Covid-19 pandemic. However, although Trump threatened to terminate the Phase One Trade Deal on May 3, both countries vowed to uphold the agreement on May 8. On July 24, the PRC ordered the closure of the US

consulate in Chengdu, two days after the US had closed the Chinese consulate in Houston.

Finally, the weeks after the US election in November were marked by increased economic pressure by the US. On November 12, Trump signed an executive order barring US investors from purchasing or investing in Chinese “military companies” and their subsidiaries.

The human rights situation in China remained another issue of contention. The US imposed several trade and travel restrictions on Chinese entities and persons in relation to human rights violations in Xinjiang [→ China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)] and Hong Kong [→ China (Hong Kong)]. Finally, increased US support to Taiwan^o was deemed subversive and considered the most sensitive issue in Sino-American relations by the PRC. [→ China (Taiwan^o)]. For instance, the US navy transited the Taiwan Strait 13 times this year, compared to nine in 2019. jkl

CHINA – VIETNAM ET AL. (SOUTH CHINA SEA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1951**

Conflict parties: PRC vs. Vietnam vs. Brunei vs. ROC vs. Malaysia vs. Indonesia vs. Philippines
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The violent crisis in the South China Sea (SCS) over territory, international power, and resources between Brunei, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China^o (ROC), Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia continued.

Throughout the year, the PRC maintained its policy of territorial assertion in the region. The PRC held several naval exercises involving live-fire drills and missile tests, sparking criticism from neighboring states and the USA. During the first half of the year, tensions rose particularly with the Philippines. On February 17, a PRC naval vessel allegedly aimed its gun control director at a Philippine naval vessel near the Spratly Islands. On March 20, the PRC installed new infrastructure at Fiery Cross and Subi Reef for research purposes. On April 18, the PRC established two new maritime districts in contested SCS waters. Two days later, the PRC released a list of 80 renamed geographical features in the SCS. However, from June onwards, the Philippines and the PRC held a series of bilateral exchanges in an effort to ease tensions. Nonetheless, on November 4, the PRC drafted a law entitling its coast guard to use force against foreign installations and vessels in contested areas.

Disputed control over the SCS’s natural resources led to repeated clashes between neighboring states in the first part of the year. Reportedly 34 Vietnamese armed fishing vessels entered the area around the Hainan Islands between January 19 and 31. Around April 2, the Chinese coast guard detained the crews of three Vietnamese fishing vessels and rammed one vessel near Woody Island. On April 30, the PRC announced a unilateral fishing ban from May 1 to August 16 in the SCS. In turn, on May 13, Vietnam urged its fishermen to ignore the ban and continue fishing in the Gulf of Tonkin Common Fishing Zone. On June 10, Vietnam accused the PRC of having rammed a Vietnamese fishing vessel near Lincoln Rock in the Paracel Islands, injuring one sailor and seizing the vessel’s cargo and equipment. In another incident, members of the Malaysian coast guard shot dead a Vietnamese fisherman on August 16, as they were inspecting two Vietnamese

vessels deemed to be involved in illegal fishing.

Regarding the SCS’s hydrocarbon reserves, the PRC launched an eight-month law enforcement campaign on April 1 aimed at undercutting perceived violations in offshore oil exploration and exploitation, as well as marine and coastal constructions. Between April 13 and 30, the PRC conducted survey missions near Hainan Islands penetrating Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone. On April 21, two US warships entered Malaysian waters to support one Malaysian oil exploration vessel that had been tailed by a PRC vessel. Tensions finally decreased on May 15, when the Malaysian oil exploration vessel left waters also claimed by Vietnam and the PRC.

In response to Chinese assertiveness, the region also saw increased US involvement. Throughout the year, the US conducted several naval and military missions in the area. Furthermore, on November 23, the US announced the supply of weapon systems to the Philippines in support of its claims in the SCS [→ China – USA].

jkl

FIJI – TONGA (MINERVA REEFS)

Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **2005**

Conflict parties: Fiji vs. Tonga
 Conflict items: territory

The dispute over territory between Fiji and Tonga continued. While Tonga has claimed the intermittent submerged Minerva Reefs since the 1970s, Fiji has disputed the ownership of the two atolls.

On two occasions, the Tongan Coast Guard intervened against foreign sailors entering the disputed waters. On July 4, the Tongan Coast Guard detained a US family on a sailing vessel and on July 6, they detained two sailors from New Zealand, accusing them of violating Tongan waters.

In February, Fiji’s Minister of Foreign Affairs underscored the necessity of speeding up talks to resolve the issue, saying that the rise of sea levels due to climate change might cause the reefs to become permanently submerged. Tonga officially defined the Minerva Reefs to be islands, while Fiji defined them as reefs which would make them part of Fiji’s exclusive economic zone.

jkl, mwe, tcr, hen

INDIA (DALITS / ADIVASIS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1950**

Conflict parties: Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes), Dalits (Scheduled Castes) vs. Upper Caste members
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

The violent crisis over the Hindu caste system and subnational predominance between Dalits and Adivasis, recognized by the government as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, on the one hand, and upper caste members on the other, continued. The number of incidents of caste violence remained steady throughout the year, especially in rural regions, where the practice of untouchability, the imposition of social dis-

abilities on a person of lower caste descent, continued to be the main reason for violence.

Incidents of caste-related violence included desecration of statues, demolition of property, assault, rape, and killings. For example, on February 13, about a hundred upper caste members stormed Mangta village, Uttar Pradesh state, and attacked its Dalit inhabitants, injuring 18. Previously, the attacked community had held an event celebrating important personalities of Dalit history, which had led to a dispute.

On June 6, several upper caste members beat up a Dalit youth after his visit to a local temple in Domkhera village, Uttar Pradesh, which went against upper caste objections. Police refused to register his complaint. Four upper caste members later shot the youth dead.

On September 14, four upper caste men raped a Dalit woman in Hathras city, Uttar Pradesh. Two weeks later, on September 29, she died of her injuries and was cremated by the police the same night, without the family members' consent. This action led to nationwide protests, with thousands of protesters demanding the death penalty for the four accused, the resignation of the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and more security for women, especially of lower caste descent. In the next weeks, several Dalit rights organizations and opposition parties organized rallies, and representatives of various parties visited the family of the deceased. On October 4, state police beat protesters with sticks in Hathras. Furthermore, approx. 500 mostly upper caste members staged a protest in support of the accused in Hathras on the same day.

Adivasi people continued to address the continuation and implementation of reservation quotas in the public sector. On September 24, several hundred Adivasis blocked the Udaipur-Ahmedabad national highway in Rajasthan state for three days, demanding more inclusion of Scheduled Tribe members in teacher recruitment. Protesters threw stones, torched a large number of vehicles, and damaged properties, while the police shot rubber bullets and tear gas shells. Several protesters and police were injured and one person died under unclear circumstances. The protesters cleared the highway after a meeting with officials.

lih

INDIA (GJM ET AL. / WEST BENGAL)

Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **1907**

Conflict parties: GJM vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

The dispute over autonomy and the creation of Gorkhaland as a separate subnational entity between Nepalese speaking Gorkhas, represented by Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), and the West Bengal state government in Darjeeling district continued.

On August 7, the Union Home Ministry invited GJM and the West Bengal government to a three-party meeting to discuss the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) before the upcoming 2021 elections in West Bengal. On October 7, representatives of the Union Home Ministry and the GJM held a meeting in the capital New Delhi. However, as no representative from the West Bengal government attended, the GTA was not discussed. At the meeting, GJM submitted a memorandum demanding the establishment of a separate Gorkhaland within India.

On October 21, the founder of GJM, Bimal Gurung, returned to the Darjeeling hill area, West Bengal, after three years in

hiding. He announced that GJM would break its alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party and would support the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) in the 2021 elections. In response to his return, the Binay Tamang and Tapa faction of GJM protested against Gurung and called for peace in the region. In November and December, Gurung organized rallies to request support from his followers for the proposed alliance with TMC.

jsc

INDIA (GNLA ET AL. / MEGHALAYA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1992**

Conflict parties: GNLA, AHAM, HNLC, KSU vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

The violent crisis over autonomy of the Garo Hills, Khasi Hills, and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya state between militant groups and the government continued. Militant groups associated with the ethnic Garo community, such as the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA), and other organizations such as the A'chik Holistic Awakening Movement (AHAM), aimed to establish an independent Garo state, while militant Khasi groups, such as the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC), were striving for an independent Khasi province.

The violence between militants and security forces continued. HNLC remained the most active group. On January 16 and February 20, HNLC planted IEDs in Bther village, West Jaintia Hills, and Kyllon Mathei Pyndeng Jalong village, West Khasi Hills, respectively. While the first IED was subsequently defused by the police, the second detonated without reported casualties. On November 26, HNLC detonated an IED in an empty market in Sookilo, East Jaintia Hills, causing damage to at least one shop. HNLC detonated a further IED on December 12, at a residential colony in Lumshnong, East Jaintia Hills, injuring one person and resulting in the collapse of walls and damage to water pipelines.

The Khasi Students' Union protested on February 28 in the East Khasi Hills area against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and in favor of the introduction of an Inner-Line Permit (ILP) system, which would regulate access to protected areas, such as Meghalaya. The protest resulted in a three-day long clash between Khasi and various non-tribal groups, which left three dead and 20 injured. Subsequently, state authorities imposed a curfew and restricted telecommunication in the surrounding districts as a cautionary measure. In response to the clash, HNLC issued an ultimatum to all Hindu-Bengalis to leave the East Khasi Hills area within one month.

The AHAM staged a sit-in at the entrance of the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC), criticizing the state government for not approving the Garo Customary Law Bill (GCL). The GCL, which aims to protect the interests, culture, and traditions of the Garo people, had been passed by the GHADC in 2018.

adi

INDIA (HINDUS – CHRISTIANS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1999**

Conflict parties: BD, BJP, Hindu Munnani, Hindus, RSS, VHP vs. Christians

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between various Hindu groups, such as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bajrang Dal, and Hindu Munnani, on the one hand, and the Christian minority on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, Hindu militant groups targeted Christians on various occasions, leaving at least five Christians dead. For instance, on June 4, a Christian convert was allegedly kidnapped and killed by Hindu radicals in Malkangiri district, Odisha state. Moreover, on July 7, Hindu radicals killed a local Christian dignitary in Godcharoli district, Maharashtra state. On July 13, four Hindu militants killed a recent Christian convert in Khunti district, Jharkhand state. On December 8, three Hindu militants shot dead a pastor in Putikda village, Jharkhand.

Furthermore, several nonlethal clashes between members of the Hindu and Christian communities occurred across the country. For instance, Hindu radicals repeatedly targeted Christian dignitaries. On January 5, Hindu radicals assaulted a pastor and his family in Bichpari, Haryana state. On March 8, a Hindu Munnani militant beat young missionaries in Anumandai village, Tamil Nadu state. Furthermore, Hindu nationalists violently attacked a pastor on May 28 in Mau district, Uttar Pradesh state. In another incident, on August 21, Hindu militants beat a pastor, accusing him of forceful conversions in Bareilly district, Uttar Pradesh.

Moreover, Christian assemblies were frequently attacked. For instance, on January 19, around 20 Hindu radicals disrupted a prayer, beating some of the assembled Christians in Malasamudra village, Karnataka state. Similarly, on March 15, around 30 Bajrang Dal affiliated radicals disrupted a church service in Pratapgarh district, Uttar Pradesh. On August 11, a group of ten Hindu nationalists attacked four Christian women while they were praying in Sarupur village, Haryana. Beyond religious gatherings, Hindu radicals also targeted Christians on several other occasions. In Erode, Tamil Nadu, on February 5 three Hindu radicals smashed the windshields of buses that carried Christian passengers, reportedly injuring several. On March 2, RSS members entered a Christian hospital in Mandya district, Karnataka state, injuring two. Similarly, on May 20, around 30 Hindu radicals attacked three Christian families with sticks and stones in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh state, leading to the hospitalization of five Christians. On September 16, 60 to 70 Hindu nationalists attacked seven Christians in Simdega district, Jharkhand, accusing them of eating and smuggling beef. The militants beat the Christians and shaved their heads. Finally, on November 25, 50 Hindu radicals attacked Christians in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh, leaving 27 Christians injured.

In addition, Hindu militants resorted to various acts of vandalism, including arson. For instance, on June 12, a church was set on fire in Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu. Around three months later, on September 8, a church in Srikakulam district, Andhra Pradesh state, was torched. Finally, unknown perpetrators desecrated a Christian cemetery in Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, between October 17 and 18.

mki

INDIA (HINDUS – MUSLIMS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1947**

Conflict parties: BD, BJP, Hindus, RSS, VHP vs. JIH, Muslims, PFI, TJ

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over religious predominance between Hindus and various Hindu organizations on the one hand, and Muslims as well as Islamic activist groups on the other, continued. Throughout the year, at least 80 Muslims, Hindus, and members of the security forces were killed and more than 300 injured. Furthermore, at least 1,000 mostly Muslim people were internally displaced.

The introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act, which was passed in December 2019 and came into force on January 10, led to nationwide protests throughout the country. Between February 24 and 29, Hindu and Muslim communities violently clashed in the Shaheen Bagh area of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, resulting in the deaths of 53 persons and the internal displacement of more than 1,000.

Moreover, several instances of violence throughout the year were related to cow vigilantism. For instance, on June 15, a Hindu mob with ties to the Hindu organization Bajrang Dal injured a Muslim cattle herder in Mangaluru, Karnataka.

Tensions also persisted between state security forces and the Muslim community. For instance, on April 15, three police officers allegedly severely beat a Muslim person in Ambedkar Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh state, who subsequently died of his injuries. Furthermore, on August 11, the alleged posting of an offensive remark about the prophet Muhammad on social media sparked violent clashes between Muslims and security forces in Bangalore, Karnataka state. The police deployed tear gas and live ammunition, killing three protesters. During the confrontation, 60 policemen and an unknown number of protesters were injured.

Furthermore, the global Covid-19 pandemic also exacerbated the underlying tensions between Muslims and Hindus in India. For instance, the biggest annual meeting of the Islamic organization Tablighi Jamaat (TJ), on March 13, led to a high number of Covid-19 infections. In relation to this, the hashtag #CoronaJihad was disseminated on Twitter, leading an MP of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to accuse TJ members of spreading Covid-19 "like terrorism" on April 7, while another BJP member called all attendees "human bombs" on April 8. Also, Hindu mobs attacked Muslim individuals, accusing the latter of spreading Covid-19. For example, on April 6, a Hindu mob assaulted a mosque in Sonapat district, Haryana state, while another Hindu mob attacked a Muslim in Gumla, Jharkhand state, on April 7.

syo

INDIA (INTER-ETHNIC RIVALRY / ASSAM)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1979**

Conflict parties: Assamese, AASU, AJYCP vs. Bangladeshi immigrants, AABYSF vs. Adivasis et al. vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, other

The violent crisis over subnational predominance and the issue of Bangladeshi immigration in Assam state between various ethnic groups, notably those identifying as indigenous versus perceived outsiders, and the government, continued. Throughout the year, several ethnic groups, primarily ethnic Assamese, protested the publication of the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The CAA had been passed in 2019, aiming to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, who had been living in India for at least six years. On January 4, over 40,000 people participated in a protest against the CAA, organized by the Asom Jatiyatibadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) in Saidya, Tinsukia district. On January 5, during an anti-CAA protest in Neherubali, Nagaon district, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) declared their opposition to granting citizenship to Bangladeshi immigrants. On February 5, AASU again protested in Sivasagar district against Bangladeshis who they alleged were illegal immigrants. On February 20, members of AASU and Bharatiya Janata Party clashed during a protest, leaving one AASU member injured and seven detained in Chabua district. In February, a recommendation for the implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord was submitted to Sonowal. The recommendation for implementation of clause 6 stated that people residing in Assam since 01/01/1951 and their descendants were Assamese people. On August 11, AASU claimed that the people of Assam had a right to be informed of the report's content. In both February and August, the All Assam Bengali Youth Students' Federation (AABYSF) had demanded the inclusion of Bengalis as Assamese people. In April, the AASU further accused the central government of misleading the Assamese people. They claimed that despite the government's promise to protect indigenous people, they were bringing in Bangladeshis through the CAA. Throughout the year, incidents of police brutality were reported. For example, on January 1, AASU and AJYCP protested by waving black flags at the Assamese Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal's convoy in Nalbari district during which the police allegedly assaulted one protester. On March 30, a policeman beat up three Adivasi women, allegedly for violating the lockdown imposed due to Covid-19, in Golaghat district. On December 29, the Assam Congress criticized the Assamese government for police brutality against female farmers who resisted the takeover of their farmlands, especially in Nagaon district.

iha

INDIA (KASHMIR)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1947**

Conflict parties: HM, IS, JeM, LeT, local protesters vs. Government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The violent crisis over autonomy or secession of the Indian-administered union territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) between Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), the so-called Islamic State (IS), the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and local protesters, on the one hand, and the Indian government, on the other hand, continued.

At least 195 alleged HM, LeT, JeM and IS militants and 45 security personnel belonging to the Indian Army or the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), among other groups, were killed in clashes throughout the year. Moreover, at least 18 civilians died in militant attacks or shootouts between militants and security forces. At least 120 militants, security personnel, and civilians were injured throughout the year.

Militant attacks on civilians included the killing of several members of India's governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). For example, on October 30, militants shot dead three BJP officials traveling in a car in Kulgam District. LeT later claimed responsibility for the attack. In a similar attack on July 8, LeT militants shot dead a BJP district president, his father, and his brother in Bandipora district.

Throughout the year, militants and security personnel clashed frequently. On July 17, CRPF and army personnel killed three JeM militants, among them a senior commander, during a shootout in Kulgam District, which also left two security personnel injured. On May 2, security forces freed civilian hostages from LeT militants in Changimulla, Kupwara District. During the operation, five security forces as well as two LeT militants, including a senior commander, were killed. On June 7, security forces killed five HM militants during a search operation in Shopian District. Furthermore, on May 6 and November 1, security forces shot dead two senior HM commanders.

Security forces were repeatedly accused of killing civilians in feigned shootouts. For example, on July 18, army personnel killed three alleged militants in Shopian District. Police later charged the commanding officer in court for staging the killings for money. On December 30, police and army claimed to have killed three militants in Hokersar. Relatives organized protests the same day, claiming the dead had been innocent. Following the 2019 Reorganisation Bill, which had divided the state of J&K into the two union territories J&K and Ladakh, the government had imposed military checkpoints and a communications lockdown on the union territories in August 2019. These were largely lifted with the exception of certain internet restrictions. On February 11, the government stated that mobile data services and internet access had been restored. However, restrictions on internet speed persisted throughout the year. nrö

INDIA (KUKIS – NAGAS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1992**

Conflict parties: Kukis, KLA, KNA, KNO, KIM vs. Nagas, NSCN-IM, NNGPs

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The non-violent crisis between Nagas and Kukis over subnational predominance in the Manipur hill area, Manipur state, escalated to a violent crisis. The Kukis were primarily organized into the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), Kuki Liberation Army (KLA) and Kuki National Army (KNA), while the Nagas were organized into Naga National Political Groups (NNGPs) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isaiah Muivah (NSCN-IM).

On February 24, NSCN-IM members assaulted one Kuki in Kamjong district, Manipur, on grounds of alleged affiliation with the KLA. In retaliation, KNA members assaulted two Rongmei Nagas in Ukhrul district, Manipur. Naga citizens of the Sampui village and Kuki citizens of the Chassad village, Manipur, clashed. On March 15, Sampui villagers burned down fields and two huts in Chassad Village. In retaliation, Chassad inhabitants burned down a Naga-owned petrol pump the following day. On the same day, Sampui villagers attacked Chassad villagers with light weapons such as stones, torches, knives, spears, and catapults, resulting in the burning of 150 houses and ten cars.

Both groups took steps to settle the conflict. On January 10, representatives of the NNGPs and KNO signed a declaration in the capital New Delhi of cooperation towards a peaceful end of the conflict.

Tensions remained between the Nagas and Kukis in response to the December 3 declaration of the Kuki Rising Day as a state-restricted holiday and the ongoing peace talks between Nagas and the Indian government [→ India (Nagalim)]. Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) requested the solution to the Kuki conflict in a letter to the government in August while settling the Nagas' conflict with the government. In April, NSCN-IM recognized the Meiteis and Naga indigenous groups in Manipur, excluding Kuki communities, claiming that the Kuki communities were only allowed to live in the region in exchange for annual payments to the Sampui village headman.

On December 28, the national Minister of Home Affairs stated that no region of Manipur would be granted autonomy and that the integrity of the state would remain. jsc

INDIA (MAFIA RAJ)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1986**

Conflict parties: sand mafia, timber mafia vs. civil society actors, government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources, other

The violent crisis over natural resources, the protection of the environment, and subnational predominance in various states between the sand and timber mafia, on the one hand, and the government and civil society actors, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, the sand mafia allegedly killed or attacked at least nine individuals opposing the illegal extraction

of resources. For instance, on January 4, a Right to Information (RTI) activist, who had investigated illegal sand mining activities, was found dead in Patna, Bihar state. Five days later, on January 9, another anti-sand mining activist was found dead in Rashgovindpur, Odisha state. In both killings, activists alleged the involvement of the sand mafia. Moreover, on January 22, sand mining contractors injured an RTI activist in Kottayam, Kerala state. On January 24, the sand mafia killed a man when he attempted to prevent the mafia from illegally mining sand from his compound in Kattakada, Kerala. Moreover, in Yadadri Bhongir district, Telangana state, two members of the sand mafia killed a farmer on January 30. On February 1, an RTI activist was allegedly killed by sand mafia members near his home in Kendrapara district, Odisha. On June 19, sand mafia members allegedly shot and killed a reporter in Unnao district, Uttar Pradesh state, for investigating illegal sand extraction in the region. Furthermore, on July 30, in Thirumalapur village, Telangana, a sand mafia member ran over and killed a farmer with a truck.

Over the course of the year, members of the sand and timber mafia also conducted attacks on government officials. For instance, on March 31, the timber mafia injured a forest guard in the Jaltap Reserve forest, Odisha. On April 5, the sand mafia pelted a Revenue Officer on patrol with stones near Bhitwarwar, Madhya Pradesh state. Mafia members also violently attacked a driver and two police officers in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh, on June 28, when they tried to stop a vehicle filled with illegally mined sand. Additionally, on November 25 and December 4, timber smugglers attacked forest guards in Kalesar National Park, Haryana state.

At the same time, several government officials were suspended or transferred due to alleged links to the sand mining mafia this year. For instance, on September 25, authorities suspended four police officers in Bharatpur district, Rajasthan state, for protecting the sand mafia. Three days later, around 13 police officers of the Palghar police station in Maharashtra state were transferred due to their leniency towards the sand mafia. Similarly, on October 1, a police inspector was suspended in Tirumangalam, Tamil Nadu state, for accepting bribes from members of the sand mafia. mki

INDIA (MANIPUR)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1964**

Conflict parties: KYKL, UNLF, KCP, PREPAK, PLA, KNF vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The violent crisis over autonomy or secession of Manipur state between militants and activist groups, including Meiteis, Kukis, and other ethnic groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Militants were organized in armed groups, such as Kuki National Front (KNF), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), People's Liberation Army (PLA), Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), and United National Liberation Front (UNLF).

Apart from their fight against the Indian government, the groups competed in violent encounters with each other. Compared to previous years, however, the number of incidents decreased significantly. Throughout the year, one injury and no fatalities were reported.

On January 23, an IED detonated three hours before the rehearsal for the Republic Day parade at Rims Road in Imphal city, Imphal West district. One civilian was injured. Subse-

quently, authorities launched search operations on all routes leading to Imphal city on January 26. A PREPAK member was arrested in relation to the attack.

Special forces arrested more than 50 militants throughout the year. For instance, on January 17, a combined team of Imphal East District Police and Assam Rifles (AR) arrested two UNLF militants in Imphal East district. The two militants were involved in killings of alleged rapists in August 2017 and September 2019 in Bishnupur district. On July 27, AR arrested three KYKL militants and one member of PREPAK near Kasong village, Kamjong district. On August 9, AR and district police arrested a high-ranking PLA militant in Leimaram Bazar, Bishnupur district.

The Kuki National Front-Nehlung (KNF-N) and the Socialist Democratic Front of Kukiland (SDFK) boycotted the Indian Independence Day celebration in the Kuki-dominated areas of the state, calling for the closure of all facilities from August 14 to 15, excluding medical service and the media. ths

INDIA (NAGALIM)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1947**

Conflict parties: NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, NSCN-KK, NSCN-KYA, NSCN-NK, NSCN-R, NSCN-U vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The violent crisis over autonomy or secession of the Naga inhabited areas between militant Naga groups and the government in the federal states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh continued.

Militants of various factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) clashed with security forces throughout the year. For instance, on May 16, during a fire exchange between the Indian Army and NSCN-Isaak Muivah (NSCN-IM), one civilian was killed and six were injured in Pumao Village, Arunachal Pradesh. On July 11, in a joint security operation of Arunachal Pradesh state police and Assam Rifles (AR), six NSCN-IM militants were killed and one AR personnel was injured in Nginu, Arunachal Pradesh. Light weapons such as AK-47, MQ Rifles, and IEDs were used during the operation. On September 9, AR personnel carried out a search operation near Bhaimo Village, Nagaland, when NSCN-Neopao Konyak / Kitovi (NSCN-NK) militants fired at the security forces. In response, security forces killed an NSCN-NK militant and arrested two.

Throughout the year, AR and the Indian Army arrested members of the militant groups in the areas of Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland. For instance, on January 19, AR personnel arrested two NSCN-IM militants and seized a vehicle loaded with smuggled pyrotechnic explosives and illegal contraband in Kohima District, Nagaland. On June 29, security forces arrested five members of NSCN-Khango Konyak (NSCN-KK) in Thahekhu, Nagaland.

Ceasefire agreements between the central government and both NSCN-Khaplang Khango faction (NSCN-K) and NSCN-Reformation (NSCN-R) were extended separately for six months until October 27. The government and NSCN-IM held informal talks on August 13 to outline their differences and to resolve the Naga political issue. NSCN-IM demanded a separate national flag and constitution, which the government opposed. On September 28, the Union Home Ministry extended the ban on NSCN-K for another five years. The government accused them of violent activities and aligning

with other insurgent groups such as the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) [→ India (ULFA-I et al. / Assam)].

During an ambush on October 4, militants killed one AR personnel and injured another in Jairampur, Arunachal Pradesh. Although no militant group claimed responsibility, the media suspected a joint action of NSCN-K and ULFA. On August 4, the dead body of a high ranking NSCN-KK militant was found in Tuensang district, Nagaland. Subsequently, Tuensang Police arrested nine members of NSCN-KK in connection with the suspected murder on October 21.

On December 25, about 52 militants of the Yung Aung faction of NSCN-Khaplang (NSCN-KYA) laid down their weapons in Phek district, Nagaland, claiming their surrender would boost the Naga peace process. iha

INDIA (NAXALITES)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1967**

Conflict parties: Naxalites vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between the left-wing extremist Naxalites and the government continued. The Naxalite militants were primarily organized into the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-M). Noteworthy splinter organizations were the Jharkhand Jan-Mukti Parishad (JJMP), the People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI), and the Tiritiya Prastuti Committee (TPC). On the government side, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), especially the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA), collaborated with state- and district-level forces.

Throughout the year, at least 237 Naxalite militants, security forces, and civilians were killed, and 220 injured in confrontations, IED explosions, and other attacks. Most fatalities were reported in the federal states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra.


Security forces carried out search operations and patrols in affected areas. For instance, on January 20, one Naxalite member was killed in Bijapur district, Chhattisgarh. Up to 1,000 security forces were deployed on January 29 to Swabhimani, Odisha state, following a confrontation between villagers and Naxalite militants.

Over the course of the year, large numbers of Naxalites turned themselves in under a so-called surrender and rehabilitation policy. The most notable case was around June 6, when approx. 107 Naxalites surrendered in order to be able to participate in an exam preparing for Bachelor's degrees.

From June 18 to 20, Naxalites gathered near the borders of Sukma and Bijapur districts, Chhattisgarh. Reportedly, 300 Naxalites, 500 Jan militia, and around 10,000 civilian supporters attended the rally. The main aim of the gathering was to choose a successor for secretary of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee, one of the Naxalites' sub-divisions. The Naxalites' continued to use IEDs. On May 16, four remote-controlled IEDs planted by Naxalites militants were recovered in Bastar, Chhattisgarh. In a clash on March 21, Naxalites killed 17 security personnel in Sukma, Chhattisgarh. On January 17, a police camp in Chhattisgarh reported being overflown repeatedly by a small drone, allegedly controlled by Naxalites. This was the second suspected use of this new technology following a similar incident in November 2019. Both Naxalites and security forces targeted civilians. For instance, on June 12, Naxalites killed a civilian, suspected of working with police forces, in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. Vil-

lagers of Chiriabera, Jharkhand, reported beatings by CRPF forces on June 15, when they were unable to answer questions about Naxalite movements. There were also several cases of attacks on infrastructure, as well as on construction vehicles. For example, Naxalites targeted twelve forest department buildings in an IED attack on June 11 in West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand. hen

INDIA (PATELS ET AL.)

Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **1981**

Conflict parties: Dalits, Gujjars, Jats, Kapus, Marathas, Patels vs. government

Conflict items: other


The violent crisis over access to benefits under the reservation system between various communities, most prominently the Marathas, Gujjars and Dalits on the one hand, and the central government of India as well as the governments of the respective federal states on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. The reservation system allocates jobs in the public sector and access to public education based on a community's status as either Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) or Other Backward Castes (OBC). Throughout the year, members of the communities staged protests to highlight their demands.

On February 7, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that states are not bound to provide reservation quotas for public sector jobs, triggering protests among groups representing SC, ST, and OBC across various states. For instance, members of the Indian National Congress staged a protest against the abolition of reservation rights on February 16 in Kurukshetra, Haryana state. Similarly, on February 23, Dalit-associated Bhim Army activists led protests against the ruling in the cities of Sambalpur and Balangir, Odisha state, as well as in Aurangabad, Maharashtra state.

On September 13, activists of Maratha organizations blocked the road near Kolhapur, Maharashtra, demanding reservation quotas for public sector employment and education. Moreover, on September 21, Maratha activists vandalized a shop and burnt tires in Solapur city, Maharashtra.

On November 1, hundreds of members of the Gujjar community staged a protest in Bharatpur, Rajasthan state. On the same day, members of the Gujjar community blocked the Mumbai-Delhi rail route in Jaipur, Rajasthan. On November 7, members of the Maratha community staged a protest walk from Pandharpur to Mantralaya, Maharashtra. Police intervened and detained protesters. syo

INDIA (SIKHS)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1947**

Conflict parties: AISSF, BKI, Dal Khalsa, KLF, SAD (Amritsar), SFJ, SLF vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over secession of Khalistan between various Sikh groups and the government escalated to a violent crisis.

Various Khalistani secessionist groups, such as the Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF) and the Khalistan Zindabad Force


(KZF), allegedly supported by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), engaged in illicit domestic activities, including the trafficking of drugs, weapons, and cash across the Pakistani border, utilizing drones and traditional smugglers. For instance, on May 8, the Punjabi police arrested six supporters of the KLF and KZF for trafficking weapons and drugs in Dadwandi, Punjab state. On another occasion, on June 19, Border Security Forces in Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir union territory, intercepted a drone deployed by KZF militants to carry weaponry, explosives, and ammunition.

In response to militant activities, Punjabi police and anti-terror forces carried out several operations against Sikh groups, thwarting a number of planned attacks. For instance, on September 5, the Special Cell of the Delhi police force engaged in a gunfight in the capital New Delhi with two Sikh militants from Babbar Khalsa International, attempting to retrieve a hidden weapons cache. According to Indian authorities, the two apprehended militants had been planning to assassinate local Punjabi politicians.

While confrontations between Sikh militants and the government reportedly did not result in any fatalities, intra-Sikh tensions rose in the course of the year. For instance, the publication of the Nanakshahi holy calendar on March 6, displaying an image of Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, triggered a violent clash in Amritsar, Punjab, between fifty members of Dal Khalsa and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. Furthermore, on October 16, two alleged Sikh militants shot dead a known Sikh anti-Khalistan activist and local politician in the village of Bhikhiwind, Punjab.

Finally, throughout the year, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), an international diaspora organization, launched repeated attempts to promote their secessionist referendum campaign, which the government deemed illegal. On September 7, SFJ announced voting would start in November, prompting authorities to alert national security forces in Haryana state and Punjab. On December 9, the National Investigation Agency charged 16 SFJ activists for sedition. lha

INDIA (ULFA-I ET AL. / ASSAM)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1979**

Conflict parties: ULFA-I, ULFA-PTF, NDFB, NDFB-S vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The violent crisis over regional autonomy or secession (in Assam) between militant Assamese, Bodo, Karbi, and Muslim groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The most active groups remained the National Democratic Front of Bodoland I.K. Songbijit faction (NDFB-S) and the United Liberation Front of Asom Independent faction (ULFA-I). The goal of NDFB-S was the creation of an autonomous state of Bodoland in Northern Assam, while ULFA-I aimed for a sovereign socialist Assam.

The violence between militants and security forces decreased in comparison to the previous year. On January 5, security forces killed one NDFB-S member during a shootout in Dwimalupara Village, Chirang district. During a clash on January 15, security forces shot dead an NDFB-S militant in Deka Damra, Kokrajhar district.

As in previous years, ULFA-I used kidnapping as means to fund their activities. For instance, on February 11, ULFA-I kidnapped a citizen in Tinsukia district, allegedly in order to extort money.

Throughout the year, authorities arrested several ULFA-I members. For instance, the Spear Corps of the Indian Army and the police apprehended a cadre of the militant group during a joint operation on November 21 in Pengeree, Tinsukia.

On January 27, the central government signed a peace agreement with all four factions of the NDFB and All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), which had pioneered a movement for a Bodoland state, in the capital New Delhi. Following the peace accord, 1,550 NDFB militants laid down their weapons on January 30. In exchange, the central and state government promised to implement a reintegration policy for former militants. A high ranking member of ULFA-I surrendered to the army in Dilsengre village, Meghalaya state, on November 11. In an affidavit submitted before the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act Tribunal, the central government claimed that the Vice Chairperson and Commander-in-Chief of ULFA-I is based in Yunnan Province, China, from where he carried out "anti-India activities." adi

INDIA – PAKISTAN

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↘** | Start: **1947**

Conflict parties: India vs. Pakistan
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The limited war over the status of the Kashmir region, international and regional power, and water distribution between India and Pakistan de-escalated to a violent crisis. The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) continued its presence along the Line of Control (LoC), where the conflict was concentrated between Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) union territory and Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Violations of the 2003 ceasefire agreement and clashes along the LoC between Indian and Pakistani soldiers increased compared to previous years, amounting to over 7,000 violations according to the conflict parties' own accounts. Cross border firing between the Pakistani and the Indian army left at least 84 persons dead and 129 injured. Both countries' military forces regularly used small arms as well as heavy weapons like mortars. For instance, on November 13, Indian and Pakistani forces exchanged heavy fire and shells across several districts along the LoC. Indian forces reportedly retaliated against prior shelling from Pakistani troops, killing four civilians and one Pakistani soldier, and destroying army bunkers and fuel dumps on the Pakistani side of the LoC in Neelum, Hattian Bala and Bagh districts, Azad Kashmir. Pakistani shelling killed six civilians, three Indian soldiers, and a border guard in Baramulla, Bandipora, and Kupwara districts, J&K. The following day, India summoned Pakistan's Chargé d'Affaires to lodge a strong protest over the ceasefire violations by Pakistani forces.

Diplomatic tensions remained high throughout the year, particularly regarding mutual accusations of state-sponsored terrorism. For instance, on October 8, Pakistan accused India at a UNGA meeting of supporting the militant organizations Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar to the detriment of Pakistan's security [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups); Pakistan (Sunni militants – religious groups)]. India rejected these allegations. In another case, the Foreign Secretary of India on November 23 shared a dossier with foreign envoys, including UNSC members, delineating Pakistan's

"terror campaign" against India [→ India (Kashmir)]. The following day, Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN accused India of violating international law by sponsoring terrorism. India's spokesperson rejected the accusation, claiming instead that Pakistan was "the epicenter of terrorism".

Furthermore, on June 30, a spokesperson of Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said India was building up military capabilities to an extent that exceeded its security requirements and warned of it destabilizing strategic stability in South Asia. On September 25, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan accused India of discriminatory policies in J&K during the 75th session of the UNGA and deemed peace in South Asia impossible without resolution of the conflict.

September 19 marked the 60th anniversary of the Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan. However, the dispute over the use of the rivers continued. At the beginning of August, the World Bank reaffirmed that India and Pakistan must reach agreement on the appropriate way to resolve their water dispute under the treaty. So far, India has demanded a neutral expert and Pakistan a court of arbitration to solve the issue. iro

INDONESIA (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1981**

Conflict parties: MIT, JAD et al. vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between Islamist militant groups, such as Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) and Mujahadin Indonesia Timur (MIT), on the one hand, and the government and the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI), on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, various violent incidents occurred in Poso regency, Central Sulawesi province, a stronghold of MIT. For instance, a series of retaliatory attacks took place between April 4 and 19. On April 4, MIT kidnapped a farmer in Poso Pesisir Utara district. Later, a video surfaced showing MIT beheading him. On April 9, police forces misidentified a young farmer as an MIT terrorist and shot him dead in Tobe village, Poso Pesisir Utara. His body was later found to show signs of physical abuse. Six days later, two MIT members attacked and injured a police officer in Poso city. On the same day, police shot dead the attackers in a gunfight. Subsequently, MIT militants kidnapped and killed a farmer in Poso, on April 19, suspecting him of being a police informant. TNI and police forces worked together in Central Sulawesi in a collaborative action to combat MIT, called Operation Tinombala, that had been launched in 2016 and was extended several times this year. On June 2, the Tinombala task force shot dead two Indonesian farmers in Kawende village, Poso Pesisir Utara, after previously firing warning shots and chasing the villagers, suspecting them to be affiliated with MIT. In order to combat the remaining MIT members in Central Sulawesi, an additional 150 TNI soldiers were deployed to Poso in support of Operation Tinombala on August 15. On November 17, Operation Tinombala task force members shot dead two MIT militants in Palu city. MIT retaliated by attacking Lembantonga village, Sigi regency, on November 27, killing four villagers and burning down six houses.

Throughout the year, security forces also intensified their efforts to arrest Islamist terrorists in other parts of Indonesia. On March 25, special counter-terrorism forces of the national police, Densus 88, raided a house in Subar district, Batang

regency, Central Java province, killing one JAD member and arresting four. On April 13, Densus 88 arrested four JAD terrorists on Muna Island, Southeast Sulawesi province. On June 1, an affiliate of the so-called Islamic State killed a police officer with a sword and injured another in South Daha district, Kalimantan province. Police shot him dead on the same day. On August 11 and 12, Densus 88 raided hideouts of MIT and JAD in the provinces of Riau, Jakarta and West Java, arresting 19 suspects. On October 4, Densus 88 arrested four members of the Islamist group Jemaah Islamiyah in Bekasi, West Java province. hbe

INDONESIA (PAPUA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: | Start: **1961**

Conflict parties: OPM, ULMWP, KNPB, FRI-West Papua, TPN, AMP vs. government

Conflict items: secession, resources

The limited war over the secession of the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat as well as natural resources, such as gold, copper, and timber, between indigenous Papuans and the government, de-escalated to a violent crisis.

In clashes between Indonesian security forces and Papuan rebels, at least 30 people were killed and 40 injured.

Over the course of the year several violent clashes occurred, mostly concentrated in Intan Jaya regency and Mimika regency, Papua province. Unrest in Intan Jaya regency between the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB) and the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) resulted in at least seven people killed and seven injured. From January 18 to 21, an additional 750 troops were deployed to Intan Jaya and nearby Paniai regency. On September 14, TPNPB killed two Papuan civilians in Sugapa district suspecting them to be Indonesian intelligence officers. On September 17, TPNPB militants shot dead a TNI officer in Bilogai village, Sugapa district. Following these attacks, TNI soldiers clashed with TPNPB in Hitadipa village, eponymous district on September 19. TPNPB shot one soldier dead and TNI retaliated by shooting and stabbing a civilian. On October 9, TPNPB attacked a government investigative team, which was reportedly on its way to investigate the Hitadipa incident, in Mamba village, killing one and injuring another. On October 26, TNI and police forces raided Jalae village, Sugapa district, killing one Papuan suspected of being affiliated with TPNPB and injuring another.

Mimika, location of the Grasberg mine, the world's largest gold mine and the second largest copper mine, also saw high levels of violence. The Grasberg mine continued to be operated by PT Freeport Indonesia, of which the Indonesian government was the majority shareholder. On March 30, eight TPNPB militants attacked the PT Freeport main office in Timika city, killing one employee and injuring four others. On April 9, security forces raided the hideout of suspects linked to the attack on PT Freeport, killing two and arresting one, in Timika. On August 16, security forces raided a TPNPB outpost in the mountains of Mimika and shot dead a leader of the militant group responsible for the attack on PT Freeport.

Throughout the year, protests over several issues erupted. In June, protests were staged in the provinces of Jakarta, Java, and Papua, after the Balikpapan district court had convicted seven Papuan activists of treason for partaking in anti-racism protests in August 2019.

Moreover, protests were held against the extension of the

special autonomy law for Papua from 2001, instead demanding independence. For instance, on October 24, police forces arrested 164 protesters in Nabire, eponymous regency, at a protest related to this law. hbe

JAPAN – RUSSIA

Intensity: **1** | Change: | Start: **1945**

Conflict parties: Japan vs. Russia

Conflict items: territory, international power

The non-violent crisis over territory and resources between Japan and Russia de-escalated to a dispute. Although the two countries retained their contrary positions regarding the Southern Kuril Islands, the year was marked by advances in the process of bilateral economic cooperation that was initiated in 2016.

However, the main obstacle to a formal peace treaty, the territorial dispute, remained. As in previous years, both countries stressed at several occasions their general willingness to sign a formal peace treaty. Yet, differences over the concrete content of said treaty remained. Several Russian actions were interpreted in Japan and internationally as a sign that Russia, while willing to cooperate economically, was unwilling to give up its sovereignty over the Kuril Islands. For example, on July 1, Russia amended its constitution, introducing a ban on ceding Russian territory. Furthermore, on September 29, the Russian military launched a military drill involving around 1,500 soldiers in the southern Kuril Islands and deployed its latest air defense missile system S-300V4 on the islands. However, Japan continued to refrain from calling the Kuril Islands "unlawfully occupied territory" in an effort to build economic ties and mutual trust between the two countries. tms

JAPAN – SOUTH KOREA

Intensity: **2** | Change: | Start: **1951**

Conflict parties: Japan vs. ROK

Conflict items: territory, other

The non-violent crisis over territory and historical perceptions between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) continued.

Trade issues were the primary point of contention.

The year saw several judicial confrontations around questions of trade, economy, and financial compensations over Japanese World War II war crimes. For instance, on June 1, an ROK Court ordered a Japanese steel company to comply with compensation payments for forced labor within 60 days to avoid a potential seizure of assets. Its appeal was dismissed by the same court on August 17 but will move to a higher court for review. A second appeal was dismissed on December 11. On December 29, another ROK court completed the process of serving notice to another Japanese company regarding asset seizures for compensation of forced labor victims.

Throughout the year, Japan continued to restrict the export of chemicals essential to the ROK industry. Subsequently, Japan expressed disappointment after ROK filed a complaint to the WTO. On November 30, Japan urged ROK to immediately remove its anti-dumping tariff on Japan-made stainless steel bars after the WTO dispute settlement panel decision stated

that an extension of the ROK protectionist policies would contravene WTO rules.

Travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic caused a particular point of tension. In the first week of March, the implementation of a mandatory quarantine for ROK individuals arriving in Japan was protested by ROK. On October 6, an agreement was reached, lifting the mutual Covid-19 travel restrictions. However, travel was halted again in December in light of a rise in infections. Nonetheless commercial relations improved towards the end of the year. On November 15, Japan and ROK signed the first free trade agreement involving the two nations. Although Japan repeatedly claimed the Liancourt Rocks, the issue was less prominent compared to previous years. jwl, jkl

JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, USA – NORTH KOREA

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1990**

Conflict parties: Japan, ROK, USA vs. DPRK
 Conflict items: system/ideology, international power, other

The non-violent crisis over international power and ideology between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), on the one hand, and Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the USA, on the other, continued.

In his New Year’s address, DPRK leader Kim Jong-un announced the further development of North Korea’s nuclear programmes and the introduction of a “new strategic weapon”. Throughout the year and beginning on March 2, North Korea conducted a total of at least five missile tests in March and April.

On October 10, the DPRK held a military parade marking the 75th anniversary of its Worker’s Party. In its parade, the DPRK displayed a Pukguksong 4A submarine-launched ballistic missile (SBLM) and four new 11-axle intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), which are the biggest missiles up to date and believed to be capable of reaching the US mainland. It was the first such display since the March 2018 US-DPRK summit agreement in Singapore on the omission of ICBM tests. On November 3, South Korean intelligence disclosed that the DPRK was in the process of constructing a new submarine capable of firing SBLMs. North Korea is currently believed to own only one submarine with this capability.

Throughout the year, Japan, the ROK, and the US conducted several observation operations and joint exercises. For instance, as in previous years, Japan and the ROK participated in the annual US-led Rim of the Pacific exercises from August 17 to 31. On November 17, a US warship successfully intercepted a mock ICBM in a first-of-its-kind test. The test was designed to “simulate a threat missile from a rogue nation”. Japan announced that this new Aegis system, which was jointly developed with the US, will be deployed to Japan by 2021.

As in previous years, the US continued its policy of personal engagement with North Korea on the level of its leaders, while renewing sanctions, for instance on June 17, and cracking down on 280 cryptocurrency accounts operated by North Korean hackers and their Chinese accomplices, on August 27. Cooperation between the US, Japan, and the ROK towards North Korea remained strained. Despite continued efforts by ROK President Moon-Jae-in to improve the US-ROK dialog with North Korea, inter-Korean relations further worsened throughout the year [→ North Korea – South Korea]. Under

newly elected PM Yoshihide Suga, Japan continued to raise the issue of North Korean abductions of Japanese civilians and in that context repeatedly proposed a summit meeting between its leaders without preconditions.

US President-elect Joe Biden called Kim Jong-un a “thug” during his election campaign on October 22 and vowed to align closely to South Korea and Japan regarding North Korea. pen

KAZAKHSTAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **2004**

Conflict parties: civil rights activists, DPK, DVK, independent trade unions, journalists, Oyan Qazaqstan vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The non-violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups, such as the illegal Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK), the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan (DPK), and individual activists, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, the government continued to repress oppositional groups and independent journalists. Several activists were detained on grounds of spreading false information during the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, between April 17 and 19, three journalists were arrested in Qaraghandy and Almaty, eponymous regions. One of them was later convicted and sentenced to three years of restricted freedom and banned from political activity for five years.

Members of the DPK planned to hold a congress in Almaty on February 22, but refrained from doing so in advance due to police harassment. For instance, the founder of the party was detained on February 21. In order to protest the government’s measures, supporters of both the DPK and the DVK staged demonstrations in several Kazakh cities such as the capital Nur-Sultan, as well as Almaty, Shymkent and Aqtobe, eponymous regions, leading to the detention of more than 100 people. On June 6, the two parties organized rallies in Almaty, Semei, Shymkent, Kyzylorda, Aqtobe, Oral, Nur-Sultan, and Qaraghandy, eponymous regions. Again, at least 100 people were detained. However, authorities also allowed protests by DPK members and activists to take place in Almaty on October 10 and November 5.

On February 24, a prominent civil rights activist died in police custody one day after being arrested in Nur-Sultan, leading to protests all over the country. Opposition activists alleged the use of torture on the side of the government. According to activist sources, 144 people were arrested overall. On May 28, authorities closed the investigation, concluding that the activist died of a heart attack. mor

KYRGYZSTAN – UZBEKISTAN – TAJIKISTAN
(BORDER COMMUNITIES / FERGANA VALLEY)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2000**

Conflict parties: Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz border communities vs. Uzbekistan, Uzbek border communities vs. Tajikistan, Tajik border communities

Conflict items: territory, international power

The violent crisis over territory and regional power in the border region Fergana Valley, between Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek border communities, backed by their respective governments, continued. Despite repeated confrontations, tensions between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan eased as leaders resumed talks about border demarcations.

On January 10, violent clashes broke out on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border near Kok-Tash, Jalal-Abad region. The incident was triggered by residents of the Tajik village of Somoniyon, Districts of Republican Subordination, who crossed the border, allegedly firing gun shots. In turn, the 254 inhabitants of the neighboring Kyrgyz village Damkha were evacuated. As a result of the clash, Kyrgyz officials arrested four persons. Furthermore, the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry handed a protest note to the Tajik ambassador. On January 14, at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border crossing at Kysy-Bel, Batken Region, a Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister and his Tajik counterpart agreed to the establishing of a 114 km long common border, including the exchange of a number of previously disputed border areas.

In May, several violent incidents took place along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. For instance, on May 8, about 80 Kyrgyz and Tajik residents clashed in the village of Chek, Batken Region, over the use of agricultural land, allegedly throwing stones and firing guns. Subsequently, Tajik and Kyrgyz border guards exchanged fire, leaving at least five people injured on both sides, with Tajik forces firing mortar shells. Subsequently, the Tajik Foreign Ministry handed a protest note to the Kyrgyz ambassador, accusing the Kyrgyz border officials of provocative behavior. In an attempt to defuse tensions, a Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister and his Tajik counterpart discussed possible strategies for sustainable de-escalation and to prevent further outbreaks of violence at the common border. However, in a renewed escalation on August 6, gunfire across the Tajik-Kyrgyz border left one Tajik villager dead and one Kyrgyz board guard injured.

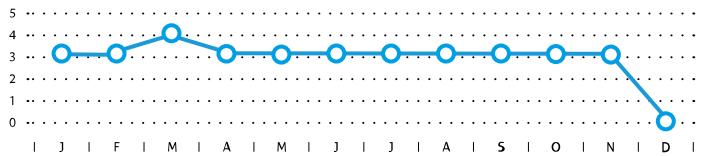
Furthermore, tensions between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan remained high. On the night of June 1, a violent dispute over the use of a local water source erupted between residents of the Kyrgyz village of Chechme, Batken Region, and the neighboring Uzbek exclave of Sokh, Fergana Region. Local villagers engaged in large-scale violent clashes, throwing stones, firing gunshots and torching buildings, ultimately leaving 187 Uzbeks and 25 Kyrgyz injured. On June 1, a Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister and Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov met at a border checkpoint to resolve the tensions. Similarly, on June 6, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev traveled to the Fergana valley, calling for mutual respect. ama

MYANMAR (AA / RAKHINE STATE)

Intensity: **4** | Change: • | Start: **2015**

Conflict parties: AA vs. Government

Conflict items: autonomy



The limited war over the autonomy of Rakhine State between the Arakan Army (AA) and the government consisting of its civilian component and the national Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw), continued. Throughout the year, an estimated 130 people were killed, at least 250 injured and approx. 55,000 internally displaced within Rakhine State and southern Chin State. Both sides supposedly used landmines, killing at least 26 and injuring more than 100 civilians.

Clashes between the Myanmar Army, also known as the Tatmadaw, and the AA continued to occur frequently in Rakhine and Chin States. For instance, on more than 40 days in January and February, the Tatmadaw and the AA engaged in fighting to gain control of Meewa Hill, between Chin State's Paletwa and Rakhine State's Kyauktaw townships. A reported 3,000 AA soldiers were involved and the Tatmadaw used helicopters, resulting in several deaths on both sides. On April 7, a government air raid targeting AA soldiers in Paletwa killed seven civilians and injured at least eight. On May 29, the AA attacked a police outpost in Tha Zin Mying village, Rathedaung township, killing four police officers and capturing six, as well as three civilians who were later released. The AA claimed the attack was in retaliation to a Tatmadaw attack on an AA encampment five days earlier. Between October 3 and 5, AA and Tatmadaw troops clashed over a hill near Aungtharzi, Kyauktan and Hteeswe villages, Rathedaung township. At least three civilians and several Tatmadaw and AA soldiers were killed. The Tatmadaw threw bombs from fighter jets.

The AA continued to kidnap civilians, especially political leaders. For instance, three members of the governing party, National League for Democracy, were taken hostage on October 14 in Taungup township, Rakhine State, during which eleven civilians were reportedly injured. In May and June, approx. 100 ward and village administrators in Kyauktaw and Myebon townships, Rakhine State, resigned from their posts after stating fears that the AA or Tatmadaw were targeting them.

On March 23, the government declared the AA and its political wing, the United League of Arakan, a terrorist group and an unlawful association, also criticized its alleged unwillingness to continue peace talks. The AA called the designation defamatory and in turn accused the Tatmadaw of war crimes, terrorism and nationalism as factors hindering peace. A proposal for a bilateral ceasefire by the AA and its allies, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army [→ Myanmar (MNDAA / Shan State)] and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army [→ Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)], was rejected by the Tatmadaw on June 2. The three allies repeatedly extended a unilateral ceasefire until November 9 due to Covid-19 and the general elections. The Tatmadaw also renewed the nationwide ceasefire, first introduced in October 2015, in May and October but excluded regions where the AA were

active. Following the cancellation of the elections in nine entire Rakhine State townships and more than 100 wards of other townships because of the conflict, the AA criticized the decision as ethnic disenfranchisement. After agreeing to a temporary truce on November 25, bilateral talks were held several times throughout November and December, in part aided by a Japanese diplomat who visited Rakhine State and also discussed the postponed elections with the government. The internet ban for Rakhine and Chin States imposed on 07/19/19 by the Myanmar government continued. On February 3, the government extended the ban to an additional five townships in Chin and Rakhine States, affecting nine altogether. On May 2 and August 1, internet access was partially restored, although limitations were extended until December 31 due to concerns that the AA had used and would use it to plan attacks.

kv

MYANMAR (KIA, KIO / KACHIN STATE)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1961**

Conflict parties: KIO, KIA vs. government
 Conflict items: autonomy, resources

The violent crisis over regional autonomy and resources, such as valuable metals, between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), politically represented by the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), on the one hand, and the government consisting of its civilian component and the national Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) on the other, continued. Although clashes between the Tatmadaw and the KIA continued in Shan and Kachin States throughout the year, the violence between the conflict parties and against civilians decreased significantly compared to last year, accounting for at least eight people killed and five injured. The peace negotiations held through 2019 continued into this year. After the National League for Democracy, leading party in peace negotiations, decided to exclude the Arakan Army [→ Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State)] from negotiations on August 6, the KIA and other allied armed groups threatened to sit out the conference. Consequently, the conference did not take place. On August 17, the KIA announced it would prohibit electoral campaigns in the KIA-controlled territories for the Kachin State elections on November 8. Due to tensions caused by KIA clashes throughout September, the Union Election Commission canceled the election in 11 of Kachin State's 18 townships on October 16, thereby excluding 1.4 million voters. Throughout June and September, KIA members and the Tatmadaw engaged in clashes within Kachin and northern Shan State, breaking the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Tatmadaw from May 10 until August 31. For instance, throughout June the Tatmadaw and the KIA clashed on several occasions in Kutkai township, northern Shan State, causing a dozen villagers to flee. The use of light weapons was recorded. On June 19, a KIA spokesperson issued a warning to civilians that clashes with the Tatmadaw could erupt at any time. A Tatmadaw offensive on June 22 destroyed a KIO Covid-19 checkpoint near the Chinese border in Loije, Kachin State. Starting in September, clashes between the KIA and the Tatmadaw intensified. On September 24, Tatmadaw and KIA troops clashed in Muse District, northern Shan State. Artillery shelling by the Tatmadaw reportedly lasted for several hours.

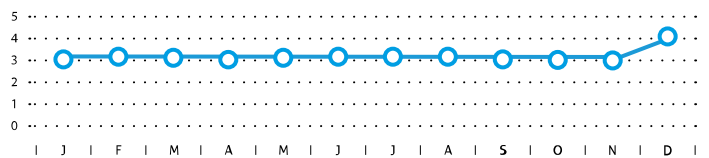
Four days later, on September 28, a KIA battalion clashed with the Tatmadaw in multiple locations in Kyukok, Shan State. The KIA's ambush left six Tatmadaw soldiers dead and five injured. The series of clashes led to the internal displacement of over 360 persons in northern Shan State that month. Between November 25 and December 23, the KIA was involved in several clashes with the Tatmadaw, the collection of extortion money, and in recruitment activities in northern Kachin State.

eku

MYANMAR (KNU, KNLA, DKBA ET AL. / KAREN STATE, KAYAH STATE)

Intensity: **4** | Change: ↗ | Start: **1948**

Conflict parties: KNU, KNLA, DKBA, DKBA-splinter group vs. government
 Conflict items: autonomy



The violent crisis over autonomy between the Karen National Union (KNU), its armed wing the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) and the DKBA splinter group Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, on the one hand, and the government consisting of its civilian component and the national Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw), on the other, escalated to a limited war. On January 1, clashes occurred between KNLA brigade and Tatmadaw soldiers after the military crossed into KNLA held territory without first notifying the KNLA command in Hpapun township, Karen State. The clashes left two civilians and one Tatmadaw soldier injured. On January 27, a Tatmadaw commander of a light infantry battalion was killed in a landmine explosion in Hpapun. The Tatmadaw alleged this was a targeted attack by the KNLA. The following day, landmine explosions damaged a Tatmadaw car transporting rice. On January 29, two soldiers were injured in landmine explosions which the Tatmadaw claimed were put in place by the KNU. These events occurred in the Hpapun where Tatmadaw supervised road construction projects were taking place, against which villagers had protested on January 15. These skirmishes escalated to frequent clashes until February 15. The clashes peaked on February 3 when the Tatmadaw fired 40 mortar rounds into Luthaw township, Karen State. Between February 9 and 15, the Tatmadaw fired on average six to seven mortar rounds per day. The clashes left one dead and two injured and also displaced an estimated 2,137 civilians from Hpapun Township. KNU and Tatmadaw representatives met on February 19 and the use of artillery abated on February 22. On March 5, Tatmadaw soldiers from a light infantry battalion fired at two civilians traveling by motorbike, killing one in Meh Way village, Karen State. Tatmadaw officials claimed the soldiers shot in self defense. On March 31, Tatmadaw soldiers from another infantry battalion shot and killed a local community leader when firing at a group of villagers returning from a shopping trip in Saw Muh Plaw village tract, Karen State. On May 6, Tatmadaw soldiers burned down four KNU-controlled Covid-19 screening posts in Dwe Lo township,

Karen State. On June 2, a Tatmadaw light infantry battalion clashed with KNLA forces near Wah Klo Htar and Maw Law Klo villages in Luthaw. Two villagers were injured in the shelling and an estimated 130 villagers displaced.

jbu

MYANMAR (MNDAA / SHAN STATE)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1989**

Conflict parties: MNDAA vs. government
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources

The non-violent crisis over the autonomy of Kokang, Shan State, between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the government consisting of its civilian component and the national Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) escalated to a violent crisis.

The Brotherhood Alliance consisting of the Arakan Army (AA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and MNDAA announced a unilateral ceasefire on January 1 and extended it continuously until the end of February 2021 [→ Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State); Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)]. However, no official meeting regarding the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement between numerous ethnic armed organizations and the Tatmadaw was held.

On August 10, a verdict was delivered by Pyin Oo Lwin District Court in Mandalay Region against combatants who had attacked the military's Defense Services Technological Academy on 08/15/19. Four members of AA, TNLA, and MNDAA were sentenced to 35 years in prison respectively.

Despite the announcement of the unilateral ceasefire, there were three raids and two armed clashes between MNDAA and the Tatmadaw. On January 18, the Tatmadaw attacked army bases of MNDAA in Kokang, killing one. On June 3, the Tatmadaw attacked MNDAA and TNLA with artillery shells in Tarmoenye sub-township, northern Shan State. Neither physical destruction nor casualties were reported. On October 3, MNDAA and TNLA attacked a military camp with rocket-propelled grenades in Muse district, Shan State, which destroyed several buildings. Armed clashes on July 24 in Hsipaw township, Shan State, and September 4 in Muse, collectively caused at least 200 residents to flee their villages.

jpa

MYANMAR (ROHINGYA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: Rohingya, ARSA vs. government, Buddhists
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, other

The violent crisis over subnational predominance and Rohingya citizenship between the mainly Muslim Rohingya ethnic minority, on the one hand, and the Buddhist majority as well as the government consisting of its civilian component and the national Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw), on the other, continued.

Armed violence shifted from Rakhine State, Myanmar, to the Kutupalong refugee camp, Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, home to at least 500,000 Rohingyas since the 2017 clearance opera-

tions in Rakhine State. On January 27, an unidentified group injured twelve Christian Rohingya refugees within Kutupalong refugee camp, destroying their homes. The Bangladeshi government accused the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) which rejected the accusation. Organizations, such as the South Asia Democratic Forum, raised the possibility that Rohingya refugees could be radicalized, consequently further escalating violence within refugee camps due to camp intern power structures based on extremist groups: Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the ARSA.

After the ARSA had been militarily inconspicuous for several months, the military reported violent resurgences. For example, on April 15, ARSA and the Myanmar Border Guard Police clashed at Khamaungseik village, Maungdaw township, Maungdaw district, Rakhine State, killing at least one member of the police forces. Similarly, on May 2, at the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, ARSA extremists wounded two police personnel near Border Pillar 41.

The main focus this year remained on legal reconditioning of attacks committed in 2017 by the Myanmar Army against the Rohingya minority and the international pressure on the government to admit instigation. On January 20, an independent commission appointed by the Myanmar government admitted that security forces had committed war crimes against Rohingyas. However, according to the government, violence on the scale of genocide did not take place. Consequently, on January 23, Myanmar was ordered by the United Nations High Court of Justice, The Hague, Netherlands, to guarantee protection to remaining Rohingyas in Myanmar. In particular, the government was ordered to conduct a thorough investigation of past crimes and to confirm compliance with these protective measures in an official bi-annual report. The first reporting took place on May 25; details were not disclosed. A complete disclosure of all war crimes was assured by the ICC, regardless of Myanmar's cooperation.

On June 30, a Myanmar court sentenced two military officers and one soldier for crimes committed against Rohingyas in 2017. In early September, Canada and the Netherlands officially called for the Myanmar government to be held accountable for its offenses. In early September, two videos were released showing two government soldiers confessing that their orders had been issued by the government, evidencing its deliberate involvement. Despite these accusations, the leading party, the National League for Democracy under Monywa Aung Sin, won the majority again in this year's election on November 8. Human rights groups, such as Human Rights Watch, pointed out that ethnic minorities, including the Rohingya, were excluded from the election.

sen

MYANMAR (TNLA / SHAN STATE)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2013**

Conflict parties: TNLA vs. government
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources

The violent conflict over subnational predominance and resources, such as poppy, between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), on the one hand, and the government consisting of its civilian component and the National Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) and supported by aligned militias such as the Panse Pyitutsit militia, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, the TNLA clashed on several occasions with the Myanmar Army, also known as Tatmadaw, and its allies over territorial issues as well as the cultivation of poppy, which the TNLA publicly opposed. For example, on March 15, the TNLA raided five different poppy cultivation sites in Namkham township, burning the fields and killing one member of an opposing militia in the course of their operations. On November 11, TNLA soldiers clashed with the Tatmadaw outside of Shan State, around Mogok township, Pyin Oo Lwin district, Mandalay Region. This resulted in several killed and wounded Tatmadaw soldiers, as well as the displacement of nearly 1,000 villagers. On May 29, the TNLA ambushed a Tatmadaw convoy, using remote detonating landmines, damaging the trucks, in Namgut village, Kutkai township. Landmines planted by the military and militants continued to pose a danger to civilians. On March 10, two villagers were killed and one was wounded in a landmine explosion near Kham Sar village, Kyaukme township. Furthermore, on July 14, two villagers were killed and one villager was injured in a landmine explosion in Namkham. Furthermore, kidnappings by the TNLA became an issue of note in the final months of the year. For instance, on October 16, the TNLA kidnapped a villager and demanded ransom for her release. They allegedly beat the abductee several times and released her on October 26. Furthermore, on December 4 in Mogok township, the TNLA abducted a renowned gem merchant at gunpoint. Gem trade is a lucrative industry in the area and the TNLA have historically targeted successful merchants for extortion.

jbu

NORTH KOREA – SOUTH KOREA

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1948**

Conflict parties: DPRK vs. ROK
 Conflict items: territory, system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over international power, ideology, and territory between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), supported by the People’s Republic of China (PRC), on the one hand, and the Republic of Korea (ROK), supported by the USA, on the other, escalated into a violent crisis. Since 2017, DPRK and ROK have repeatedly met to discuss bilateral relations and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In March and April, however, the DPRK launched at least nine projectiles – considered to be short-range ballistic missiles – into the Sea of Japan. On October 10, in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party, DPRK presented four new types of inter-continental ballistic missiles [→ Japan, South Korea, USA – North Korea]. One of the key points of tension in the inter-Korean dialog marked the so-called balloon campaigns conducted by ROK-based North Korean defector activist groups [→ North Korea, China (defectors)]. Kim Yo-jong, sister of DPRK Chairman Kim Jong-un, repeatedly demanded the ROK stop anti-regime campaigns and threatened military action. On June 8, DPRK cut off all communication channels with the ROK, which had not been restored by the end of the year. On June 16, DPRK blew up the inter-Korean joint liaison office in Kaesong, DPRK. Subsequently, ROK increased measures to restrict anti-DPRK activities by defector groups, such as revoking their business licences in July and passing a bill in December prohibiting the

launch of anti-DPRK material across the inter-Korean border. Later this year, a ROK public official disappeared from a patrol boat and was found in DPRK waters on September 22 by a DPRK sea patrol in South Hwanghae province. DPRK troops shot the man, allegedly burned his corpse, and threw it into the sea, which DPRK officials claimed to have been Covid-19 prevention measures. Although Kim Jong-un publicly apologized for the incident, the DPRK did not respond to requests by the ROK for joint investigations and later accused them of not preventing the incursion into DPRK waters. On November 3, ROK’s National Intelligence Service found circumstantial evidence of DPRK’s independent investigation to search for a body. In light of this incident, the ROK’s agenda for reconciliation with the DPRK and declaration of a formal end to the Korean War was met with renewed criticism from ROK politicians and citizens.

Notwithstanding escalating tensions, over the course of the year, ROK approved more than USD 20 million in humanitarian aid to be sent to the DPRK via UN agencies. The US undertook defensive policies surrounding the DPRK. For instance in February, March, April, and December, surveillance aircrafts flew over the ROK six times to monitor the DPRK. Furthermore, the US extended existing sanctions, seized 280 cryptocurrency accounts with suspected DPRK connections, and cut all non-humanitarian assistance to the DPRK.

ile

NORTH KOREA, CHINA (DEFECTORS)

Intensity: **2** | Change: **↘** | Start: **2000**

Conflict parties: DPRK, PRC vs. defectors (networks)
 Conflict items: system/ideology, other

The violent crisis over ideology and North Korean defectors’ (NKD) right to migrate between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), on the one hand, and the NKDs and defector support networks such as aid groups and other NGOs, based mostly in the Republic of Korea (ROK), on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

On January 2, DPRK authorities allegedly launched an extensive operation in Ryanggang Province to capture 15 Pyongyang senior officials attempting to flee to the PRC. North Korean border security personnel caught seven. NKDs also increased their direct involvement in ROK politics. On March 6, the Inter-Korean Unification Party was launched as the first political party led by NKDs. In the April general elections, two NKDs, Thae Yong-ho and Ji Seong-ho, each won a seat in the ROK parliament under two separate conservative opposition parties that later merged as the United Future Party. The party focuses on enhancing NKD welfare and voicing out against human rights violations in the DPRK. NKD activist groups continued to send anti-DPRK material across the border, leading to the deterioration of DPRK-ROK relations. In response, on July 17, ROK revoked the business permits of two such groups, namely Fighters for a Free North Korea and Kuensaem. On December 15, ROK passed a bill, prohibiting the launching of anti-DPRK material across the inter-Korean border [→ North Korea – South Korea]. Over the year, defection from and to the DPRK occurred at the DPRK-ROK border. In July, a defector re-defecting to the DPRK potentially infected with Covid-19 led to a lockdown of Kaesong, DPRK. On September 20, a defector captured by a ROK border patrol testified that he was collecting in-

formation for DPRK authorities under duress. On November 4, ROK alarm systems failed to signal a man defecting to the ROK through the Demilitarised Zone. ROK border forces subsequently captured the man and investigated the circumstances of his defection.

ile

PAKISTAN (BALOCHISTAN)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1948**

Conflict parties: BLA, BLT, BNP-M, BRA, BRAS vs. gov-
ernment

Conflict items: secession, resources

The violent crisis over the secession of Balochistan province and the control of its gas, oil, coal, and mineral resources between several Baloch militant groups and political parties, on the one hand, and the government, supported by China, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the United Baloch Army (UBA), the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), and the Baloch Raji Ajoie Sangar (BRAS) conducted several attacks and frequently clashed with security forces. Overall, security forces arrested 14 militants while at least 41 people were killed, among them four members of the BLA and five members of the BRAS.

Attacks on projects related to the Chinese Pakistan Economic Corridor and associated infrastructure continued throughout the year. For instance, on January 27, BLA militants used explosives to destroy parts of the Sui Northern Gas Pipeline, Punjab province. Three days later, the Multan Police Counter Terrorism Department arrested four BLA members in connection with the incident. On May 17, an IED killed six and injured four Frontier Corps soldiers protecting oil and gas engineers in Bolan area, Balochistan. UBA claimed responsibility for the attack. On October 15, BRAS militants attacked a state Oil and Gas Development Company convoy in Gwadar district, Balochistan, killing seven Frontier Corps soldiers and seven private security guards.

Baloch militants also repeatedly conducted attacks on security forces. On May 8, BLA killed six soldiers and destroyed an army vehicle in Kech district, Balochistan, in an IED attack for which they claimed responsibility the day after. On July 14, BLF members attacked a convoy of security forces in Panjgur district, Balochistan, killing at least three security forces and injuring at least five.

On June 29, in an attack on Pakistan's stock exchange in Karachi, Sindh Province, four BLA militants, carrying grenades and firearms, killed three security personnel and injured at least seven others. Security forces killed the militants. On July 18, Karachi police announced the arrests of six BRAS members in connection with a foiled attack and the attack on the stock exchange.

Authorities conducted operations throughout the year. For example, security forces killed at least five BRAS militants during a raid in Rajanpur district, Punjab, on July 31. On March 25, the Counter Terrorism Department arrested five BLA members in the Rojhan area of Punjab and defused several bombs in connection with a planned attack. The department also conducted a raid in Khuzdar District, Balochistan, on November 28, arresting three BLA members and recovering weapons and explosives. plo

PAKISTAN (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2001**

Conflict parties: al-Qaeda, JuA, LeJ, TTP vs. Govern-
ment

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the Islamist militant groups Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and al-Qaeda, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Militant groups remotely detonated eight IEDs throughout the year. For example, on January 7 a motorbike laden with explosive materials was remotely detonated near Liaquat market in Quetta, Balochistan province, when a vehicle carrying security personnel passed by. Two civilians were killed and at least 14 injured, including two security personnel. JuA, an offshoot faction of TTP, claimed responsibility for the attack. Over the course of the year, the Pakistani Counter Terrorism Department carried out twelve reported raids on known TTP bases across the provinces of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Punjab, and Sindh. Overall, the raids resulted in the death of seven Pakistani soldiers, 33 militants, and one civilian as well as the arrest of eight militants.

The raid with the highest death toll took place on March 18 in the town of Dattakhel, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, when soldiers entered the hideout of the Hafiz Gul Bahadar group, a faction of the Pakistani Taliban. Seven members of the militant group and four Pakistani soldiers were killed in the crossfire and a cache of arms, ammunition, and IEDs belonging to the group were seized. In a similar joint operation of the Pakistani Special Investigation Unit and the US Central Intelligence Agency on April 20 in the Gulistan-e-Johar neighborhood of Karachi, Sindh, security forces arrested four militants belonging to al-Qaeda. They also seized weapons belonging to the group including detonators, remote controls, IEDs, hand grenades, and assault rifles.

On January 11, TTP member Ehsanullah Ehsan, responsible for the 2012 shooting of Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace laureate and female activist, as well as for the Peshawar school attack in 2014, escaped from house arrest. Further, on August 17, TTP announced that its splinter group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar rejoined the main group after six years. On April 20, Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Authority reported to have removed approx. 1,800 names from its terrorist watch list this year. In 2018 the list had contained some 7,600 names, which was reduced to approx. 3,800 in 2020. stv

PAKISTAN (PASHTUNS / PTM)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2018**

Conflict parties: Pashtuns, PTM vs. Government

Conflict items: autonomy

The violent crisis over autonomy between Pashtuns, organized in the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) and supported by Afghanistan, and the government continued.

On January 27, police forces detained PTM leader Manzoor Pashteen in Peshawar, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, on charges including sedition, hate speech, and criminal

conspiracy. The following day, thousands protested against Pashteen’s arrest in the capital Islamabad and in the provinces of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. Afghanistan’s President Ashraf Ghani stated concerns over the detention, in what Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry called “unwarranted” comments. A court ordered Pashteen’s release on February 15, which was realized ten days later.

On April 17, police forces detained PTM leader Sardar Arif Wazir in Peshawar after he had allegedly made “anti-Pakistan” statements during a speech in Afghanistan. He was released on bail on April 30. Two days later, unidentified gunmen shot and critically injured Wazir in Wanna, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. He died in hospital the next day. Thousands across the country protested against the murder on May 5, with the main protest taking place in Wanna.

Police forces detained PTM leader Mohsin Dawar at the airport of Quetta, Balochistan province, on October 25. Dozens of PTM activists staged a sit-in to protest the detainment.

On November 30, Pakistan Frontier Corps forces shot at Pashtun civilians at a border crossing point in Chaman, Balochistan, killing one and injuring six others. This sparked the protests of several hundred Pashtuns in Quetta the next day. PTM organized a rally in Karachi, Sindh, to commemorate the Peshawar school shooting [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)], which had taken place on December 6 six years ago. Among the speakers at the rally was PTM leader Ali Wazir, who was subsequently detained by police in Peshawar on December 16 on charges of hate speech and criminal conspiracy, among others. Two days later, several hundred Pashtuns protested against the detainment across the country. In the aftermath of the protests, police also detained two other PTM leaders on the same charges as Wazir. [hen](#)

PAKISTAN (SINDH)

Intensity: **3** | Change: ↗ | Start: **1947**

Conflict parties: Mohajirs, MQM vs. Balochs, PPP, Sindhis vs. ANP, government, Pashtuns vs. Government

Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance, resources

The non-violent crisis over secession of Sindhudesh, resources, and subnational predominance between the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) and different ethnic groups and their affiliated political parties, namely Mohajirs and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), on the one hand and Balochs, Sindhis, and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on the other hand, and the government, escalated to a violent crisis. The SRA, a newly founded Sindhi separatist group, carried out several attacks in Sindh province throughout the year, in which at least ten people were killed and at least 61 injured. For example, on June 10, the group carried out two separate attacks in Karachi city. In the first attack in Gulistan-e-Johar Town, a grenade explosion targeting a police vehicle killed two police officers and injured five. In the second attack, an IED explosion killed one police officer and injured two at a checkpoint in Malir Town. Moreover, on August 5, the SRA attacked a rally against actions of the Indian government in Kashmir [→ India (Kashmir)] in Karachi with grenades, killing one protester and injuring 38. The government added the SRA to the list of banned organizations on May 11.

On August 2, a consortium of four Baloch organizations called Baloch Raji Ajoi Sangar (BRAS) announced an alliance with

the SRA. Among the members was the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), which demanded greater autonomy for the Balochistan region [→ Pakistan (Balochistan)] and was known for opposing Chinese investments. Opposition against Chinese influence in Sindh was also a key demand of the SRA.

The rivalries between various ethnic groups and their respective political parties continued. For instance, on September 24, MQM held a rally in Karachi, accusing the PPP government in Sindh of neglecting urban centers in the region with their policies and demanding a separate province comprising the urban parts of Sindh. In response, the PPP staged a protest on October 4 in Karachi.

Furthermore, security agencies attacked protests by Sindhi political organizations. On June 27, MQM supporters and various Sindhi groups protested together in Karachi against alleged enforced disappearances of political activists by federal security agencies in Sindh. [lih](#)

PAPUA NEW GUINEA (TRIBAL TENSIONS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1975**

Conflict parties: Okiru vs. Miape vs. Toria, various other tribes vs. Herebe

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources, such as arable land, between various tribes, such as the Okiru and the Miape, continued.


Over the course of the year, clashes involving different tribes in the provinces Enga, Eastern Highlands, Hela, Jiwaka, Southern Highlands, and Western Highlands left at least 30 people dead and nine injured.

For instance, on March 11, Okiru tribesmen ambushed Miape tribe members in their traditional hunting grounds near Suyan village close to Pogera township, Enga, leaving at least ten people dead and one injured, primarily women and children. The police chief inspector described the attack as a retaliation, linked to the July 2019 killings in Karita village, Hela. These caught national attention due to the unusual targeting of women and children. In response, the UN strongly condemned the attack in Enga and called for immediate intervention.

After a successful mediation in 2018, tensions between Toria and Herebe tribe members escalated again in neighboring Hela, when Herebe crossed the allegedly agreed upon border between their tribes in late July. Subsequently, Toria shot at the Herebe, leaving one dead. Three days later, Herebe killed a Toria, reportedly in retaliation. The day after, Toria killed another Herebe, reportedly again in retaliation. Several days later, Herebe entered Toria-controlled territory and attacked tribe members, leaving three dead and two injured.

Despite ongoing clashes, several peace ceremonies between rival tribes were conducted, ending previous conflicts in Western and Southern Highlands. After renewed clashes over the Gumanch coffee plantation had erupted in early 2019, Kimka and Rolgoka representatives signed a ceasefire agreement on May 27. Another peace agreement was signed by representatives of the Anagerepa and Bela-Yamola tribes on June 13 in Sumi village, Kagua-Erave district, Southern Highlands. Previously, both tribes had clashed over sorcery allegations in April 2019, leaving at least eleven people dead and hundreds internally displaced. [nro](#)

PHILIPPINES (BIFM, BIFF – GOVERNMENT)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **2008**

Conflict parties: BIFM, BIFF vs. government
 Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance

The limited war over subnational predominance and secession of Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) between the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), on the one hand, and the government, supported by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis.


Throughout the year, the fighting was concentrated in BARMM and SOCCSKSARGEN region. In total, frequent clashes killed at least 72 persons, including 60 BIFF members, and injured 62, while displacing more than 230 civilians. Nevertheless, in light of expanding de-radicalization programs and ongoing local peace talks, at least 235 BIFF militants voluntarily surrendered to the government.

Over the course of the year, BIFF and government forces violently clashed in BARMM. For instance, in clashes between March 1 and 8, at least 14 BIFF members and four soldiers were killed, while at least another 23 combatants on both sides were injured in Maguindanao province. The army allegedly targeted the militants with airstrikes combined with ground operations. Furthermore, more than 230 civilians were displaced. On May 4, BIFF militants killed two army soldiers and injured another at a community quarantine checkpoint in the municipality of Datu Hoffer Ampatuan, Maguindanao. BIFF militants and government forces clashed again at community quarantine checkpoints in Rajah Buayan and Mamasapano, Maguindanao, on May 22 and 23, resulting in the death of three BIFF members. On June 30, government forces killed four BIFF members in the municipality of Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao. On July 29, BIFF members clashed with government forces in the municipality of Datu Salibo, Maguindanao. As a result, 15 BIFF members and two soldiers were killed, while another eight BIFF members and 13 soldiers were injured. On December 9, the army repelled a BIFF attack in Shariff Aguak, deploying tanks as well as orchestrating artillery fire against the militants.

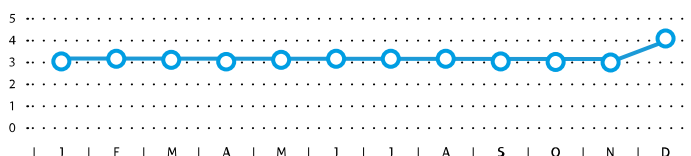
Moreover, the government accused BIFF of using IEDs in Maguindanao. For example, an IED explosion, allegedly linked to BIFF, left one police officer and a civilian dead, as well as four police officers injured on July 9 in Shariff Aguak. On another occasion, on September 18, an IED explosion destroyed a marine vehicle, killing one soldier and injuring four others in Datu Hofer Ampatuan.

In the second half of the year, violent incidents grew more frequent in SOCCSKSARGEN. In Lambayong municipality, Sultan Kudarat province, government forces killed six BIFF militants and injured five in a clash on June 4. Nine days later, army forces killed one BIFF member and arrested five others in the municipality of Midsayap, Cotabato province. From August 8 to 10, government and police forces killed four BIFF members in operations in Polomok, South Cotabato province. On November 13, security forces killed six BIFF members in a gunfight in South Cotabato, during which two police officers were also injured. jlk, gko, kmk, jwl

PHILIPPINES (CPP, NPA)

Intensity: **4** | Change:  | Start: **1968**

Conflict parties: CPP, NPA vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology



The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, escalated to a limited war. Throughout the year, at least 247 were killed and 71 injured compared to less than 190 in 2019. Of those killed in 2020, a minimum of 201 can be attributed to the NPA, followed by 34 who belonged either to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), its irregular auxiliary force the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit or the Philippine National Police. At least twelve civilians were also killed, mostly through executions. As a consequence of several clashes, approx. 3,000 people were internally displaced. In many instances alleged NPA militants were arrested or surrendered.

As in previous years, AFP and NPA members clashed continuously and all over the Philippines. Fighting was mostly focused on the southern regions of the Philippines, notably Caraga, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Bicol, and SOCCSKARGEN. Due to Covid-19, President Rodrigo Duterte announced a unilateral ceasefire from March 19 to April 15 which the NPA extended until April 30. Both sides accused each other of violating the agreed ceasefire.

Clashes followed mostly in the wake of military operations by the AFP and were usually on a low intensity. For instance, on January 31, three NPA militants were killed after troops from the 37th Infantry Battalion encountered approx. 20 NPA militants during an operation in Sitio Sinuksok, Sultan Kudarat province, SOCCSKARGEN. The NPA conducted attacks and ambushes throughout the year. For instance, on October 17, one AFP member was killed and three wounded during an ambush by NPA militants at a remote village near Oas town, Albay province, Bicol. The NPA also conducted several executions of former NPA militants or individuals suspected to collaborate with government forces. For instance, on March 19, one tribal chieftain and another member of the Manobo tribe, who allegedly declared NPA militants as persona non grata, were killed with stabbing weapons following the attack of more than 20 NPA militants in the town of San Miguel, Surigao del Sur province, Caraga.

In its largest scale attack of the year, about 800 AFP troops of the 401st Infantry “Unite “N Fight” Brigade conducted operations between May 14 and 19, killing 13 NPA militants, to overcome an NPA stronghold in Andap Valley, Surigao del Sur. In at least two instances the AFP deployed heavy weapons to fight the NPA. On June 26, the AFP engaged NPA militants in a gunfight and were at a later stage supported by Philippine Air Force attack helicopters in Arakan town, North Cotabato province, SOCCSKARGEN. During the clash, four NPA militants were killed and more than 200 families of the local population fled the fights. On December 25, the AFP was supported by a Philippine Air Force FA-50 fighter jet who dropped six bombs on an NPA base camp in the

Philippines (CPP, NPA)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December



hinterlands of Daguma Range, Sultan Kudarat, killing ten to 13 NPA militants.

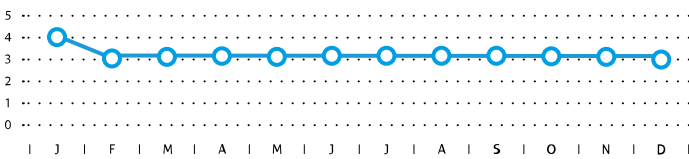
In a break of tradition, there was no bilateral ceasefire declared at the end of December. Throughout the year, the AFP reaffirmed Duterte’s goal to “destroy” the NPA movement before the end of his term in 2022. pen

PHILIPPINES (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **•** | Start: **1991**

Conflict parties: Abu Sayyaf, Maute et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology



The limited war over ideology and the political system between various Islamist militant groups, such as Abu Sayyaf (ASG) and Maute, sometimes also called Dawlah Islamiyah, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Over the course of the year, at least 141 people were killed and more than 160 were injured. Of these, at least 119 people, among them 78 ASG members, were killed in clashes and attacks involving ASG.

Throughout the year, clashes between ASG and the Philippine Armed Forces (AFP) concentrated mostly in the Bangasamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and to a lesser extent in Zamboanga Peninsula region.

In the BARMM, the military continued its offensives against ASG, using heavy weaponry on several occasions. For instance, on February 23, it attacked ASG strongholds near the village Bakong, Patikul, Sulu province, from helicopters with air-to-surface missiles, and orchestrated mortar fire, leaving two ASG dead and two soldiers wounded. On April 17, ASG clashed with AFP in Patikul town, killing at least eleven soldiers, and injuring 14. The AFP was conducting search operations for ASG regional leader Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, who was responsible for the 01/27/19 suicide attacks in Jolo which killed 23 people. Five days later, in a second clash between AFP and ASG in the same area, six ASG members were killed and eight soldiers injured. On July 6, five ASG members were killed and two soldiers and Sawadjaan wounded during a clash in Patikul. Sawadjaan died later as a result of this encounter. On August 24, one ASG member, after first detonating a bomb separately, detonated her suicide bomb an hour later, killing 15 people, including seven soldiers, six civilians, and a policeman, while injuring at least 75 in Jolo, Sulu. Allegedly, this was an act of revenge for the attack on Sawadjaan. On November 3, the Joint Task Force Sulu killed seven ASG members belonging to a kidnap-for-ransom group during an alleged kidnap operation on the coast of Parang, Sulu.

On the Zamboanga Peninsula, AFP and ASG clashed on seven occasions in total, three of them in September, and two each in November and December. In total, eleven ASG members were killed while at least four soldiers and three civilians were wounded. On September 6, the AFP clashed with the ASG around high-ranking ASG leader Furuji Indama in Zamboanga Sibugay province, leaving one ASG member dead. The group was suspected of attempted abductions. Three days later, the AFP launched an offensive against the same

group, engaging in a gun battle and using combat helicopters, killing five ASG members in the process, among them Indama, while two soldiers were injured. In addition, at least three civilians and two other soldiers were injured in the clashes between September 6 and 9.

Throughout the year, ASG abducted at least nine people to demand ransom. Seven, three of them abducted in 2019, were later freed and one was killed during an attempt by government forces to free him. On October 29, during a clearing operation following a gunfight between ASG and the military, one abducted Indonesian fisherman was found dead in Patikul. One ASG was also killed during the clash.

Maute was mostly active in South Cotabato province, SOCCSKSARGEN, and Lanao del Sur province, BARMM. Throughout the year, 22 people were killed in several small clashes with government forces, among them 18 Maute affiliates. For instance, joint government forces killed six Maute members in the biggest encounter of the year, and two police officers were wounded, in Polomolok, South Cotabato, on November 13. jlk, kmk, pen

PHILIPPINES (MILF – MNLF)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2009**

Conflict parties: MILF vs. MNLF


Conflict items: subnational predominance

The non-violent crisis over subnational predominance between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) escalated to a violent crisis. Over the course of the year, the general absence of violence was contrasted with isolated attacks between family clans affiliated either to the MILF or the MNLF. The clashes mainly occurred during one weekend in mid-May and were confined to the municipalities of Pikit and Matalam, Cotabato province, SOCCSKSARGEN. The Independent Decommissioning Body resumed phase II of the decommissioning of up to 40,000 MILF members on February 18. Each former combatant benefits from socio-economic assistance and can enroll in governmental livelihood projects.

One family feud over land control – typically referred to as rido – escalated when MILF members killed Norodin Ambel, son of the chairman of the MNLF, and wounded six others in Matalam, Cotabato on April 30. One week later, a MILF clan led by Naig Naga and a MNLF clan led by Dima Ambel engaged in gunfights over the course of the weekend in Pikit and Matalam and in nearby towns. The fights allegedly resulted in more than a hundred casualties and in the looting and razing of more than 30 houses. The Municipal Social Welfare & Development Office of Pikit reported 4,574 displaced individuals. The Naga and Ambel fractions have been at odds for decades, fighting over large areas of agricultural lands situated on the border of Pikit and Pagalungan, Maguindanao. On May 13, a peace deal between the two fractions was signed in Carmen, Cotabato. The deal, which was mediated by the 602nd Infantry Brigade, obliges the fractions to stay in their respective areas and to avoid the display of guns as well as the issuing of provocative statements. It was also agreed that approx. 1,000 displaced families could return home. Moreover, the MILF have arrested those responsible for the killing of Norodin Ambel and have announced further investigation. On June 21, in a separate incident, MNLF members allegedly wounded a MILF member in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. Major clashes between the two fractions had come to a halt

in February 2019 following the creation of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), a regional interim government paving the way for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region with upcoming elections in 2022. The BTA includes both MILF and MNLF members. [jwl](#)

PHILIPPINES (MILF)

Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **1977**

Conflict parties: MILF vs. government
 Conflict items: autonomy, system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government over autonomy of the so-called Bangsamoro Republik, as well as over the orientation of the political system and resources, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.


This year, the decommissioning of former MILF combatants continued. The final Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro between MILF and the government foresees the decommissioning and resocialization of the armed wing of MILF, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces. According to the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, 70 percent of the combatants have already been commissioned and the remaining 30 percent will be decommissioned by 2022. In December, more than 64 former combatants completed vocational training which was the first of the decommissioning group of 12,000 former combatants.

On February 2, President Rodrigo Duterte named the son of MILF founder Salamat Hashim as a minister for the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA). The number of ministers of the BTA reached 80, of whom 41 belonged to MILF and 39 had been selected by Duterte.

On February 24, security forces arrested and disarmed 38 members of the MILF 118 Basher Unit based in Maguindanao province at a checkpoint in Bukidnon province, Northern Mindanao region. The MILF members were believed to be on their way to prevent the arrest of a member who had been involved in a shooting in 2019.

In November, the Chief Minister of BARMM region stated that the peace process was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. In November, this led the BTA to request an extension of the transition phase to three years, which was supported by Duterte. In December, two congressmen filed bills seeking to postpone the elections to May 2025, while another sought a postponement until May 2028. [aya](#)

PHILIPPINES (MNLF)

Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **1969**

Conflict parties: MNLF vs. government
 Conflict items: secession, system/ideology, resources

The non-violent crisis over ideology, resources, and secession of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Republic of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the government continued.


No clashes were reported this year. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) praised the MNLF for its support and coop-

eration in the peace effort in the southern Philippines. On August 14, police officers from the Davao City Police Office arrested Abu Sayyaf Leader, Anduljihad ‘Idang’ Susukan, in Davao City, Davao region, in the residence of MNLF faction chief Nur Misuari [[→ Philippines \(Islamist militant groups\)](#)]. According to the Police Office, Misuari facilitated the negotiation. The AFP and the Philippine National Police stated on August 17 that it was up to the courts to decide whether Misuari was accountable for allegedly harboring Susukan. Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said it was highly unlikely that Misuari would be convicted as he had not harbored Susukan and cooperated with the police.

In late August, concerns were raised by the media that ex-Abu Sayyaf combatants were joining MNLF fractions which might be harmful to the peace process.

On November 26, the newly elected MNLF faction chairman Datu Muslimin Sema stated that the MNLF favored the request of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority for an extension of the transition phase and pledged full support to the peace effort. [aya](#)

SRI LANKA (INTER-RELIGIOUS TENSIONS)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1948**

Conflict parties: Sinhalese Buddhists vs. Muslims vs. Christians vs. Hindus
 Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between several religious groups, such as Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and Hindus, continued.

As in previous years, Muslims continued to face discrimination. For instance, on March 9, an armed group arrived at a Muslim-run hotel, in Negombo town, Western Province. When staff refused to serve them alcohol, the group stabbed employees, leaving one person dead and two injured. The police subsequently arrested two suspects. Furthermore, on May 25, police officers and civilians assaulted and injured a Muslim civilian in Aluthgama town, Western Province. The police subsequently suspended three officers for neglecting their duties. On March 27, the UNHRC published a report indicating continued patterns of violence and discrimination against Muslims. For instance, the report criticised the government for making cremations compulsory Covid-19 victims, which contradicts the Islamic tradition of burying the dead.

Christians were also continued subjects of assault by Buddhists and Hindus. On February 2, a group of 150 individuals, led by three Buddhist monks, ambushed a group of Christians as they were leaving Ihala Yakkura village, North Central province. Three Christians were injured in the ensuing clash. Later in the year, on July 19, a group of 45 people, led by Hindu leaders, disrupted a Christian service in Kommanthurai, Eastern province. The group assaulted the pastor and his family, and also damaged property. On August 8, 50 Hindu villagers furthermore disrupted a Christian funeral in the Palliyadithona area, demanding that the ceremony follow Hindu rites. An unidentified group of radicals attacked and destroyed a church near China Bay, Eastern province, on October 5. About two weeks later, on October 18, a Sri Lankan pastor shut down his church in Bakamuna, North Central Province, after receiving threats of violence from Buddhist monks. [ewo](#)

THAILAND (ISLAMIST SEPARATISTS / SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1902**

Conflict parties: BRN, PULO vs. government

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

The violent conflict over ideology and secession of several southern border provinces between various Islamist separatists, such as Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) and Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, violent encounters specifically affected the southern provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and Songkhla. Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani extended the Emergency Decree on Public Administration for the 61st time in an Emergency Situation due to Covid-19, effective as of September 11. The decree enables the Thai government to impose curfews, detain suspects without charge and ban public gatherings.

On January 21, the government and the BRN entered into a first round of formal peace talks in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The meeting was followed up by a second round on March 2 and did not result in a peace agreement. The crisis in the southern border provinces continued at a violent level. Despite a ceasefire being declared by the BRN on April 3 due to Covid-19, at least 38 people were killed and 58 injured in related fighting throughout the year.

Militant groups carried out numerous attacks, primarily targeting security personnel. For instance, on January 12, insurgents attacked a defense volunteer outpost in Sukhirin District, Narathiwat, using firearms and injured two. In the same district, on March 6, militants killed one police officer and injured two in a shooting and firebomb attack. On March 17, separatists placed a car bomb and an IED in front of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre in Muang district, Yala, injuring at least 18, including security personnel and civilians.

Islamist separatists conducted several attacks using drive-by shootings. On May 3, gunmen with suspected separatist affiliation killed two soldiers in Sai Buri, Pattani. On July 3, two insurgents on a motorcycle attacked a security base at Ban Joh Nam Sai, southern Narathiwat, using machine guns. Insurgent groups also conducted several attacks using IEDs. Between July 14 and 15, insurgents detonated two remote-controlled bombs in the southern Pattani districts of Mae Lan and Bang Maruad, killing one soldier and injuring ten people including four civilians. On October 1, BRN militants killed one soldier and injured six others with a roadside bomb in Thepha district, Songkhla. On December 7, one soldier was shot multiple times and killed by insurgents near Koke Pho district, Pattani.

Thai security forces also conducted multiple operations against insurgent groups. On February 23, Thai security forces killed five suspected insurgents, who were reported to be responsible for the attack on a security outpost on January 12. On March 17, government forces killed three militants during a military operation in Muang district, Yala. Between August 14 and 18, the Thai army and the BRN clashed several times in Yarang district, Pattani, leaving nine insurgents dead and three soldiers wounded. kbu

THAILAND (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: ↑ | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: FFP, Liberation Youth vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The dispute over national power and the political system between a coalition of political opposition groups, including the Future Forward Party (FFP) and the Liberation Youth group, on the one hand and the coalition government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, supported by the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTAF), on the other, escalated to a violent crisis.

On February 21, following a lawsuit filed by the Election Commission of Thailand, the Constitutional Court ordered the dissolution of the FFP for reportedly violating the laws governing the use of loans by political parties. The ruling occurred only one month after Thailand's Constitutional Court had acquitted the FFP and its leader, Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, of conspiring to overthrow the monarchy on January 21.

Throughout the year, the government witnessed the largest protests since 2014. On January 12, more than 13,000 protesters joined the "Run Against Dictatorship" in Bangkok to demand democratic rights and Prayut's resignation. After the government enacted a declaration of emergency powers on March 24, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic that limited public gatherings, protests resumed on July 18 in Bangkok, when approx. 2,500 people protested against the government.

On August 16, approx. 10,000 protesters demonstrated against the government in Bangkok. On August 22, seven prominent members of the Liberation Youth group were arrested in Bangkok on charges including sedition and inciting public unrest. On October 14, the government banned gatherings of five or more people under an emergency decree due to Covid-19. The decree was revoked a few days later after the ban had caused protests of up to 20,000 people in Bangkok and other cities on October 17. On November 17, at least 40 protesters were injured by gunshots and tear gas in clashes with police forces in Bangkok. By December 20, at least 35 activists had been charged under the royal defamation law. kbu

VIETNAM (MONTAGNARDS)

Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **1958**

Conflict parties: Montagnards vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy, system/ideology

The dispute over ideology and autonomy between the ethnic and religious Montagnard minority and the government continued.

The Montagnards, a collective of ethnic groups residing in Vietnam's Central Highlands, have been historically subject to threats, harassment, and detention by other communities and the government.

Human Rights Watch affirmed that the Vietnamese government continued restricting basic civil and political rights of the Montagnards, including freedom of religion, expression, and assembly.

On March 18, a local Vietnamese court sentenced two Hmong

men to life in prison for attempting to establish a separate state in a rural area of northwestern Vietnam in Dien Bien province between 2018 and 2019. The next day, security forces detained three leaders of Ha Mon, a branch of the Montagnards, who had been wanted by security forces for eight years.

Vietnam continued to lead dialog about the human rights situation with the EU and USA, but without making headway. ebr

VIETNAM (SOCIOECONOMIC PROTESTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1986**

Conflict parties: factory workers, peasants, other civilians vs. manufacturing companies, government

Conflict items: resources, other

The non-violent crisis over natural resources, land allocation, industrial pollution, and working conditions between peasants, factory workers, and other civilians, on the one hand, and the government as well as manufacturing companies, on the other, escalated to a violent conflict. Land confiscations, strikes, and restrictions on freedom of expression continued throughout the year.

Land grabbing triggered violent clashes. On January 9, in Dong Tam province, civilians protested against land grabbing by the government, using petrol bombs, hand grenades,

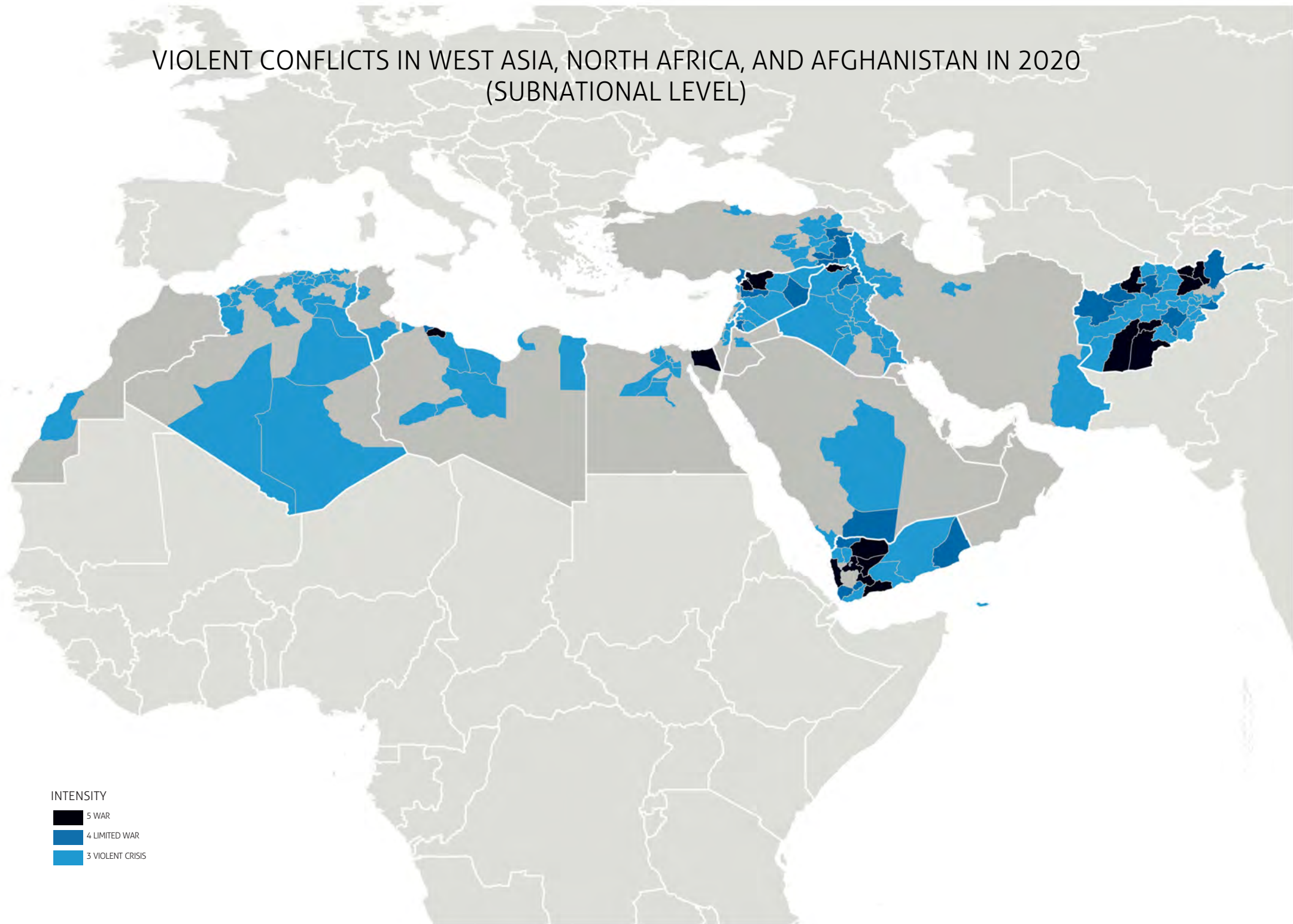
and knives, killing three police officers. In turn, police responded with pepper spray and explosive charges, killing one protester. Of the five protesters arrested, three received long prison sentences and two were sentenced to death in September. This clash became a heavily contested domestic issue. On April 27, a civilian was sentenced to 18 months in prison for posting on social media about the Dong Tam clash by the Ninh Kieu District People's Court in Can Tho City. On May 11, a violent clash occurred between local police forces, using construction vehicles, tear gas, and batons, and approx. 100 Khmer Krom farmers over an attempt to confiscate a territory in Kien Giang province. In another clash on June 9, Police injured ten Khmer Krom Farmers and arrested six.

In urban areas, strikes and protests took place despite Covid-19 restrictions imposed by the government. On February 18, 5,000 Vietnamese factory workers organized a strike in Thanh Liem District, Ha Nam Province. On March 16, protesters blocked access to a waste-processing plant due to the dumping of polluting waste in local fields. Police confronted the group and arrested 20 people. Similarly, on June 1, 10,000 workers in Tan Uyen town, Binh Duong province, organized a strike to protest mass lay-offs. Police arrested four protesters and injured one with a stun gun.

The government continued to limit freedom of expression notably intensifying its crackdown on activists and advocates of free press in preparation for the Communist Party's 13th party congress. On November 6, the Minister of Information and Communication revealed that a Code of Conduct for social media platforms was in development. As of December 2020, the code had not come into effect. ebr

WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN

VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN IN 2020 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)



INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the region West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan, HIIK observed a total of 61 active conflicts in 2020, an increase of one compared to the previous year. Overall, 38 conflicts were on a violent level, four more than last year. Compared to 2019, West Asia, North Africa and Afghanistan lost its status as the region with the highest number of full-scale wars. Five full-scale wars retained their intensity, while two wars de-escalated and one violent crisis escalated to a war. Moreover, four limited wars de-escalated to violent crises. Altogether, seven full-scale wars and one limited war were observed in 2020.

In Afghanistan, the ongoing conflicts between the government and the so-called Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)] and even more so between the government and the Taliban [→ Afghanistan, USA (Taliban et al.)] remained major threats to public safety. ISKP conducted various attacks targeting primarily civilians, government institutions, and officials. On February 29, the Taliban and the US government signed the "Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan" in Doha, Qatar. Among other things, the agreement stipulated the withdrawal of all US and their coalition partners' personnel stationed in Afghanistan within 14 months. In addition, the Taliban agreed upon an intra-Afghan dialog and negotiations with the government on a comprehensive ceasefire. Despite the agreement, violence in Afghanistan continued on a very high level and intensified even further after the Afghan government and the Taliban had started peace negotiations in September. Particularly noteworthy was the increase of targeted attacks carried out against government employees, journalists, and human rights activists.

In Iran, tensions with the US peaked in early January when a US drone strike killed Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps major general and Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani in Iraq's capital Baghdad [→ Iran – USA]. Shortly thereafter, the Iranian government abandoned all limitations on uranium enrichment originally imposed by the JCPOA in 2015. In response, the US government tightened sanctions against Iran.

Similarly, the conflict between Iran and Israel was marked by the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, brigadier general in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corp and lead scientist for the Iranian nuclear program, in the town of Absard, Tehran Province, in November [→ Iran – Israel]. While the question of responsibility for the attack remained unresolved, Iran accused Israel of conducting the assassination. Throughout the year, Israel repeatedly carried out airstrikes against Iranian-backed militants in Syria. Israel and Iran were targeted by cyberattacks from unknown entities. Furthermore, for the first time Iran confirmed its arms support to Palestinian militant groups.

In Iraq, the targeted killings of Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces, by a US drone strike [→ Iran – USA] sparked extensive protests, significantly adding to calls for the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq to the previously mostly socio-economic demands. Nonetheless, the limited war over the orientation of the political system and national power, including issues such as the country's sectarian system and elite corruption, between opposition groups and the government de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ Iraq (opposition)]. On May 6, Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi assumed office, reducing violent crackdowns against protesters and initiating the disarmament of militia groups. However, unidentified militia groups attacked the US embassy and US military facilities using rockets on several occasions throughout the year [→ Iraq (Shiite militant groups)]. Tensions also persisted between some militia groups and the government. In Iraqi Kurdistan, protests against the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) over corruption and mismanagement that had started in 2011 within the Arab Spring, flared up again and escalated to a violent crisis in December [→ Iraq (KRG – opposition)].

The Turkish Armed Forces launched several operations against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), conducting repeated airstrikes and ground attacks in both Iraq and Turkey. For instance, the cross-border operations Claw-Tiger and Claw-Eagle allegedly destroyed over 500 PKK hideouts and killed at least 337 PKK fighters in northern Iraq [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK)].

In Syria, most violent conflicts de-escalated, except for the ongoing war between various opposition groups and the government. The government backed by Russia continued to make territorial gains and in some cases clashed with Turkish troops, mostly in southern Idlib. After Turkey and Russia agreed on a ceasefire in Idlib on March 5, joint Russian-Turkish patrols along the strategic M4 and M5 highways led to relative calm [→ Syria (opposition)]. The inter-oppositional rivalry between the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and various Islamist groups and coalitions de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)]. Similarly, the war between Turkish-backed Syrian opposition groups and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northern Syria near the Turkish border de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ Syria (Turkey – SDF / northern Syria)]. The war between IS and the government continued. IS was not able to recapture any territory in Syria and remained confined to the Governorate of Deir ez-Zor. However, its sleeper cells continued attacking government, militia, and civilian targets [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

In Libya, the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA) under General Khalifa Haftar seized control of the coastal city of Sirte, on January 6. However, on January 19, all Libyan and foreign actors involved in the conflict met at the Berlin Conference to discuss a de-escalation plan for the ongoing conflict. As a result, all stakeholders committed to support UN-backed peace talks between the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the LNA. During the second half of the year, on June 4, the GNA regained full control of Tripoli, the capital of Libya. The GNA and LNA signed a ceasefire deal, agreeing to the demobilization of various armed groups and the withdrawal of their troops from the frontlines on October 23 [→ Libya (opposition)]. Moreover, various tribal and ethnic groups continued to clash over the control of trafficking routes and resources, such as oil, specifically in Murzuq district and Wadi al Hayat district [→ Libya (inter-tribal rivalry)].

In Algeria, the Hirak continued to denounce the ruling regime and its attempts at reform [→ Algeria (opposition)]. Protests were halted over the summer due to the Covid-19 pandemic but resumed in light of the highly contested constitutional referendum in November. With a strong presence of government troops, the activity of militant Islamists in the country was heavily restricted. IS and AQIM both claimed only one attack respectively.

In Tunisia, opposition protests centered around the country's deteriorating socioeconomic condition continued as a violent crisis [→ Tunisia (opposition)]. Several people self-immolated in protest and security forces clashed with protesters demanding jobs in Tataouine city.

In Morocco, the opposition conflict de-escalated to a non-violent crisis [→ Morocco (opposition)], while security forces

WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN

successfully contained Islamist activities. However, the conflict between POLISARIO and the Moroccan government over the secession of Western Sahara escalated to a violent crisis [→ Morocco (POLISARIO / Western Sahara^o)]. Sparked by Sahrawis protesting the Guerguerat border crossing in October, POLISARIO and the Moroccan army engaged in combat using anti-tank weaponry and artillery throughout the rest of the year. No casualties were confirmed. As a result of the confrontation, POLISARIO ended their commitment to the 1991 ceasefire agreement.

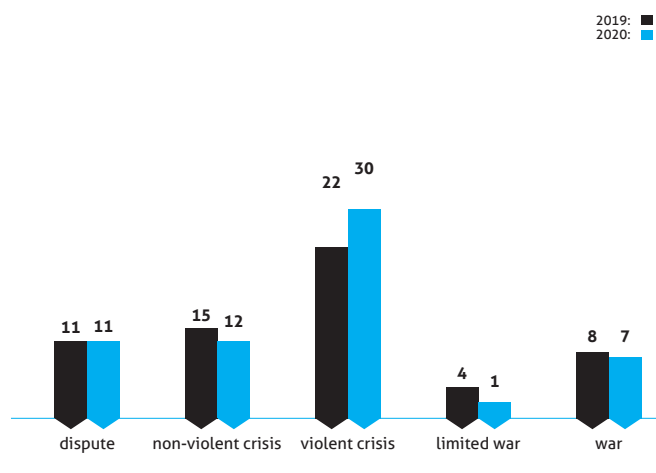
In Egypt, the war between the government and militant groups on the Sinai Peninsula de-escalated to a limited war [→ Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)]. The conflict overlapped with the fight against the local IS affiliate Sinai province, operating in the same area. IS militants continued to attack civilians frequently and to clash with the Egyptian Armed Forces and the Egyptian National Police [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. In the rest of the country, security forces violently cracked down on various opposition groups and protesters, who had publicly addressed the issues of forced disappearances, police brutality, and the lack of freedom of speech. Security forces broke up several protests and arrested thousands of civilians [→ Egypt (opposition)].

The violent crisis between the Palestinian National Authority and Palestinian protesters on the one hand, and the Israeli government as well as Israeli settler movements on the other, continued [→ Israel – State of Palestine^o (PNA)]. Palestinian protests took place in the West Bank, following the release of US President Donald Trump's peace plan for the middle eastern conflict. Clashes with the Israel Defense Forces resulted in several deaths and injured persons. Also in the Gaza Strip, thousands of Palestinians took to the streets to protest against the peace plan. While the proposal was mostly welcomed by Israel, Hamas and other militant Islamist groups rejected it. Over the course of the year, both Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad deployed incendiary balloons and fired rockets from the Gaza Strip towards Israeli territory, whereas the Israel Defense Forces carried out airstrikes, targeting mainly Hamas. The conflict resulted in 31 deaths and over 900 displaced persons [→ Israel (Hamas et al.)].

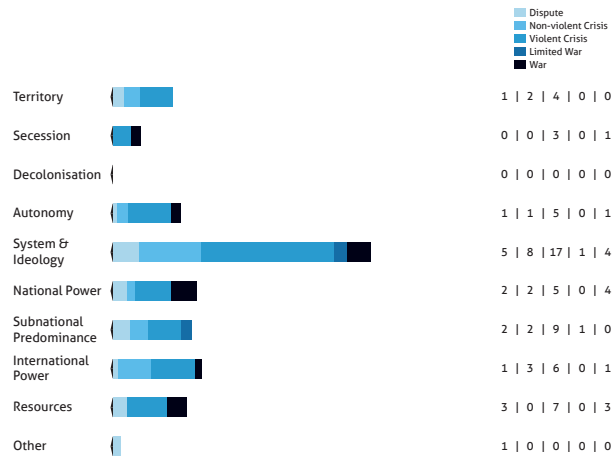
The non-violent crisis over ideology and territory between the Israeli government and Hezbollah escalated to a violent crisis. Throughout the year, Israeli forces carried out dozens of airstrikes on Lebanese and Syrian territory, while Hezbollah continued targeting Israeli security forces in Israel's Northern District [→ Israel (Hezbollah)].

In Yemen, the war over national power between the al-Houthi forces and the internationally recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi continued [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)]. Peace negotiations between Saudi Arabia and al-Houthi officials continued without results. However, air- and missile strikes by both conflict parties killed and injured hundreds of people throughout the year. UNOCHA suggested the war's total death toll had reached 230,000 by December 2020. Moreover, the violent crisis between al-Hirak and the government over the secession of southern Yemen escalated to a war [→ Yemen (al-Hirak / Southern Yemen)]. The year was marked by the withdrawal of both parties from the 2019 Riyadh Agreement only to resume discussions on the implementation of the agreement. This back and forth, however, changed by the end of the year with an agreement to form a new joint government, which Hadi announced on December 18. Half the new cabinet were ministers associated with the Southern Transitional Council. The conflict was also marked by multiple violent clashes, which took place mainly in the governorate of Abyan and intensified throughout the year, resulting in at least 350 deaths. Furthermore the violent crisis over ideology and subnational predominance between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its local arm Ansar al-Sharia on the one hand, and the al-Houthi forces on the other, continued [→ Yemen (AQAP – al-Houthi forces)]. On August 19, for instance, al-Houthi claimed victory in al-Bayda Governorate and reported the killing of 250 AQAP and IS members. IS and AQAP militants also continued to fight each other repeatedly in al-Bayda governorate [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

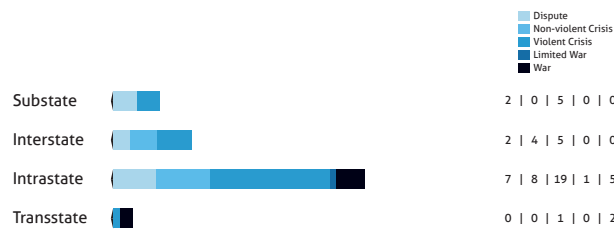
CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND AFGHANISTAN IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM
IN WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND AFGHANISTAN IN 2020



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE
IN WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND AFGHANISTAN IN 2020



WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN

Overview Conflicts in West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan in 2020

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Afghanistan (Kuchi Nomads – Hazara)*	Kuchi Nomads vs. Hazara	subnational predominance, resources	2007	↑	3
Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)	government vs. Taliban et al.	system/ideology, national power, resources	1994	•	5
Afghanistan – Pakistan	Afghanistan vs. Pakistan	territory, international power	1949	•	3
Algeria (Berbers / Kabylia)*	Berbers vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1963	•	2
Algeria (Malekites – Mozabites / Ghardaia)*	Malekites, Mozabites	subnational predominance	2013	END	1
Algeria (opposition)	Hirak movement, labour unions, opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	3
Bahrain (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1975	↘	2
Egypt (Bedouin activists)*	Bedouin activists vs. government	other	2004	END	1
Egypt (Christians – Muslims)*	Christians vs. Muslims	subnational predominance	1952	•	3
Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)	militant groups vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2011	↘	4
Egypt (opposition)	militant opposition groups, political opposition and activists vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1954	•	3
Egypt – Sudan*	Egypt vs. Sudan	territory, resources	1958	•	1
Iran (opposition)	intra-systemic opposition, non-systemic opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1993	•	3
Iran (PDKI et al.)	PDKI, various other Kurdish parties and groups vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1979	•	3
Iran (People's Mujahideen)*	PMOI vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1979	•	2
Iran (PJAK)*	PJAK vs. government	autonomy	1979	•	3
Iran (Sunni militant groups / Sistan Baluchistan)*	Ansar al-Furqan et al., Jaish al-Adl vs. government	autonomy	1979	•	3
Iran – Israel	Iran vs. Israel	system/ideology, international power	1979	•	3
Iran – Saudi Arabia*	Iran vs. Saudi Arabia	system/ideology, international power	1979	•	2
Iran – UAE*	Iran vs. UAE	territory	1971	↗	2
Iran – USA	USA vs. Iran	system/ideology, international power	1979	↗	3
Iraq (KRG – opposition)	KRG vs. opposition movement	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2011	NEW	3
Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government)*	Kurdistan Regional Government vs. government	autonomy, resources	1971	•	1
Iraq (opposition)	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	↘	3
Iraq (Shiite militant groups)	Badr Organization, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Saraya al-Salam vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2004	•	3
Israel (Hamas et al.)	Hamas, other Islamist militant groups, PIJ vs. government	secession, resources	1988	↘	3
Israel (Hezbollah)	Hezbollah vs. government	territory, system/ideology	1982	↗	3
Israel – Lebanon*	Israel, Lebanon	territory, international power	1948	↗	3
Israel – State of Palestine ^o (PNA)	Palestinian protesters, PNA vs. government, Israeli settlement movements	secession, system/ideology, resources	1948	•	3
Israel – Syria	Israel, Syria	territory, international power, resources	1948	•	3
Jordan (Hamas)*	Hamas vs. government	system/ideology	1994	END	1
Jordan (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	2011	•	3
Kuwait (Bedouins)*	Bedouins vs. government	other	1959	•	1
Kuwait (opposition)*	opposition movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	1
Lebanon (Fatah al-Islam et al.)*	Palestinian Islamist groups vs. government	system/ideology	2006	↘	1
Lebanon (inner-Palestinian tensions)	Ansar Allah et al. vs. al-Fatah vs. other Palestinian factions	subnational predominance	2006	↓	1

WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Lebanon (Sunni militant groups)*	Sunni militant groups vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2014	↗	3
Lebanon (Sunni – Alawite)*	Sunnis vs. Alawites	subnational predominance	1975	END	1
Libya (inter-tribal rivalry)	Tebu, Touareg vs. Awlad Suleiman, Zway	subnational predominance, resources	2012	↘	3
Libya (opposition)	GNA, HSC vs. LNA, HoR	system/ideology, national power, resources	2011	•	5
Mauritania (anti-slavery activists)*	IRA, opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	2015	•	2
Morocco (opposition)*	Justice and Spirituality, M20F, AMDH, labor rights activists, Hirak movement vs. government	system/ideology	2011	↘	2
Morocco (POLISARIO / Western Sahara ^o)	POLISARIO, Sahrawis vs. government	secession	1975	↗	3
Oman (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	2011	•	1
Qatar – Saudi Arabia et al.*	Qatar vs. Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates	international power	2017	•	1
Russia – Turkey*	Russia vs. Turkey	international power, resources	2015	↗	3
Saudi Arabia (opposition)	opposition vs. government	system/ideology	1992	↗	2
Saudi Arabia (Shiites)*	Shiites vs. government	system/ideology	1979	↘	1
Saudi Arabia, Yemen (AQAP)*	Saudi Arabia, USA, Yemen vs. AQAP	system/ideology	1990	•	3
State of Palestine ^o (Hamas – al-Fatah)*	al-Fatah vs. Hamas	subnational predominance	1994	•	2
State of Palestine ^o (Hamas – Salafi groups)*	Hamas vs. Salafist groups	subnational predominance	2007	↘	2
Syria (FSA, Islamist groups – KSC / Kurdish regions)*	FSA, Islamist groups vs. KSC, PYD, YPG	subnational predominance, resources	2012	END	1
Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)	FSA, HTS, various Islamist groups	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	2013	↘	3
Syria (Kurdish groups)	KDPS, PYD vs. government	autonomy, subnational predominance, resources	1962	↗	3
Syria (opposition)	NC, FSA, HTS vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	5
Syria (Turkey – SDF / Northern Syria)	SDF, YPG vs. Turkey, FSA	autonomy, subnational predominance	2018	↘	3
Syria – Turkey*	Syria vs. Turkey	territory, international power	1946	•	2
Syria – USA*	Syria vs. USA	system/ideology, international power	2003	•	2
Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)	IS vs. Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, France, Hezbollah et al., Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Syrian opposition groups, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA, Yemen	system/ideology, international power, resources	2014	•	5
Tunisia (opposition)	civil society groups, opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	2010	•	3
Turkey (Huda Par – PKK / Kurdish regions)*	Kurdish nationalists vs. PKK	system/ideology	2012	END	1
Turkey (opposition)*	Nation Alliance, HDP vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2013	•	1
Turkey (PKK, TAK)	PKK, TAK vs. government	autonomy	1978	•	5
Yemen (al-Hirak / Southern Yemen)	al-Hirak vs. government	secession	2007	↗	5
Yemen (AQAP – al-Houthi forces)	al-Houthi forces vs. Ansar al-Sharia, AQAP	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2010	•	3
Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)	al-Houthi forces vs. Saudi Arabia, Yemen	national power	2004	•	5

¹ Conflicts marked with * are without description

² Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

³ Change in intensity compared to the previous year: ↗ or ↘ escalation by one or more than one level of intensity; ↘ or ↙ deescalation by one or more than one level of intensity; • no change

⁴ Levels of intensity: 5 = war; 4 = limited war; 3 = violent crisis; 2 = non-violent crisis; 1 = dispute

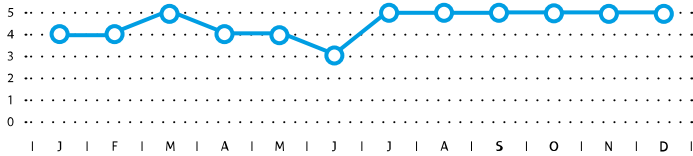
⁵ HIIK considers statehood to be non-contested if the state is an official UN members state.

Disputed statehood is marked with a ^o if a territory is recognized by at least one other official UN member state ("limited recognition")

AFGHANISTAN (TALIBAN ET AL.)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 1994

Conflict parties: government vs. Taliban et al.
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources



The war over national power, orientation of the political system, and resources, such as poppy, between the Taliban and various other Islamist militant groups, on the one hand, and the government, supported by the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission and especially the USA, on the other, continued.

Over the course of the year, UNAMA registered 8,820 civilian fatalities, of which 3,960 were attributed to the Taliban, 674 to Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), and 89 to international military forces. It was the lowest number of civilian fatalities since 2013. Even so, this year marked a significant increase in targeted killings of journalists and human rights activists, with a total of 23 persons killed, out of which 13 were gunned down.

Ending almost 1.5 years of peace negotiations between the Taliban and the US government, both sides signed the "Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan" on February 29 in Doha, Qatar. The agreement guaranteed a withdrawal within 14 months of all military forces of the US, its allies, and coalition partners, including non-diplomatic civilian personnel, private security contractors, trainers, advisors, and supporting services personnel located in Afghanistan. In addition, a prisoner exchange of 5,000 Taliban fighters for 1,000 pro-government forces was scheduled for March 10. In return, the Taliban made the commitment neither to pose a threat to US or allied forces nor to cooperate with any individual or group who would do so, such as al-Qaeda. Furthermore, they agreed upon an intra-Afghan dialog and negotiations with the government on a comprehensive ceasefire. In alignment with the agreement, the US reduced its troops in Afghanistan within 135 days from 12,000 to under 8,600. By the end of December only 4,000 US forces remained in the country. At the same time about 7,000 NATO troops from other nations were stationed in Afghanistan, outnumbering US forces for the first time since 2001. At the end of the year NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg left open whether NATO partners would meet the obligations in the agreement made unilaterally by the US government.

Furthermore, the election dispute of 2019 between President Ashraf Ghani and opponent Abdullah Abdullah continued. When President-elect Ghani was sworn into office on March 9, Abdullah simultaneously proclaimed a parallel government. About two weeks later, on March 23, the US government announced a USD 1 billion cut in development assistance to Afghanistan due to the paralyzed Afghan government. On May 17, Ghani and Abdullah signed a power-sharing deal and ended the political crisis.

Despite the peace agreement between the US and the Taliban, several hundred violent clashes took place between ANDSF and Taliban militants throughout the year. In contrast to a week-long reduction of violence before the signing of the

peace agreement, the subsequent weeks were marked by a significant increase in attacks by the Taliban. For instance, on March 4, Taliban special operation forces, the so-called Sara Keta or Red Unit, attacked a military base in the Third Police District of the city of Kunduz, eponymous province, killing 15 soldiers of the Afghan National Army and wounding another. The bodies all displayed head-shot wounds. On March 16, the Taliban attacked security outposts in the village of Sala Khana, Ghor province, leading to the death of 13 ANDSF and 15 Taliban fighters, while 20 more pro-government forces were wounded. By mid-April, Taliban forces carried out several dozen attacks per day. From July 31 to August 2, the Taliban unilaterally declared a nation-wide Eid-al-Adha ceasefire. Nevertheless, the government accused the Taliban of killing at least 20 individuals during that period.

Throughout the year, militants also conducted several violent operations against government employees, journalists, and human rights activists. On March 24, Taliban kidnapped and killed two government officials in Khan Abad District, Kunduz Province. On September 9, an attack on the convoy of the Vice President left ten people dead, while the attacker survived. The executive director of the non-governmental organization Free and Fair Election Forum Afghanistan was assassinated by unknown gunmen in the capital Kabul on December 23. One day later a women rights activist was shot dead by gunmen in northern Kapisa Province. According to Taliban fighters arrested in December, the Taliban created a group in Logar Province named "Obaida" to target government employees as well as journalists and civil right activists. Even though the US-Taliban agreement had scheduled the complete prisoner exchange on March 10, the Afghan government only released 1,500 Taliban that day. They conditioned the release of the remainder on a concrete reduction of violence and proceeded to gradually release prisoners throughout the year. Subsequently, the Taliban ruled out any negotiations with the Afghan government.

After several months of delay due to the gradual prisoner swap, the government and the Taliban entered the first ever Intra-Afghan peace talks in Doha, Qatar, on September 12. Nevertheless, the negotiations marked the beginning of a period of increased violence. For instance, on September 20, the Taliban ambushed a military convoy in the Deh Afghanistan area in Wardak Province, killing 31 security forces. Between September 18 and September 22, Taliban militants captured at least 15 security checkpoints from ANDSF in Gizab District, Uruzgan Province, allegedly killing at least 22 Afghan soldiers who had surrendered. On October 10, the Taliban attacked the city of Lashkar Gah in Helmand Province. Subsequent clashes lasted almost two weeks. In spite of the US-Taliban agreement, al-Qaeda militants reportedly fought alongside the Taliban. The UN estimated that 35,000 civilians were displaced in Helmand Province during the second half of October. Heavy fighting between Afghan forces and the Taliban took place in at least 28 provinces throughout October and led to a steep surge in fatalities.

After all, the first nine months of the year exhibited the lowest civilian fatality rate in Afghanistan since 2012. According to UNAMA, this was to a large extent due to significantly fewer airstrikes carried out by international forces since March 2020. However, throughout the year, several airstrikes caused civilian fatalities. For instance, on July 22, an Afghan air force attack targeting a Taliban gathering reportedly killed at least twelve and injured another 20 civilians in Gozara District, Herat Province. On September 19, Afghan forces killed 24 civilians during airstrikes against the Taliban in Khan Abad District, Kunduz Province. On October 26, an US

UAV allegedly killed three civilians when targeting a Taliban stronghold in the Durrani area of Wardak Province. Finally, in November and December, the number of violent clashes between Taliban and ANDSF rose significantly especially in the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan as well as in the capital Kabul. After multiple attacks occurred in Kabul involving suicide bombers, IEDs, and VBIEDs, the government doubled the security forces protecting the presidential palace.

Despite these developments, the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban were scheduled to continue on 01/05/21, after both parties announced on December 2 that they had agreed on a preamble to the Intra-Afghan Negotiations and had implemented a committee to prepare the draft topics for the agenda. mwe, hla

AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

Conflict parties: Afghanistan vs. Pakistan
 Conflict items: territory, international power

The violent crisis over territory and international power between Afghanistan and Pakistan continued. The porous border and the deteriorating security situation in both countries remained the primary issue of contention. According to UNHCR, by the end of the year, more than 1.4 million registered and a similar number of undocumented displaced Afghan citizens remained in Pakistan. Amidst ongoing violent conflicts within the Afghan territory [→ Afghanistan, USA (Taliban et al.); Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)] as well as Covid-19 restrictions on movement, this year saw the lowest number of voluntary returns of refugees to Afghanistan since 2002.

Throughout the year, Pakistan continued to fence the border and violent confrontations occurred between Pakistani and Afghan military forces. For instance, on July 16, missiles fired from Pakistan into Afghan territory at Asadabad, Kunar Province, killed at least four civilians and injured a further nine. The Afghan government accused Pakistan of the attack. On September 3, in a clash between Afghan and Pakistani military in Mohmand Dara district, Nangarhar Province, one member of the Afghan Border Force was killed and three were wounded, as were three civilians.

Starting on March 15, border crossings were repeatedly shut for passenger traffic until the end of the year due to Covid-19 restrictions. At the Chapman-Spin-Boldak crossing, Kandahar Province, clashes erupted between Pakistani and Afghan security forces on July 30. The closed crossing reopened to let civilians enter the respective country to celebrate Eid al-Adha. Soon after, Pakistanis demonstrating against the border crossing restrictions torched a Covid-19 quarantine facility. Pakistani security forces opened fire, killing two civilians, and were subsequently attacked by Afghan security forces. Pakistani military then attacked the area with artillery, killing 15 civilians and injuring 80.

Furthermore, as Afghan-Taliban peace negotiations approached a breakthrough [→ Afghanistan, USA (Taliban et al.)], the Afghan government also intensified efforts to improve bilateral relations with Pakistan. On July 6, Pakistan announced a new special envoy for Afghanistan and emphasized the willingness to seek political reconciliation between both countries. Two months later, on September 28, Senior Afghan peace official Abdullah Abdullah visited Pakistan for three days to support the inter-state dialog. The Pakistani

government explicitly welcomed these efforts as well as the Afghan-Taliban peace negotiations. pfr, mwe

ALGERIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2011**

Conflict parties: Hirak movement, labour unions, opposition groups vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the Hirak movement, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

This year's protests were mostly centered around the proposals for democratic reform by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and the Hirak's ongoing demands for constitutional reform. Different factions within Hirak struggled to agree on the movement's goals and identity. For instance, at the end of July, Islamists threatened to leave the movement over conflicts with students and feminists. The internal cohesion of Hirak was further endangered by the arrest of the movement's figureheads who were accepted as such by all factions of Hirak.

The Hirak continued last year's weekly protests until April, demanding a replacement of the current regime and denouncing the detention of Hirak activists. Tebboune, elected on 12/12/19, initiated a set of reforms in January and set up a commission to amend the constitution. The Hirak movement criticized these efforts as insufficient and continued their Friday marches.

Mass protests took place from January to the end of March, predominantly in the provinces of Algiers, Bejaia, Tizi Ouzou, Bouira, and Bordj Bou Arreridj. Up to 75,000 protesters took to the streets almost every Friday. The protest marches came to a halt when the government imposed restrictions on public gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the provinces of Algiers and Blida on March 24. These were extended nationwide on April 4 and remained in force until the end of the year. On June 19, Hirak activists tried to revive the movement by protesting in the provinces of Bejaia, Bouira, Tizi Ouzou, Bordj Bou Arreridj, and Constantine. Police forces used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowds in the cities of Bejaia and Bouira, injuring dozens. In August and early September, some small marches were dispersed by police forces for showing the Amazigh flag [→ Algeria (Berbers / Kabylia)] or violating Covid-19 restrictions.

By the end of September, protesters resumed the Friday marches to denounce the constitutional referendum on November 1 and called for a boycott. Protesters destroyed ballot boxes and posters and forcefully blocked polling stations in several cities in Bejaia and Bouira on October 31 and November 1. On the same days, protesters clashed with police forces in Bejaia, Bouira, Boumerdes, Constantine, Skikda, and Tizi Ouzou. At least 40 people were injured during the clashes. As a result, the national election commission cancelled the vote in most communities in Bejaia and Tizi Ouzou. With a voter turnout of 23.7 percent, the referendum passed in favor of the constitutional changes. In December, the weekly Hirak marches subsided in most provinces with the exceptions of Alger, Setif, Sidi Bel Abbes, and Bejaia. For instance, more than 500 protesters took to the streets of Kherrata, Bejaia, on December 12 and 19.

twh

BAHRAIN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↓ | Start: 1975

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between Shiite opposition groups and the government de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

On November 11, Bahrain's Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa, who had served for 50 years, died. Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa inherited the office. On February 14, nationwide protests against the ruling Al Khalifa dynasty took place to commemorate the ninth anniversary of the "Day of Rage".

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government released 1,486 prisoners on March 17, excluding political prisoners of opposition groups. On June 9, however, the government transferred the prominent opposition activist Nabeel Rajab to house arrest. Reports claimed that his health had deteriorated in prison over the years. On September 14, a prominent opposition lawyer was charged with "inciting hatred of a religious sect" on social media and received a six-month suspended prison sentence by the High Court of Appeal.

This year the Court of Cassation sentenced four opposition members to death on the grounds of alleged membership to a terrorist group. On June 15 and July 13, the court upheld the death sentences which had been challenged due to reports of forced confession under torture. Throughout the year, human rights organizations called upon the government to abolish the death penalty as well as end coercion through torture, leading to the submission of a written statement to the UNHRC on August 19. On November 21, the EU called for the improvement of the human rights situation in Bahrain. Furthermore, on December 1, several NGOs published a joint letter opposing Bahrain's presidency for the UNHRC due to its domestic human rights violations.

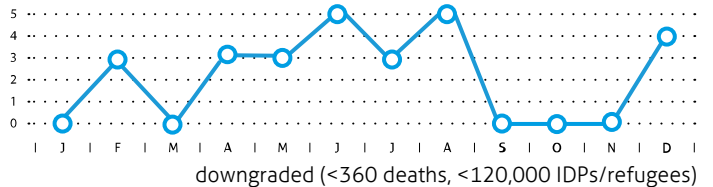
The government also continued to arrest alleged opposition members and withdraw their citizenship. On October 10, for instance, hundreds of civilians participated in an outdoor Shia ritual, in which 61 opposition supporters were allegedly arrested by government forces.

On September 11, the Bahraini and Israeli governments published plans to normalize their relations. In reaction, opposition groups protested against the normalization agreement for six nights in a row in Manama city, Capital Governorate, as well as within the Northern Governorate. Allegedly two opposition supporters were arrested. Demonstrations continued in October. In response to the protests, the Bahraini Interior Ministry announced on October 14 that authorities were taking legal measures against the protests as well as online criticism.

sbl

EGYPT (MILITANT GROUPS / SINAI PENINSULA)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↓ | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: militant groups vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

The war over ideology and subnational predominance in the Sinai Peninsula between various militant groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a limited war. Over the year, at least 22 military personnel and 202 militants died in clashes. As in previous years, most clashes occurred in the North Sinai Governorate. The conflict overlapped with fighting against the so-called Islamic State's (IS) local affiliate, called Sinai Province, operating in the same area [→ Iraq, Syria, et al. (IS)].

Throughout the year, militant groups carried out several attacks against the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) and the Egyptian National Police (ENP). On February 25, a bombing in Karm al-Qawadis, North Sinai, targeted the vehicle of an EAF commander, killing him and others as well as injuring several security personnel. On June 30, two militants were killed in a fire exchange with ENP personnel in North Sinai as they were scouting out military checkpoints as potential targets, according to the Ministry of Interior. On July 21, the military spokesperson reported another militant attack on a checkpoint in North Sinai, killing 18 militants and two soldiers, and leaving two soldiers injured.

Security forces continued to fight militant groups. On April 14, ENP killed seven militants in a raid after the Ministry of Interior had received information about potential attacks against Coptic Christians. During this operation one policeman was killed, while three others were injured. Another operation followed on May 2, when ENP killed 18 militants as they stormed a hideout in the town of Bir al-Abd, North Sinai. In a similar operation on May 22, ENP stormed two hideouts in northern Sinai, killing 21 suspected militants. According to the ENP, the militants were plotting attacks on Eid al-Fitr holiday marking the end of Ramadan. Following that, on May 30, EAF killed 19 militants during three military operations in the cities of Bir al-Abd, Rafah, and Sheikh Zuweid, North Sinai, resulting in the death of five soldiers. Between July 22 and August 30, security forces conducted consecutive "anti-terrorism" operations, which resulted in the killing of at least 77 suspected militants. EAF located more than 300 hideouts and destroyed at least ten vehicles loaded with weapons and ammunition. During this operation, militants killed three officers and four soldiers. Another military operation followed in the period from September 1 to December 8, during which EAF killed at least 40 militants and destroyed around 440 hideouts and 160 IEDs. There were at least six casualties among its troops.

In late October, the parliament extended the nationwide state of emergency until the end of the year. As a result, North Sinai experienced severe security restrictions imposed by state authorities, limiting travel, education, and civilian life. nbu

EGYPT (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1954**

Conflict parties: militant opposition groups, political opposition and activists vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between the opposition and the government continued. Throughout the year, clashes took place between protesters and security forces. The opposition criticized police brutality, forced disappearances, and the lack of freedom of speech.

On January 15, Egyptian National Police (ENP) raided the offices of the Turkish media outlet Anadolu. All staff members were detained for allegedly spreading false information. The government continued to interfere in news outlets and social media, for example by blocking the news website Darb on April 9. Moreover, the Supreme Council for Media Regulation blocked and banned several media outlets and social media accounts for allegedly spreading false information related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the course of the year, more than seven doctors, several researchers, and journalists were arrested, disappeared, or were forced to leave the country after questioning the official infection numbers or raising concerns about Egypt's health system with rising Covid-19 cases.

The UN special rapporteur on human rights and counter terrorism expressed concerns over the tightening of the 2015 anti-terror law in April, which according to her threatens journalists, human rights defenders, opposition parties, and public sector workers.

On September 20, a five-day protest began against repression, rising rates of poverty, as well as the economic fallout of Covid-19. The protests took place all across Egypt. Security forces used different types of weapons, for example tear gas, batons, birdshot, and live ammunition, to break up the protests. For instance, on September 25, ENP clashed with protesters in the capital Cairo, resulting in three civilians injured and one dead. On September 30, ENP raided the home of political activist Daa al-Rawi in Luxor city, eponymous governorate, and shot dead his brother who resisted the arrest of al-Rawi. Later that day during his public funeral, clashes erupted between protesters and security forces, leaving one civilian dead. On November 12, on Tahrir Square in Cairo, a man staged a self-immolation in protest of corruption and living conditions. dal

IRAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1993**

Conflict parties: intra-systemic opposition, non-systemic opposition vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between opposition groups such as the reformist parties as well as non-organized actors on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

After major demonstrations by anti-government groups had

ended in November 2019, political disinformation sparked demonstrations again at the beginning of this year. On January 8, two days after the assassination of Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Major General and Iranian Quds-Force commander Qassem Soleimani [→ Iran – USA], the Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 was hit by two anti-aircraft missiles shortly after its departure from Tehran International Airport. All 176 people on board were killed. After the government initially reported the aircraft had crashed due to technical errors, three days later, they claimed it had been accidentally shot down by the IRGC. Subsequently, protests erupted across several cities, including Tehran, Isfahan, eponymous province, and Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province. According to Amnesty International, the government responded to the demonstrations with arrests and the use of force against protesters, including rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, and beatings. In some cases hospitals in Tehran turned away injured people due to the possibility they would get arrested after treatment. The protests lasted for several days and left an unspecified number of people injured.

Prior to the parliamentary elections in February, 90 percent of the reformist candidates who had registered to run for office had been rejected by the Guardian Council, which was criticized by President Hassan Rouhani. On election day, February 21, conservative candidates won 230 out of 290 seats. The overall voter turnout was 42.5 percent, the lowest participation since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Reformist politicians remained under high political pressure throughout the year. For instance, on May 18, a disqualified reformist MP was sentenced to prison and fined for unspecified charges. He had previously criticised the former head of the Judiciary for corruption.

On June 30, a journalist for the anti-government news website Amad News, who had been accused of inciting anti-government protests in 2017 and 2018, was found guilty for "corruption on earth" and was subsequently hanged on December 12. On July 14, three demonstrators who had taken part in the 2019 November protests were sentenced to death by the Iranian Supreme Court. On the same day, major online protests erupted using the hashtag #NoToExecution. Subsequently, the government cut internet services on July 14, repeating its strategy from the 2019 November protests. The death sentences were halted indefinitely on July 19. On December 5, the Supreme Court announced it would review the judgment.

Additional disruptions of internet services occurred throughout the year, for instance, on November 16, the first anniversary of the 2019 protests. On August 24, lawmakers made a motion to the parliament's presidium to set fines and prison sentences for offering social media messaging apps without official licenses. cbi

IRAN (PDKI ET AL.)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1979**

Conflict parties: PDKI, various other Kurdish parties and groups vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy, system/ideology

The violent crisis over autonomy and the orientation of the political system between the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) as well as various other Kurdish groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Clashes between the conflict parties were concentrated in the West Azerbaijan Province, Iran, and the border region of the autonomous Kurdistan Region, Erbil Governorate, Iraq. For instance, on May 17, the PDKI-associated Zagros Falcons attacked the military base of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in West Azerbaijan Province, Iran, wounding four IRGC members. On June 16 and 17, IRGC forces fired artillery against the PDKI and other Kurdish opposition groups in Haji Omara, Erbil Governorate, Iraq, without any casualties. The artillery attacks came one day after Turkey had started its cross-border ground and air operation Claw-Tiger in Iraq [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK)]. The offensive targeted Kurdish militant groups in the Kurdistan region of Iraq near the Iranian border. On June 23, the IRGC started a two-day maneuver against “terrorist elements and groups” along Iran’s northwestern and southeastern borders, using ground and airborne forces, including UAVs. Although the Iranian government announced the maneuver had cleared the area, no casualties were reported.

Furthermore, in June, the Iranian government confirmed it had secretly executed a PDKI-affiliated Kurdish political prisoner on May 11. He had been arrested in 2016 after allegedly giving shelter to PDKI Peshmerga. According to Iran Human Rights, this marked the first execution carried out by a firing squad in Iran since the 1980s.

In the second half of the year, IRGC forces repeatedly used missiles for cross-country operations into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. For instance, on August 3, PDKI stated that IRGC forces fired missiles at Peshmerga in Erbil Governorate, Iraq. Similar attacks targeting the same area occurred on September 9 as well as on October 29. None of these incidents caused any casualties. On November 13, Kurdish Peshmerga killed three IRGC border guards near the city of Urmia, West Azerbaijan Province, Iran. The day after, in retaliation for the attack, IRGC launched artillery against different Kurdish armed groups close to the northwestern border, with no casualties reported.

dst

IRAN – ISRAEL

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1979**

Conflict parties: Iran vs. Israel
 Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The violent crisis over international power and ideology between Iran and Israel continued. While the Iranian support of militant groups such as Hezbollah [→ Israel (Hezbollah)] and the Iranian nuclear program remained an issue, the two conflict parties faced military confrontations in Syria [→ Syria (opposition); Syria (inter-opposition rivalry); Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

Throughout the year, Israel conducted repeated airstrikes against Iranian-backed forces in Syria, killing at least 255 Iranian-backed militants and four civilians as well as injuring at least four Iranian-backed militants. For instance, on April 22, an Israeli airstrike killed nine Iranian-backed militants in Homs, eponymous Governorate, Syria. On July 11, an Israeli airstrike killed 35 Iranian-backed militants in Abu Kamal, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Syria. On September 1, an airstrike in Daraa, eponymous governorate, Syria, killed seven Iranian-backed militants and one civilian.

In addition, both conflict parties were hit by cyberattacks tar-

geting critical infrastructure. For instance, on April 24, Israel averted a cyberattack on several water facilities across the country. On May 9, a cyberattack targeting the Iranian Port Shahid Rajaei disrupted its cargo operations for days. Neither government confirmed its involvement in the attacks.

Tensions between both parties peaked on November 27, when Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, brigadier general in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corp and lead scientist for the Iranian nuclear program, was assassinated in the town of Absard, Tehran Province, Iran. Fakhrizadeh and his bodyguards were driving on a highway in Absard, when unknown attackers ambushed the convoy, mortally injuring the scientist. While it is certain that a VBIED detonated close to the convoy, it remains disputed whether assassins were present. The Iranian government accused Israel of conducting the assassination and stated Fakhrizadeh was killed by bullets fired remotely from a parked pickup truck. Israel did not respond to the accusations. On December 9, the Iranian government stated that an unspecified number of persons had been detained for being involved in the assassination. Fakhrizadeh is the fifth Iranian nuclear scientist to have been assassinated since 2010.

In public statements, the Israeli as well as the Iranian government underscored their military efforts against each other. On May 6, Israel’s defense minister stated that Israel would continue its operations in Syria until Iranian-backed forces left the country [→ Syria – Israel]. Shortly after, on May 22, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei confirmed that Iran supported Palestinian militant groups with weapons. It was the first time the Iranian government openly admitted the support of these groups. Finally, when Israel normalized its diplomatic relations to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates by signing the Abraham Accords on September 15 [→ Bahrain (opposition)], the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the joint agreement and emphasized it would strengthen anti-Israeli resistance.

cbi

IRAN – USA

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1979**

Conflict parties: USA vs. Iran
 Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over international power, ideology, and the Iranian nuclear program between Iran and the USA escalated to a violent crisis. The US “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran initiated by the US government after withdrawing from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018 remained a key element in the parties’ relationship.

On January 3, the US carried out an MQ-9 drone strike, killing Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) major general and Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani as well as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, commander of the Iranian-backed Kata’ib Hezbollah [→ Iraq (Shiite militant groups)], in the capital Baghdad, Iraq. Three IRGC members and five members of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces were also killed in the incident. According to the US Secretary of State, the strike was carried out to prevent an imminent attack planned by Soleimani that would have endangered US citizens in the area. This justification was later questioned within the US government.

Two days later, on January 5, the Iranian government aban-

done all limitations on uranium enrichment originally imposed by the JCPOA in 2015. On January 8, after informing the government of Iraq about an upcoming Iranian airstrike, the IRGC attacked two air bases operated by the US military using surface-to-surface missiles – one in Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq, the other in Erbil, eponymous Governorate, Iraq. While the US government initially denied any injured personnel, it gradually announced a total of 109 wounded US service members. Hours after that incident, Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 was hit by two anti-aircraft missiles shortly after its departure from Tehran International Airport. All 176 civilians on board were killed. At first, the government reported the aircraft had crashed due to technical errors, three days later, they claimed it had been accidentally shot down by IRGC forces who had been on high alert due to the tensions with the US. On January 10, the US imposed further sanctions on Iran targeting the manufacturing, textile, and mining sectors. On January 16, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani stated that the state’s uranium enrichment capacity exceeded the pre-JCPOA level.

After the outbreak of Covid-19 in Iran, on February 28 the US government offered support to the Iranian government to contain the spread of the virus. Iran refused the offer. In April and May, the Iranian government, the UN, and the Russian government repeatedly pointed out that sanctions targeting the country should be lifted for humanitarian reasons due to Covid-19, which the US government refused.

In July and August, the US Justice Department seized more than 1.1 million barrels of Iranian oil from Greek tankers which were heading to Venezuela. The US government justified its actions with existing sanctions against both Venezuela [→ USA – Venezuela] and Iran. On August 26, Rouhani reaffirmed Iran’s cooperation with the IAEA on the inspection of nuclear facilities. After the US elections on November 3, Iran signalled its willingness to return JCPOA once US President-elect Joe Biden would lift the sanctions on the country.

From October to December, the US imposed new sanctions on the Iranian banking sector, two not further specified individuals, and a foundation controlled by Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

rkr

IRAQ (KRG – OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **NEW** | Start: **2011**

Conflict parties: KRG vs. opposition movement
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

The dispute over subnational predominance and the orientation of the political system between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the local opposition movement escalated to a violent crisis.

The conflict had initially started in 2011, when mass protests against corruption and mismanagement arose during the Arab Spring. The ongoing financial crisis in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), corruption, as well as the inability to finance public sector salaries led to mass unemployment and rising discontent among the public.

On December 3, public servants in Sulaymaniyah city, eponymous governorate, organized protests to demand the disbursement of outstanding salary payments. Security forces used rubber bullets and tear gas against the protesters, among them also members of the oppositional Gorran party,

who had organized protests in 2011. On December 7, government security forces raided the office of the independent TV channel NRT and forced it to suspend its broadcasts. Lamenting broader socioeconomic grievances including high unemployment and poor public service provision, protests spread to other cities in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, such as Ranya, Kifri, Takya, Dukan, and Said Saqiq, with many youth protesters participating. Between December 8 and December 12, security forces used live ammunition against protesters, killing nine. Moreover, on December 13, security forces cracked down on further protests, injuring 120 participants and detaining seven.

On December 12, security personnel suppressed sporadic protests in the KRI’s capital Erbil and arrested some attendees. Moreover, police raided the Erbil office of NRT, closing it down on December 22. In light of the imposition of curfews and the extended use of violence by government forces, the intensity of the protests decreased at the end of December.

IRAQ (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↘** | Start: **2011**

Conflict parties: opposition vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The limited war over the orientation of the political system and national power between the opposition and the government de-escalated to a violent crisis.

Throughout the year, the opposition protests against corruption, unemployment, and inefficient public services that had peaked in October 2019 continued and resulted in the death of over 50 persons, including approx. 50 civilians, and at least two security personnel. Approx. 800 were also injured. In January, an extrajudicial targeted killing operation carried out by the USA [→ Iran – USA] sparked extensive protests across Iraq demanding the withdrawal of the US troops along with previous demands.

On January 3, the US military launched a drone attack close to the Baghdad airport, killing ten people, among them Qasem Soleimani, Iranian major general and Quds force commander, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces. Subsequently, thousands of people took to the streets in the capital Baghdad, in the city of Basra, eponymous governorate, the city of Nasiriyah, Dhi Qar Governorate, and the city of Najaf, eponymous governorate. Pro-Iranian Shiite militant groups also participated actively in the protests [→ Iraq (Shiite militant groups)]. Over the course of the month, Iraqi security forces killed a total of approx. 20 protesters and injured at least 350, mostly through the use of live ammunition and tear gas. Additionally, on January 10 two journalists covering the protests were shot dead by unknown gunmen in Basra.

Violent protests continued in February, resulting in the death of approx. 15 protesters and at least 100 injured, but slowly subsided at the beginning of March following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the imposition of a nationwide curfew. However, some protest camps remained in place and clashes continued between protesters and security forces. For instance, on April 4, police used tear gas to disperse protesters defying the curfew in Nasiriyah. In response, protesters threw Molotov cocktails at police forces, injuring at least twelve police officers.

Moreover, activists were repeatedly killed by unidentified at-

tackers. On March 10, two activists were shot dead in Maysan Governorate. In Basra, the fatal shootings of two activists within five days on August 14 and August 19 respectively sparked outrage among protesters. Another activist was shot dead along with her parents in their home in Baghdad on September 15.

Additionally, the country faced internal political frictions. After the former prime minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi had resigned in December 2019, two subsequent candidates failed to form a government. Finally, on May 6, Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi assumed office. He instructed Iraqi security forces not to use violence against protesters and ordered investigations into the forced disappearances and kidnappings of protesters. However, protests continued until the end of the year.

anb

IRAQ (SHIITE MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2004**

Conflict parties: Badr Organization, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Saraya al-Salam vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between Shiite militias and the government continued. The Shiite militias were organized under the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and included the Badr Organization, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Kata'ib Hezbollah, as well as Saraya al-Salam, the former Mahdi Army. Following the so-called Islamic State's (IS) offensive in June 2014, the government turned to Shiite militias to support the Iraqi Armed Forces (IAF) to retake territory previously lost to IS [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. After IS was pushed out from its territories, some Shiite militias began to operate largely outside government control, increasingly focusing on terminating the US military mission in Iraq.

The year was marked by the deteriorating relationship between Iraq and the US as its supporter.

On January 3, the US military conducted a drone strike close to Baghdad airport, killing ten people, five of them PMF members. Among them was Qasem Soleimani, Iranian major general and Quds Force commander [→ Iran – USA] and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chief of the PMF.

Subsequently, several attacks took place on the US embassy in the Green Zone, Baghdad, as well as military bases hosting US forces in Baghdad Governorate and other parts of Iraq. Similarly, on several other occasions throughout the year, unidentified groups attacked US facilities using rockets, injuring at least 35, among them US staff and civilians. Most of the attacks remained unclaimed and in some cases Shiite militia organizations denied the allegations of their involvement in the attacks against US targets.

Following increasing public calls for the withdrawal of US troops [→ Iraq (Opposition)], the parliament issued a resolution on January 5, calling on the government to expel all foreign troops from its territory. The US government refused to comply, threatening heavy sanctions.

On March 11, two US soldiers and one British contractor were killed and more than twelve people injured in a rocket attack on Al Taji military airbase, Baghdad Governorate. Subsequently, US military conducted an airstrike on five Kata'ib Hezbollah targets in Karbala Governorate and Baghdad, killing

six people including security forces. In October, Shiite militias agreed to a ceasefire on the condition of a scheduled US troop withdrawal, however, attacks continued until the end of the year. The US began to gradually reduce their troops in the second half of the year with around 3,000 remaining in Iraq in December, according to the acting US Defense Secretary.

ISRAEL (HAMAS ET AL.)

Intensity: **3** | Change: ↘ | Start: **1988**

Conflict parties: Hamas, other Islamist militant groups, PIJ vs. government

Conflict items: secession, resources

The limited war over the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state and over resources between Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and other Islamist militant groups operating from the Gaza Strip, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis. Throughout the year, 31 people were killed and 996 displaced.

At the beginning of the year, on January 28, US President Donald Trump proposed a peace plan for the region, which immediately sparked outrage and violence [→ Israel – State of Palestine^o (PNA)]. Following the announcement, thousands of Palestinians in Gaza took to the streets to protest the plan that was mostly welcomed by Israel, but rejected by Hamas and other militant Islamist groups.

Over the course of the year, both Hamas and PIJ continued to send incendiary balloons and fire rockets from the Gaza Strip, whereas Israel Defense Forces (IDF) carried out airstrikes, targeting mainly Hamas. On February 23, for instance, members of PIJ fired 20 rockets towards the town of Ashkelon, Southern District, from Gaza Strip, with the Israeli missile defense system Iron Dome blocking most of them. In the aftermath, IDF bombed military posts of PIJ in Gaza, resulting in several people injured. In August, almost daily launches of rockets and airstrikes occurred, resulting in several injuries. For example, on August 6, IDF struck several sites that belonged to Hamas in Gaza, using among others tanks, warplanes, helicopters, artillery, and shells, while there were also reports about rockets and incendiary balloons flying from Gaza.

Israel also announced the closure of checkpoints for the delivery of goods to Gaza on August 11, only allowing humanitarian aid to pass through. On September 1, Hamas announced a unilateral ceasefire in an attempt to de-escalate the conflict with Israel. However, after the signing of a normalization deal between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain [→ Bahrain (opposition)] in Washington D.C., USA, rockets were again fired from Gaza on September 16, to which Israel responded with airstrikes. In October and November, both sides continued to frequently exchange rocket fire and airstrikes.

Clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militants continued. On February 23, for instance, Israeli soldiers shot two members of the Al-Quds Brigade, the armed wing of the PIJ, in Khan Yunis, Southern Gaza, when they tried to plant IEDs on border facilities, killing one of them. On August 9, IDF reported militant Palestinians firing gunshots from Gaza at Israeli workers who were doing construction work on the barrier along the border.

hal

ISRAEL (HEZBOLLAH)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1982**

Conflict parties: Hezbollah vs. government
 Conflict items: territory, system/ideology

The non-violent crisis over ideology and territory between Hezbollah and the Israeli government escalated to a violent crisis.

Throughout the year, Israeli forces launched dozens of airstrikes on Lebanese and Syrian territory, mostly in Nabatieh Governorate, Lebanon, and the Syrian Governorates Damascus, Daraa, Deir ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Quneitra, and Rif Dimashq. Hezbollah continued to target Israeli security forces in the Northern District, Israel. Overall, 49 people were killed, more than 15 of them belonging to Hezbollah, and over 36 persons injured.

For instance, on February 27, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) killed one Hezbollah member in a drone attack near Hadar, Quneitra. On April 20, Israel launched airstrikes on Iranian targets in Palmyra, Homs, killing nine militants, six belonging to Hezbollah [→ Iran – Israel; Israel – Syria]. Later, on April 30, Israel attacked Iranian militias and Syrian regime force positions in Tal Ahmar and Ma'ariya, Daraa, and Tal al-Ahmar al-Gharbi area, Quneitra, using five rockets and causing material damage.

On May 1, Israel Air Forces (IAF) attacked a Hezbollah weapon storage in Homs city with rockets, injuring ten people. On July 20, IDF carried out a missile attack on Jabal al Mane, Muqaylabiya, and Zakiya towns, Damascus, killing five fighters, one allegedly belonging to Hezbollah, and injuring eleven.

On July 27, an armed clash erupted after a small group of Hezbollah militants had crossed the Blue Line into Israel. Israeli forces used machine guns, tanks, artillery cannons, and smoke shells. No casualties were reported. On August 25, Hezbollah militants targeted Israeli soldiers near Manara, Northern District. Israeli forces reacted by launching airstrikes on Hezbollah positions in Mays al-Jabal, Nabatieh, on August 26, causing material damage and bush fires. On August 31, Israel carried out missile strikes on Syrian territory, targeting positions of Iranian-backed militias in several towns across Daraa, Rif Dimashq, and Damascus. The airstrikes killed eleven people of which ten belonged to Iranian-backed militias and Hezbollah. Additionally one civilian was killed and over ten injured. On September 3, Israel targeted Iranian positions in Abu Kamal and al-Mayadeen, Deir Ezzor, killing 16 militants, seven belonging to Hezbollah, by using warplanes and missiles. On December 25, IAF carried out missile strikes on Syrian and Iranian weapons depots and a research center in Masyaf, Hama, killing six militants.

sap

ISRAEL – STATE OF PALESTINE^o (PNA)Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1948**

Conflict parties: Palestinian protesters, PNA vs. government, Israeli settlement movements
 Conflict items: secession, system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis over the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state, ideology, and resources between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Palestinian protesters, on the one hand, and the Israeli government as well as Israeli settler movements, on the other, continued. Over the course of the year, at least 25 Palestinians and four Israelis were killed.

On January 28, US President Donald Trump released a peace plan proposing a two-state-solution. The peace plan was rejected by PNA President Mahmoud Abbas arguing that the plan was biased in favor of Israel as well as the Yesha Council of the West Bank settlers refusing to acknowledge a Palestinian state. In response, Palestinians protested across the West Bank between February 3 and 7. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intervened, killing at least two Palestinians and injuring another two during the protests.

Moreover, several violent clashes over Israel's settlement policy took place throughout the year. For instance, on February 6, IDF shot dead two Palestinians during a protest against the demolition of a Palestinian house in Jenin town, eponymous governorate. Another violent confrontation between Palestinians, who protested against Israeli settlers, and IDF took place on March 11 in Nablus, eponymous governorate, leaving two Palestinians dead and at least 17 injured. During another protest on May 12 in Jenin, a Palestinian hit an IDF soldier with a rock, killing him. One day later, a violent clash occurred when IDF raided the Palestinian al-Fawwar refugee camp, Hebron Governorate, killing one Palestinian and injuring at least three.

Throughout the year, Palestinian radicals carried out a series of attacks including stabbings, shootings, and car rammings, resulting in casualties on both sides. For example, a Palestinian killed a Rabbi on August 26 in Petah Tikvah, Central District. On February 6, 14 Israeli soldiers were injured in the capital Jerusalem during a car ramming attack. On December 21, a Palestinian opened fire on Israeli Police, who in turn shot the assailant dead in East Jerusalem.

On several occasions, Israeli settlers conducted attacks on Palestinian farmers. For instance, on January 24, Jewish right-wing extremists set fire to a Palestinian mosque in East Jerusalem. Another arson attack on a mosque took place on July 27 in al-Bireh, Ramallah and al-Bireh Governorate. Furthermore, Israeli settlers repeatedly damaged or cut down Palestinian olive groves. For example, on October 26, a Palestinian farmer found 100 olive trees chopped down in al-Mughayir village, Ramallah and al-Bireh Governorate. On November 3, IDF demolished 18 tents and shacks of 74 Bedouins in the village of Khirbet Humsa, Hebron Governorate. Moreover, on May 30, Israeli Police shot dead an autistic Palestinian, after repeatedly telling him to stop at the Lion's Gate in East Jerusalem. The incident caused outrage on social media, spreading the hashtag #PalestinianLivesMatter. The next day, thousands gathered at his funeral with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu describing the incident as a "national tragedy". voe

ISRAEL – SYRIA

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1948**

Conflict parties: Israel, Syria
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The violent crisis over territory, international power, and resources between Israel and Syria continued. As in previous years, Israel blamed the Syrian government for all attacks originating from Syrian territory. Throughout the year, Israel targeted Syrian army positions, Hezbollah outposts, and Iranian infrastructure in Syria [→ Israel (Hezbollah); Israel – Iran]. In most instances, Israel did not comment on its military operations.

On January 10, an arms depot of a pro-Iranian militia from Iraq was targeted by airstrikes, leaving eight militants dead in the Abu Kamal district, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Syria, close to the Syrian-Iraqi border. Syria accused Israel of the attack, while the US-led coalition against the so-called Islamic State, which also operated in the area, denied responsibility [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. On February 6, Israel targeted several military sites in the Syrian capital of Damascus as well as in Dar'a and Quneitra governorates. The Israeli Air Force shot missiles at the targets from within Lebanese airspace. 23 people were killed and eight injured. One week later, Israel attacked warehouses and a command centre of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) at Damascus International Airport by firing missiles from the Israeli occupied parts of the Golan Heights. Several military personnel were killed. On February 24, Israeli airstrikes on Damascus airport left six people dead, among them two militants of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Israel claimed responsibility for the attack, stating it was a retaliation to rocket fire on Israel from the Gaza Strip. In two separate air raids in Syria the Israeli Air Force killed at least 14 Iranians on May 5. The first strike hit in Khanasir, Aleppo Governorate. The second strike targeted militia camps in eastern Deir ez-Zor close to the Syrian-Iraqi border. Alleged Israeli air-raids left six pro-Iranian militants dead in Abu Kamal, the strikes followed just shortly after the commander of the Quds Force, an IRGC elite unit, visited troops in the area. On July 11, Israeli aircraft allegedly targeted a convoy of pro-Iranian militias and IRGC in the Syrian-Iraqi border region, Deir ez-Zor, killing at least 35 militants. Following an incident in which four unidentified militants trying to plant IEDs at the Israeli border fence in the Golan Heights were killed by the IDF on August 2, Israel targeted military infrastructure of the Syrian army in the Golan Heights one day later. The same day, Israel attacked the Iranian Imam Ali military base near Abu Kamal, killing 15 militants and destroying military equipment. Throughout September, the Israeli air force continued to carry out airstrikes near Abu Kamal, killing 26 pro-Iranian and Syrian militants. After Israel found three anti-personnel mines at the border fence in the Golan Heights, Israeli forces attacked several military positions at Damascus airport and ammunition depots near Sayyida Zainab and al-Kiswah, Rif Dimashq, killing three Syrian soldiers and seven militants, on November 18. In attacks on November 22 and 26, Israeli air force targeted pro-Iranian militia positions near Abu Kamal, killing 33 militants.

ska

JORDAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2011**

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups, comprising trade unions, and civil society organizations, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Compared to 2019, most protests remained small in scale, with only several hundred participants. Occasionally, prominent figures of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood Group, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), and the Bani Hassan tribe attended demonstrations and issued statements of support. Protests erupted over the gas agreement with Israel, US President Donald Trump's proposed peace plan [→ Israel – State of Palestine^o (PNA)], and the suspension of the Jordan Teachers Association (JTA). Furthermore, protesters expressed the demands for increased political participation and changes to the economic system.

On January 3, two days after the Jordanian and the Israeli government announced the start of experimental Israeli gas supply, thousands of people participated in a massive protest in the capital Amman to terminate the gas agreement signed with Israel in 2016. On January 28, demonstrations with thousands of protesters broke out against Trump's peace plan in the form of a two-state-solution for the Middle East conflict, as Jordan is home to the largest Palestinian diaspora. As a precaution, national security forces blocked off access to the US and Israeli embassies in Amman.

On August 4, despite the restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, protests took place demanding the release of leading members of an opposition-run teachers' union in several cities, which started in Kerak, eponymous governorate. Over the course of the previous two years, authorities in Amman had arrested leaders of the JTA, restricting their political activities. Protesters set up road blockades and threw stones at national security personnel, injuring seven of them. In response, security forces used tear gas and water cannons to break up the gatherings.

On November 10, parliamentary elections were held. Previously, on July 15, Jordan's Court of Cassation had dissolved the Muslim Brotherhood. Nevertheless, as the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, IAF took part in the elections and won ten seats out of 130.

frd

LEBANON (INNER-PALESTINIAN TENSIONS)

Intensity: **1** | Change: ↓ | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: Ansar Allah et al. vs. al-Fatah vs. other Palestinian factions
 Conflict items: subnational predominance


The violent crisis over subnational predominance between the Palestinian Islamist group Ansar Allah, various other Palestinian Islamist groups, the political party al-Fatah, and other Palestinian factions, de-escalated to a dispute.

Unlike in previous years, the situation in the twelve Palestinian refugee camps across the country remained calm. However, Palestinian refugees were affected by the Covid-

19 pandemic, the Lebanese social and economic crisis, as well as the significantly decreasing budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

On September 2, Hamas Chief Ismail Haniyeh arrived in Lebanon on his first official visit in 27 years. Haniyeh met with Lebanese officials as well as the heads of Palestinian factions. He visited Ain el-Hilweh camp, South Governorate, and held a speech in which he reinforced the role of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in the struggle for return. Fatah officials criticized the visit and further stressed the neglect of Palestinian refugees' needs by their allies, the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization. ebi

LIBYA (INTER-TRIBAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: Tebu, Touareg vs. Awlad Suleiman, Zway

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The limited war over subnational predominance and resources such as oil between tribes in southern Libya de-escalated to a violent crisis. Inter-tribal violence continued to concentrate in the Wadi al Hayat district and Murzuq district. Specifically, the largest Libyan oilfield al-Sharara as well as the al-Feel oilfield were focus of contention this year between the main regional tribes of Touareg and Tebu, who largely supported the Government of National Accord (GNA) against the Zuwaya and Awlad Suleiman tribes, who supported the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA) [→ Libya (opposition)]. The various tribal alliances with the GNA and LNA have often changed in the past years.


On January 17, the Zuwaya tribe, which inhabited large parts of Libya's eastern oil crescent region, announced the closure of several oilfields and oil ports. The LNA affiliated tribes maintained the blockade of the al-Sharara and al-Feel oilfields until June 6 and 7, respectively, when the Petroleum Facilities Guard aligned with Touareg commander Ali Kana lifted the blockade in Murzuq district, after the Zuwaya tribe had withdrawn. On June 8, the Touareg Battalion from Ubari oasis, Wadi al Hayat district, switched alliances and announced their support for the GNA. On the same day, the LNA Battalion 128, consisting of Awlad Suleiman and Zuwaya tribe members, conducted an airstrike on a military convoy of the GNA in the town of Sebha, eponymous district. Tebu and Touareg renewed their commitment to the GNA on June 10 and continued to stay in control of the al-Sharara and al-Feel oilfields. On December 6, LNA troops reinforced the Awlad Suleiman and Zuwaya tribes and initiated attacks on the Awbari camp, Tindi military airbase, and Taminhnt airbase, Wadi al Hayat district, controlled by Ali Kana led tribes. The groups were not successful in their attempt to gain control over the military sites and no deaths were reported.

On January 3, tribal leaders from all over Libya hosted a meeting in Benghazi city, Cyrenaica district, to respond to the deployment of Turkish troops supporting the GNA. After the Berlin conference on January 19 had not been successful in negotiating peace between the GNA and the LNA [→ Libya (opposition)], international actors increasingly pointed to the role of the tribes in the ongoing conflicts. Algeria and Tunisia highlighted the importance of including all tribal

leaders in peace talks to support intra-Libyan political processes. On February 19, the so-called Supreme Tribal Council was formed following a tribal meeting, which was attended by 3,000 tribal representatives, including Tebu, Touareg, and Awaqir. An UN led peace forum was held in Tunisia on November 9, which did not include Tebus and Touaregs who criticized their marginalization.

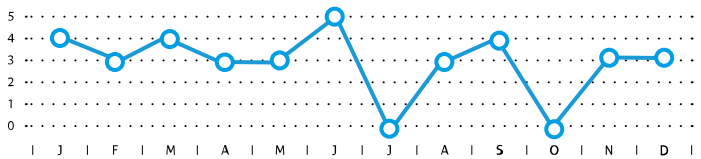
jol

LIBYA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **5** | Change:  | Start: **2011**

Conflict parties: GNA, HSC vs. LNA, HoR

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources



The war over national power, control over oilfields, and the orientation of the political system between the Government of National Accord (GNA), based in the capital Tripoli and recognized as the legal government of Libya by the UNSC, on the one hand, and the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA) headed by General Khalifa Haftar, on the other, continued.

The GNA and their legislative body, the High State Council, were supported by several militias and armed groups mainly based in the city of Misrata, eponymous district. Furthermore, the GNA was backed by Qatar and Turkey. Based on a military deal signed on 12/19/19, the Turkish government started the deployment of its troops to Libya on January 5 to aid Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and the GNA. Additionally, the Turkish government reportedly offered 2,000 Syrian mercenaries the Turkish citizenship for fighting against the LNA and its supporters. On the other hand, the LNA and the House of Representatives, the legislative body allied with the LNA based in Tobruk, al-Butnan district, were supported by tribes from eastern Libya and the al-Kaniyat militia, as well as by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Russia. For instance, the Russian government deployed fighter jets to Libya on May 26 to support Russian Wagner Group's mercenaries who had fought alongside the LNA. On July 20, the Egyptian parliament passed a bill allowing the deployment of Egyptian troops outside the country, after the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi had called for an intervention in Libya.

Throughout the year, at least 888 people were killed and at least 182 were injured. Furthermore, more than 316,000 people were internally displaced. On January 6, the LNA seized control of the coastal city of Sirte, eponymous district. The fighting lasted only three hours due to the Madkhali militia switching allegiance during the fight. On January 19, the German government held the Berlin Conference including all Libyan and foreign stakeholders to discuss a de-escalation plan for the conflict. The participants committed to implement the UN arms embargo and to support UN-backed peace talks between the GNA and LNA. However, talks to reach a permanent ceasefire agreement failed. The negotiations were hampered due to Haftar's decision to shut down all oil fields and ports in the eastern parts of Libya starting on January 17.

In an attempt to take over the capital Tripoli, the LNA had launched Operation Flood Dignity on 04/04/19 and had captured various towns as well as the international airport of Tripoli. On June 4, the GNA announced that together with allied forces, they had regained full control of the capital. On the next day, GNA forces seized the city of Tarhuna, Murqub district, the last stronghold of Haftar’s forces in the western parts of Libya, after Russian mercenaries and the al-Kaniyat militia had withdrawn. Although the Egyptian government called for a ceasefire on June 6, fighting continued and the GNA started an offensive to recapture the LNA-held city of Sirte. The offensive stalled following airstrikes by the Russian Air Force and the Egyptian threat to intervene with military force.

After recapturing Tarhuna, GNA forces found 100 civilian corpses in the city’s hospital on June 5. Furthermore, throughout the second half of the year, they discovered several mass graves in Tarhuna and in the southern outskirts of Tripoli with at least 353 bodies. For instance, on June 16, the GNA exhumed 226 bodies in the region. The territory had been controlled mainly by the LNA-aligned al-Kaniyat militia. According to the Tripoli-based General Authority of Search and Identification of Missing Persons, at least 270 people were still reported missing in Tarhuna.

The 5+5 Military Commission, which was established as a result of the Berlin Conference, initiated talks that led to a ceasefire deal signed between the GNA and LNA on October 23 in Geneva, Switzerland. The two parties agreed on the demobilization of various armed groups and the withdrawal of their troops from the front lines. They also agreed on the departure of all foreign fighters, although neither faction officially acknowledged that they were supported by foreign troops. On November 7, the UN-led Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, consisting of different Libyan conflict actors including the GNA and LNA, agreed to hold democratic national elections on 12/24/21. jmr

MOROCCO (POLISARIO / WESTERN SAHARA°)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1975**

Conflict parties: POLISARIO, Sahrawis vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over secession of Western Sahara° between the Popular Front of the Liberation of Saguia al-Hamran and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO), claiming to represent the Sahrawi people inhabiting Western Sahara, as well as Sahrawi people living in the disputed territory, on the one hand, and the Moroccan government, on the other, escalated to a violent crisis. The Moroccan government claimed Western Sahara as part of the Kingdom, while POLISARIO demanded the right for self-determination of the Sahrawis in the proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). POLISARIO ended their commitment to the 1991 ceasefire agreement after a military confrontation in November around the Guerguerat border crossing.

Between October 21 and November 13, several dozen Sahrawi protesters blocked the Guerguerat border crossing, effectively halting all border traffic between Western Sahara and Mauritania. On November 13, approx. 1,000 Moroccan soldiers entered the Buffer Strip starting a military operation that secured control of the aforementioned border crossing. As a result, POLISARIO ended their commitment to the ceasefire agreement on November 14 and accused Mo-

rocco of attacking peaceful protesters and civilians. Morocco declared its continued commitment to the agreement. Also on November 13, POLISARIO attacked a military outpost of the Moroccan army near the sand berm near the town of Mhables, which the Moroccan army repelled with anti-tank weaponry with no casualties on either side. POLISARIO also attacked other military bases and checkpoints along the sand berm near Al Mahbes, Bagari, and Guerguerat with artillery and claimed to have killed several Moroccan soldiers. The Moroccan army denied that claim. This triggered a series of artillery attacks by both sides which continued until the end of the year with an unknown number of casualties.

Throughout November, police increased pressure on Sahrawi activists in the region. For instance, on November 13, police beat civilians with batons after Sahrawis had protested in support of POLISARIO in Laayoune town. In the days following the protest, police raided several houses and carried out arrests, also in the cities of Boujdour, Dakhla, and Smara.

The UN-led peace process further stalled during the year, partly due to the inability to find a new UN envoy. The Moroccan government strengthened diplomatic ties with various governments as twelve predominantly African countries opened general consulates in Western Sahara, all of which were renounced by POLISARIO. On December 10, the US government recognized the Moroccan territorial claim over Western Sahara in a diplomatic deal, which in turn included the normalization of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Israel.

mfr

SAUDI ARABIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **2** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1992**

Conflict parties: opposition vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The dispute over the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the government of Saudi Arabia escalated to a violent crisis. Since its start in 1992, members of the opposition of the Saudi government, such as various civil and women’s rights activists, demanded a constitutional monarchy and the liberalization of society and laws. The dispute reached a peak in 2018 when journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed in the Saudi embassy in Istanbul, Turkey.

On April 21, the prominent human rights activist, Dr. Abdullah al-Hamid, co-founder of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), died in al-Ha’ir prison. Human rights associations as well as the UN criticized the circumstances leading to his death.

The killing of Jamal Khashoggi continued to cause outrage when the prison sentence of five of his assassins, who had been sentenced to death by a Saudi court in 2019, was reduced to 20 years each on September 9.

Despite political parties being banned, an opposition party called The National Assembly Party (NAAS) was established on September 23. Its main objectives included democratization, separation of powers, and changes to foreign policy. NAAS members were mostly located in exile.

The government continued to sentence opposition group members throughout the year. For instance, on December 28 a women’s rights activist was sentenced to five years and eight months imprisonment on terror charges such as agitation for change, harming the public order, and pursuing

a foreign agenda. Amnesty International alleged that Saudi authorities tortured and sexually harassed her while in detention.

Over the year, at least 274 journalists were imprisoned according to a statement made by the NGO Committee to Protect Journalists on December 5. In addition, the Citizen Lab, of the University of Toronto, released a report stating that the Saudi government used Spyware to hack 36 personal phones of Al Jazeera employees in July and August 2020.

lme

SYRIA (INTER-OPPOSITION RIVALRY)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↘** | Start: **2013**

Conflict parties: FSA, HTS, various Islamist groups
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources

The limited war over resources, subnational predominance, and the orientation of the political system between the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and various Islamist groups and coalitions, such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), and the So Be Steadfast Operations Room (SBS) de-escalated to a violent crisis. While the groups fought jointly against the Syrian government and the so-called Islamic State (IS) on several occasions, tensions between Islamist and moderate groups as well as among different Islamist militias persisted [→ Syria (opposition); Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

On January 11 and March 5, Russia and Turkey agreed to two ceasefires in Idlib city, eponymous governorate. On March 5, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to establish a security corridor and joint patrols in Syria's northwestern Idlib Governorate in a bid to avoid a major escalation. These agreements established a de-escalation zone in Idlib and required Turkey to contain the activities of Islamist militia groups. Although several Islamist militias, such as Hurras al-Din (HAD), Ansar al-Din Front (ADF), and Ansar al-Islam (AAI) rejected the ceasefires, the two agreements contributed to a calming of inter-opposition rivalries.

On 12 June, a coalition of jihadist insurgent groups including HAD, ADF, and AAI, along with al-Muqatileen al-Ansar Brigade and al-Jihad Coordination Group, led by former HTS commanders, reorganized themselves into a new operations room called 'So Be Steadfast'. On June 23, armed clashes occurred between HTS and HAD. HAD captured Idlib Central Prison and the Kansarwah factory, as well as several housing blocks west of Idlib city. One day later, HTS attacked SBS' stronghold of Arab Saeed, Idlib Governorate, with tanks and artillery, while clashes also resumed west of Idlib city between HTS and HAD. On the same day, HTS detained several SBS leaders, including Abu Salah Al-Uzbeki, leader of ADF. In return, SBS fighters attacked the Al-Yaqoubiya village checkpoint in Idlib Governorate, seizing control from HTS. As a result of the clashes, nine militants were killed and four civilians injured. On June 25, clashes occurred throughout the day around Arab Saeed, leaving at least five HAD and four HTS fighters dead. Following heavy fighting which killed ten HAD and nine HTS militants, HTS managed to recapture the Idlib Central Prison. On the following day, the two sides reached a new agreement, temporarily halting the violence. Moreover, HAD withdrew from all newly captured HTS territories. SBS fighters as the main local coalition were allowed

to withdraw to rebel-held areas of Latakia, eponymous governorate. However, the ceasefire did not hold, as sporadic clashes resumed at a later stage.

hkz

SYRIA (KURDISH GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1962**

Conflict parties: KDPS, PYD vs. government
 Conflict items: autonomy, subnational predominance, resources

The conflict over autonomy, subnational predominance, and resources between the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS), the Democratic Union Party (PYD), and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), on the one hand, and the government and pro-government forces, on the other, escalated to a violent crisis. While the Kurdish groups and the government fought separately against the so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)], on several occasions there were clashes between them, mostly in Qamishli, Al-Hasakah Governorate, which is largely under the control of the SDF.

On April 4, the pro-government National Defence Forces (NDF) fired on a Kurdish Internal Security Forces's (Asayish) vehicle, killing one officer and one civilian in Qamishli. Also on April 16, NDF forces reportedly threw two grenades on a checkpoint of Asayish Forces in Qamishli and exchanged fire with them. No casualties were reported. On August 17, US forces on a joint patrol with SDF returned fire at a Syrian government checkpoint near Tal al-Zahab, al-Hasakah Governorate, reportedly killing one Syrian soldier and wounding two others. US forces claimed the patrol had come under fire from the checkpoint's vicinity.

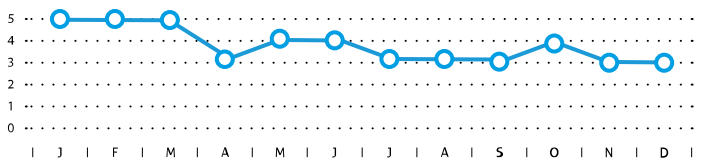
On August 2, the government revealed the conclusion of an agreement between an American oil company and the SDF, which controls northeastern oilfields, over the development of the current fields as well as production and sale of oil. The government condemned the conclusion of the agreement and called it illegal.

mob, hkz

SYRIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **•** | Start: **2011**

Conflict parties: NC, FSA, HTS vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power



The war over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition groups and the government continued for the 10th consecutive year.

The opposition was primarily comprised of the National Coalition for the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (NC), its military wing Free Syrian Army (FSA), and Islamist umbrella groups, such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The latter was formed in a January 2017 merger between Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly al-Nusra Front, the Ansar al-Din Front, and other Islamist militant groups. The Syrian Arab Army (SAA)

was supported by Iran and various Shiite militias from Syria and neighboring countries, most prominently the Lebanon-based Hezbollah. Since 2015, Russia has supported the government with airstrikes and ground forces. Furthermore, the government, its allies, and opposition groups fought against the so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. Depending on the source, the conflict's overall death toll varied from 370,000 to 600,000. As of December 2020, at least 5.6 million people have sought refuge in neighboring countries and 6.9 million have been internally displaced since the beginning of the conflict. The government's territorial gains were limited this year due to the involvement of international actors, especially Russia and Turkey. Nevertheless, al-Assad was able to consolidate his power in the government-controlled areas, while fighting concentrated on opposition-held northwestern Syria.

The government continued its offensive, mainly in Idlib Governorate from January to March. A ceasefire was brokered between Russia and Turkey on January 9, which came into effect on January 12. One day prior, al-Qaeda militia Ansar al-Thawid had attacked Syrian army positions in southeastern Idlib, gaining a strategic hill position. After several similar attacks by different opposition groups in the following days, the Syrian army resumed its offensive on January 15. The following week, the control over several towns and villages changed repeatedly. On January 22, Turkistan Islamic Party and Syrian government forces clashed in southern Idlib using heavy weaponry such as tanks. The clashes left 50 militants and 40 soldiers dead, as well as 90 militants and 80 soldiers wounded.

On January 24, the Syrian army, supported by Russian airstrikes, continued its ground offensive to capture the strategically important town of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, Idlib Governorate, at the M5 highway. In the first two days of the operation Russian air forces conducted approx. 80 airstrikes and Syrian helicopters dropped approx. 50 barrel bombs in the contested area. By January 27, SAA had almost encircled the town. In the following two days, SAA recaptured the city and nearby Wadi Deif military base. During the fighting, 147 pro-government forces were killed, as were 151 militants. This further push northwards by the SAA was heavily condemned by Turkey, which threatened to get directly involved. Subsequently, Turkish and Syrian soldiers exchanged fire on February 3, killing seven Turkish and 13 Syrian soldiers. Turkey also claimed responsibility for several airstrikes on Syrian military positions which killed at least 30 Syrian soldiers. These claims were rejected by Syria and Russia. On February 7, SAA took most of Saraqib, Idlib, including Turkish observation posts, killing seven Turkish soldiers. By February 11, SAA had recaptured 600 square kilometers since the beginning of the year, leaving 700,000 people internally displaced. A day later, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that Turkey would strike Syrian forces if they attacked Turkish observation posts. By then, Turkey had stationed 30,000 troops at the border and 9,000 in Idlib. Ongoing bombardments and ground attacks forced the WFP to halt its activities in Idlib.

After the SAA had regained full control over the strategic M5 highway connecting Aleppo, eponymous governorate, and the capital Damascus on February 5, it shifted its focus to the western outskirts of Aleppo. By February 17, SAA had pushed the opposition militias out of their last captured areas in Aleppo's western periphery. On the same day, al-Assad announced that the military operations in Aleppo and Idlib would continue regardless of Turkish interference. At the end of February, opposition militias started a counter-offensive

towards Saraqib, backed by Turkish artillery. Meanwhile, SAA continued to make territorial gains in southern Idlib, also clashing with Turkish troops. On February 27, opposition militias recaptured Saraqib and thereby cut the government control over the M5 highway. The same day, Syrian airstrikes on a Turkish infantry battalion near Balyun, Idlib, left at least 34 soldiers dead. In retaliation Turkey attacked 200 Syrian targets with heavy weaponry like helicopters, tanks, and howitzers. At least 74 Syrian soldiers, 22 Hezbollah militants, as well as one Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officer were killed.

NATO expressed its support for Turkey, while Russia increased naval and air supply to Syria due to a possible blockade by Turkey. The UNSG called for an immediate ceasefire, which was supported by 13 UNSC members but vetoed by Russia and China. On March 1, Turkish F-16 fighter jets shot down two Syrian Su-24 jets. With the strong Turkish involvement, the momentum at the front in southern Idlib changed and opposition militias were gaining ground again and, killing at least 46 SAA soldiers. Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin met on March 5 in the Russian capital Moscow and agreed to a ceasefire, starting on March 6. By March 12, both sides had repeatedly violated the ceasefire.

From March 15, joint Russian-Turkish patrols along the M4 and M5 highways led to relative calm until June. On June 3 and 8, Syrian and Russian air forces conducted bombing campaigns in southern Idlib, displacing hundreds and killing at least three. Despite the ceasefire, Russia, Syria, and Turkey conducted airstrikes throughout the rest of the year. In one of the most fatal incidents since the beginning of the ceasefire, on October 26, Russian Air Force struck the camp of a Turkish-backed Islamist group, Faylaq al-Sham, near Kafr Takharim in Idlib Governorate, killing 78 fighters and wounding more than 90. The shelling of schools, hospitals, and civil infrastructure during the whole campaign was heavily criticized by human rights groups. The government's poor response to Covid-19 led to sporadic protests in different government-controlled areas. [ska](#)

SYRIA (TURKEY – SDF / NORTHERN SYRIA)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↓** | Start: **2018**

Conflict parties: SDF, YPG vs. Turkey, FSA

Conflict items: autonomy, subnational predominance

The war over subnational predominance and autonomy between Turkey and the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (TFSA), on the one hand, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), militarily led by the People's Protection Units (YPG), on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis. Throughout the year, clashes between the TFSA, backed by Turkish airstrikes, and SDF continued, leaving at least 237 people dead and 272 injured on both sides, including civilians. Parallel to the fighting, US-mediated talks between the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Kurdish National Council (ENKS) led to a joint agreement on June 17, strengthening and uniting political opposition to the 2019 Turkish invasion.

From late March to May, the Turkish advance came to a temporary halt due to clashes between rivaling TFSA subgroups in Tel Rifaat, Aleppo Governorate, during which the Kurdish Afrin Liberation Forces (HRE) launched several attacks on TFSA groups. For instance, on April 25, HRE killed ten TFSA members and injured 14 in Sherawa district, Aleppo Gover-

norate, in a hit-and-run attack. Moreover, on April 28, a VBIED killed 40 civilians in Afrin, Aleppo Governorate. The Turkish army blamed SDF for the attack, which denied the allegations. Throughout June in the Euphrates region, both the SDF and Turkey allegedly set alight the crops of local farmers. One of the largest fires occurred on June 7 and destroyed some 250 hectares of agricultural land. On June 14, Turkey launched Operation Claw-Eagle, shifting their focus from Northern Syria to attacking Kurdistan Workers' Party cells in northern Iraq [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK)]. Nevertheless, Turkish airstrikes continued in the following months, for instance killing three Kurdish civilians, amongst them a leader of the local women's confederation Kongra-Star, on June 24. Furthermore, repeated car bombings continued to affect the region. For instance, on September 12, a VBIED detonated in Ras al-Ayn, al-Hasakah Governorate, killing two people and injuring five. Two days later, another VBIED explosion in Afrin, Aleppo Governorate, left nine people dead and 43 injured. The attacks were not claimed by either side.

The internal displacement of civilians due to ongoing clashes remained an issue throughout the year. In response, in early January, the Turkish government announced that the occupied areas between Ras al-Ayn district, al-Hasakah Governorate, and Tell Abiyad district, Raqqqa Governorate, would become a safe zone model area where IDPs from Idlib, eponymous Governorate, would be settled. However, the situation in Washukanni IDP camp, al Hasakah Governorate, hosting over 10,000 people, deteriorated on March 23, when the Turkish army closed down a water station which provided water for the camp and neighboring villages. Nonetheless, on May 1, the Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria announced that over 1,500 families fleeing the increasing violence in Idlib [→ Syria (Opposition)] had settled in Ain Issa and Hasakah IDP camps. From December onwards, Ain Issa, Raqqqa Governorate, came under increased artillery fire by Turkey and TFSA forces, reportedly forcing 7,000 civilians to flee the city on December 10.

daj

tion including social services. Due to large-scale mobilization on social media, foreign fighters from over a hundred countries joined the group. IS expanded its operations to Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, and Algeria in 2014, followed by Yemen, Tunisia, and Turkey in 2015, as well as Saudi-Arabia in 2016. Outside West Asia and North Africa, IS operated in Afghanistan and Pakistan [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)]. Other militant groups from Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia pledged allegiance to IS, including an al-Shabaab faction, a Boko Haram faction, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Caucasus Emirate, as well as Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Sayyaf, and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters [→ Somalia (ISS); Nigeria (Boko Haram); Russia (Islamist militants / Northern Caucasus); Tajikistan (Islamist militant groups); Indonesia (Islamist militant groups); Philippines (Abu Sayyaf); Philippines (BIFF, BIFM – MILF, government)]. In order to halt the territorial advance of IS, coalitions led by the US, France, Russia, and Saudi Arabia as well as individual countries such as Iran and Turkey started to launch several operations in Iraq and Syria in 2014 and later years. Besides the US-led coalition Operation Inherent Resolve and Iranian support of the Syrian and Iraqi governments as well as other militant groups in combating IS in 2014 [→ Iraq (Shiite militant groups)], Russia commenced its military operation in 2015 as a fight against radical Islamist militants [→ Syria (opposition)]. In 2016, Turkey intervened in Syria and pushed IS back from its border. IS started to lose territory in Syria and Iraq in 2016 and had lost almost all its territory until early 2019. Since then, IS has not regained any territory, however its sleeper cells remained active and continued attacking governments, militias, and civilian targets. Several anti-IS operations continued in the countries in which the group was still present. On the country level, in 2020 the conflict was on the level of a war in Syria, while it was on the level of a violent crisis in Afghanistan, Algeria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen. No violent measures were recorded in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the US, the Russian Federation, France and the UK.

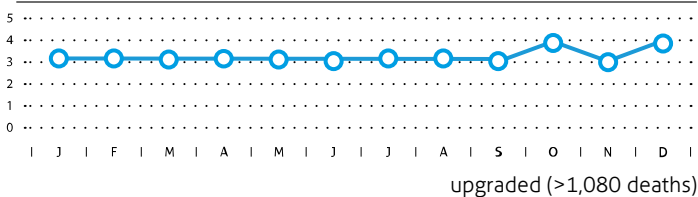
mob, ska

SYRIA, IRAQ ET AL. (IS)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2014

Conflict parties: IS vs. Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, France, Hezbollah et al., Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Syrian opposition groups, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA, Yemen

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power, resources



The war over the orientation of the international system and resources such as oil between so-called Islamic State (IS), on the one hand, and Syria and Iraq as well as other governments and several militant groups, on the other, continued. Following its foundation in 2014 by Iraqi citizen Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, IS brought large territories in Syria and Iraq under its control. It announced a caliphate, implemented its interpretation of Sharia law, and set up state-like administra-

SYRIA

In Syria, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) seized IS' last regional territorial strongholds in March 2019. In 2020, IS was not able to recapture any of its formerly held territory. In the first quarter of the year, most of IS' activities were confined to the governorate of Deir ez-Zor. From March onwards, IS fighters mainly conducted attacks from the deserts in Homs and in the Aleppo-Hama-Raqqqa triangle. Sleeper cells were active in al-Hasakah, Dara' and Idlib governorates. IS killed approx. 819 pro-government troops throughout the year, while the group's own death toll rose to around 507. At least 53 civilians died from IS attacks, assassinations, and landmine explosions. SDF was primarily concerned with small-scale IS attacks. For example, on January 29, IS claimed responsibility for the killing of one SDF member and for the wounding of another, after an IS-built IED detonated on their motorcycle. Throughout the year, SDF initiated several security campaigns with international coalition air support that led to the arrest of various former and current IS fighters. On October 8, Kurdish authorities released 631 IS fighters they deemed to be regretful of their former IS affiliation and unharmed to the public. At the beginning of the year, IS mainly conducted small-scale attacks against Syrian troops. For example, on January 15, militants seized almost 2,000 cattle from shepherds in Deir

ez-Zor's Al-Mayadin Desert. After Syrian troops accompanied the shepherds to the desert in order to investigate the theft, IS attacked them, killing eleven soldiers and two shepherds. From March onwards, IS cells increasingly conducted large-scale attacks and ambushes against government forces and pro-government militias from the deserts in Homs and Hama governorates. On March 31, IS cells captured and executed a colonel and two soldiers close to Al-Rashwaniya village in Homs desert. On April 9, IS attacked positions of military and pro-government militias and briefly captured houses in the city of Sokhna in Homs Desert. The subsequent clashes were accompanied by Russian airstrikes, resulting in the death of 32 government fighters and 26 IS militants. On May 7, IS launched an attack on Syrian troops from the Homs Desert between the towns al-Sukhnah and al-Sholah. IS wounded 15 soldiers while nine IS fighters were killed. At the beginning of September, Syrian troops ramped up military operations together with pro-Syrian militias and Russian air support in order to detect IS cells in Homs Desert and in deserts located in the Aleppo-Hama-Raqqa triangle. Intense clashes between IS militants and pro-Syrian troops repeatedly erupted in these areas until the end of the year. On December 30, IS ambushed a Syrian military convoy on the Homs-Deir ez-Zor road in eastern Deir ez-Zor, killing at least 39 of the government forces who were returning to their home base for the holidays, marking it to be one of IS' most lethal attacks since its territorial defeat in March 2019.

mif

IRAQ

Throughout the year, there remained between 3,500 to 4,000 active militants of IS in Iraq. IS did not hold any strategically important territory and was mostly active in the governorates of Baghdad, Salah ad-Din, Kirkuk, and Diyala. During the year, IS militants committed around 50 major attacks on civilians, killing at least 240. For instance, on April 21, IS killed five civilians north of the capital Baghdad. On June 13, IS militants killed six civilians in Dara village, eastern Diyala. On September 25, IS committed two attacks, remotely detonating IEDs that were planted in farmland in Diyala and Northern Kirkuk, killing at least two civilians. On November 8, at least eleven people were killed in Radwaniyah district, close to the Baghdad international airport. On November 19, IS committed a second major attack killing eight civilians near Almsahag village, Northern Salah ad-Din. IS also frequently carried out attacks against local police forces, army forces, and paramilitaries organized under the state-sponsored Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). For instance, on April 3, IS militants killed three soldiers in an IED attack in Kirkuk. Two days later, IS targeted a military checkpoint, killing four soldiers near Rutba town in western al-Anbar Governorate. Two IS attacks occurred on May 1 in Makeeshfa and Tal al-Dahab villages, resulting in the death of ten PMF fighters. On August 24, IS opened fire on a checkpoint, killing four soldiers in the Daquq area, southeastern Kirkuk. On December 13, IS detonated an IED which killed one soldier and wounded two in Kirkuk.

Security forces conducted at least 30 operations against IS throughout the year. For instance, on February 25, the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service forces killed 39 IS militants in a clash in Salah ad-Din. On April 13, Operation Inherent Resolve killed 23 IS fighters in the Wadi Shie region, Kirkuk. On April 28, the British Royal Air Force killed ten IS militants and destroyed six IS hideouts in Salah ad-Din. On June 24, a joint Iraqi Security Forces and US-led coalition operation

killed at least twelve IS militants in Makhmur district, Erbil Governorate. On September 11, security forces killed four IS leaders in Samarra district, Salah ad-Din. On October 22, security forces killed a high-ranking IS commander in Zghitoun Valley, west of Kirkuk.

vba

AFGHANISTAN

In the first half of the year, the activities of Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) were centered in the eastern Kunar Province, while frequently targeting the capital Kabul and the eponymous province. ISKP targeted primarily civilians, government institutions, and officials. On March 6, for instance, ISKP fighters attacked a memorial ceremony at a Sikh temple in Kabul, killing at least 32 civilians and injuring twelve. On May 12, three ISKP members attacked a hospital in Dasht-e Barchi area in Kabul, an area which is inhabited mostly by the minority Shiite Hazara community. The attackers, two of whom were dressed as police officers, targeted the maternity ward, killing at least 24 women, children, and newborns. The ISKP fighters were also killed. The same day, ISKP conducted a suicide attack at a funeral in Nangarhar Province, killing at least 15 civilians and injuring 40.

In the second half of the year, ISKP continued its attacks on both government and civilian institutions. On August 3, it attempted to free imprisoned ISKP fighters in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province. The militants breached the prison's security perimeter with a VBIED and entered with ten gunmen. As a result, 39 people, including inmates, civilians, security forces, and all ISKP attackers were killed and 48 more injured. Out of 1,793 prisoners, 1,025 managed to escape. At least 700 were recaptured, according to officials. On October 24, an ISKP suicide bomber detonated explosives at the Kawsar-e Danish school, Dasht-e Barchi area, Kabul, killing 24 people and injuring 57. On November 3, ISKP gunmen attacked Kabul University, killing 22 civilians and injuring 22, and claiming they had targeted the graduation ceremony for judges and investigators of the Afghan government. On November 21, ISKP fighters conducted a mortar attack on Kabul's Green Zone, launching 23 mortar shells from two vehicles, two of which hit the Iranian Embassy compound, killing at least eight civilians and injuring 31. On December 12, ISKP forces fired ten Katyusha missiles at the capital's airport, causing minor damages to an unoccupied airplane.

Throughout the year, Afghan police, intelligence, and army forces, in collaboration with the US-led coalition forces, conducted various operations leading to arrests of ISKP fighters and commanders. On February 12, for example, the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS) arrested nine ISKP supporters during a military operation in Kabul. On September 10, the NDS arrested a high ranking commander of the ISKP in Kabul, who was allegedly the head of operations in Northern and Northeastern Afghanistan. On December 30, Afghan security forces arrested a finance manager of ISKP in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province.

In addition to the ground operations, the Afghan Special Forces as well as the US air force repeatedly launched airstrikes at ISKP militants. For instance, on February 25, US military forces conducted two airstrikes in Kunar Province, killing four ISKP fighters. On November 27, in a series of US airstrikes in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces, 13 ISKP militants were killed.

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ALGERIA

IS claimed one attack against the Algerian Peoples' National Army (ANP) this year. An IS fighter attacked a military base with a car bomb in the area of Timiaouine, Bordj Badji Mokhtar Province, on February 11, killing one ANP soldier and himself. The ANP, on the other hand, continued their operations against Islamist fighters throughout the year, claiming to have killed 21 fighters without clear allegiance. twh

EGYPT

In Egypt, clashes between the Egyptian government, supported by Bedouin tribes, and the local branch of IS, so-called Sinai Province fighters, continued. Most violent confrontations took place in the North Sinai Governorate, particularly in the cities of al-Arish, Rafah, Sheikh Zuweid, Bir al-Abd and the respective surroundings. Throughout the year, IS claimed attacks on security forces and civilians via social media and their news outlet Amaq. Moreover, IS continued to attack civilians for their cooperation with Egyptian State authorities. Security forces continued to attack IS militants and other militant groups operating in the same area [→ Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)].

On February 5, Sinai Province fighters shot dead five soldiers of the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) in North Sinai. On February 9, Sinai Province claimed responsibility for the killing of seven soldiers and injuring another seven EAF personnel during an attack on three army checkpoints in North Sinai. Subsequently, on March 2, an Egyptian court sentenced to death 37 alleged IS militants, including Hisham al-Ashmawi, one of the country's leading militants. On March 13, the Ministry of Interior announced the killing of another IS leader in North Sinai. During the operation, EAF killed five other militants. On April 7, a suicide car bombing in the city of Sheikh Zuweid, for which Sinai Province claimed responsibility, resulted in the deaths of four members of Egyptian National Police as well as three civilians and left 26 civilians injured. In late April, Sinai Province claimed responsibility for an attack on a military vehicle in Bir al-Abd in which ten EAF members were killed. On June 6, a member of the Tarabin tribe, which is part of the Union of Sinai Tribes supporting the Egyptian government in their fight against IS, was executed by Sinai Province. On July 21, Sinai Province attacked a military camp in the village of Rabea in North Sinai, which forced many residents in villages close to Bir al-Abd to flee their homes. During another attack, armed militants occupied the villages of Qatiya, Iqtiya, Ganayen, and Merih, forcing mass displacement from the area. On September 13, Sinai Province claimed responsibility for an attack on a military vehicle, which resulted in several security personnel injured. On different occasions in mid-October, at least 14 civilians were killed by IEDs in Bir al-Abd area, which had been planted in houses deserted in July and August. On October 14, an IED detonated in the village of Al-Marih, west of Bir al-Abd, killing an officer and injuring four soldiers.

nbu

LEBANON

In Lebanon, the IS conducted a number of violent attacks. On August 21, a former IS member killed three people in a car attack in Kaftoun, North Governorate. Throughout September, armed clashes between alleged IS members, a former IS

member and Lebanese security forces took place in Araman and Minyeh, Jabal al-Bedawi area, North Governorate, and in Wadi Khaled area, Akkar Governorate, resulting in 21 casualties, 15 arrests and three injured persons. sap

LIBYA

The so-called Islamic State in Libya (ISL), once considered the group's strongest branch, continued to lose organizational power and influence within Libya throughout the year. As in the last year, both the Government of National Accord (GNA), recognized as the legal government of Libya by the UNSC, and their rival, the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA) headed by General Khalifa Haftar, conducted attacks against ISL.

Drone strikes carried out by the US as well as a lack of funding reduced ISL's capabilities to execute large-scale attacks. As a result of the ongoing operations against ISL fewer than 1,000 members remained within Libya, mainly dispersed across the south-western and central regions of the country.

ISL concentrated its attacks on the southwestern parts of Libya. During May and June, the group claimed several small-scale attacks targeting LNA forces with rockets and small arms. For instance, on May 25, ISL attacked a LNA-held security checkpoint with a VBIED in Taraghin town, Murzuq district. No casualties were reported.

ISL and the LNA clashed on several occasions. For instance, on August 16, the LNA fought with ISL fighters, who attempted to enter an oil facility in southern Libya, and killed four ISL militants. On September 23, the LNA clashed with ISL in Sebha town, eponymous district, and allegedly killed the leader of ISL as well as eight other militants, and arrested four others. Among them were various foreign fighters. Three LNA members were also killed during the fight. On April 16, the US Africa Command conducted an airstrike on ISL militants in Ghadwa town, Sebha district. No casualties were reported.. ala

TUNISIA

IS conducted at least one attack in Tunisia this year. On March 6, two suicide bombers detonated IEDs in front of the US embassy in the capital Tunis, killing one police officer and injuring five others as well as one civilian. No group confirmed the attack, however, IS had claimed similar attacks in the city in 2019. On September 6, three Islamist militants rammed a vehicle into a patrol in Sousse town, eponymous governorate, killing one National Guard officer and injuring another with a knife. Police forces shot dead the attackers. IS later claimed the attack.

Tunisian security forces, on the other hand, continued their campaign against Islamist groups throughout the year. On February 25, the National Guard killed two IS leaders at Mount Selloum, Kasserine Governorate. Supported by the National Guard, the Tunisian military killed two IS militants near Kasserine city, eponymous governorate, on April 4. twh

YEMEN

The Yemeni IS branch carried out most of their attacks against al-Houthi forces in al-Bayda governorate. One incident also occurred in the Dali governorate. IS claimed responsibility for 50 attacks of which only two were directed against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

(AQAP). This confirmed observations of the previous year that IS had shifted its focus from AQAP back to al-Houthi forces. However, an UN report stated that IS and al-Houthi forces were collaborating in al-Bayda. Photo evidence and written statements published on IS-affiliated media channels suggested that IS recruited AQAP deserters to fill up their ranks.

After heavy fighting between August 11 and 17, al-Houthi forces claimed victory over IS in the al-Bayda governorate. The group stated that they had killed, injured, or captured 250 jihadists including the IS leader of al-Bayda, destroyed twelve camps, and seized 1000 km of territory in al-Qayfa district. At the same time, IS-affiliated sources declared victory over al-Houthi forces in al-Bayda and claimed to have killed and injured 60 militants.

sbr

TUNISIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2010**

Conflict parties: civil society groups, opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and civil society movements, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The conflict was marked by decentralized socio-economic protests all over the country, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Protests occurred throughout the year, with people protesting the retention of wages, unemployment as well as water shortages and the lack of food supplies. In April, three young men reportedly attempted to self-immolate in front of the local government offices in Maktar, Siliana Governorate, to protest economic hardship. On May 28, hundreds of protesters took to the streets in at least seven cities all over the country, demanding jobs. Several demonstrations concerning the El-Kamour oil production site, Tataouine Governorate, further called for the implementation of a 2017 agreement between the government and the Tunisian General Labour Union aimed at creating jobs. Starting on June 8, protesters staged a sit-in and blocked the road to the oil production site by erecting tents. Police violently dispersed the protests from June 20 to 23 and clashed with protesters in Tataouine city, eponymous governorate. Protesters threw stones and Molotov cocktails, police responded with the heavy use of tear gas, injuring at least 200 according to Amnesty International. On October 13, further protests erupted in the city of Sbeitla, Kasserine Governorate, after authorities bulldozed an unlicensed kiosk, killing a sleeping man inside. After hundreds of protesters clashed with the police, the military was deployed to protect government facilities.

Overall, the country's political situation remained unstable. On September 1, parliament confirmed the third government within a year. The ongoing state of emergency, first declared in November 2015, was extended until 05/23/21.

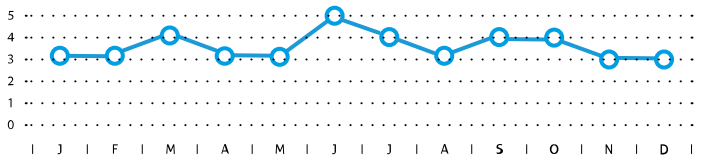
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TURKEY (PKK, TAK)

Intensity: **5** | Change: • | Start: **1978**

Conflict parties: PKK, TAK vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy



The war over autonomy between the Turkish government, on the one hand, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), supported by its alleged offshoot, the Kurdistan Freedom Fighters (TAK), on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, at least 686 people were killed and 71 injured. Clashes between the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and the PKK mostly affected the southeastern Turkish provinces Agri, Van, Hakkari, Sirnak, Siirt, Bitlis, Mus, Mardin, and Hatay, as well as the Iraqi governorates Nineveh, Dohuk, and Erbil. In June, the Turkish government reinforced its military presence in northern Iraq with additional air and ground support.

In January and February, the Turkish government started four counterterrorism operations in Turkey's southeastern provinces Mardin, Hatay, and Batman. Up to 800 security personnel such as gendarmerie, police, and village guards carried out each of the operations, claiming they had arrested approx. 450 and killed 69 PKK members in total. The operations aimed to anticipate and hamper PKK operations as well as potential militant attacks by identifying PKK shelters and destroying weaponry.

During the second half of the year, the Turkish government started several operations called Operation Yildirim in Turkey's eastern provinces Agri, Sirnak, Siirt, Hakkari, and Van. They were launched as a follow-up to previous Yildirim Operations to regain control from the PKK over the area. Operation Yildirim-10 and Operation Yildirim-11 both included over 1,000 security personnel. During these operations, TAF destroyed more than 100 PKK hideouts and arms depots. Between August and October, TAF killed at least 26 PKK militants in these operations.

Throughout the year, Turkish authorities detained at least 687 people for alleged links to the PKK. Between February 10 and February 15, Turkish security forces carried out raids in 37 provinces and detained 450 people for alleged ties to the PKK.

In June, the Turkish government launched two cross-border operations, Operation Claw-Eagle and Operation Claw-Tiger, in northern Iraq. Within the first two days of the operations, TAF carried out airstrikes in combination with ground attacks and destroyed allegedly over 500 PKK hideouts. After TAF initiated the cross-border operations in mid-June, the Iraqi population in Sulaymaniyah Governorate protested against Turkish military actions in northern Iraq. In June and July, approx. twelve villages were evacuated in Dohuk Governorate from Dohuk city's surrounding area to Zakho district. Over the course of both operations, TAF killed 337 militants and seized PKK weapons. In June, TAF conducted airstrikes on over 700 targets as part of the operations. Since January, at least 152 militants surrendered to the Turkish military.

Throughout the year, the PKK conducted several attacks using IEDs in Turkey. For instance, on March 31, PKK militants damaged a natural gas pipeline in Agri Province. On April 8,

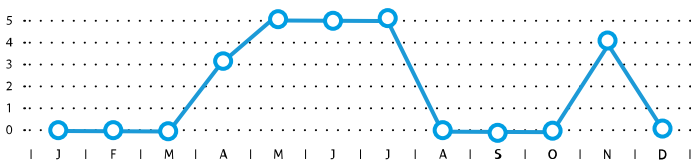
PKK militants killed five civilians in Diyarbakir Province. PKK militants killed two and injured eight civilians in Van Province on June 8 and killed four civilians in Sirnak Province on June 17. On October 26, a suicide bomber associated with the PKK targeted Ferner Avenue and killed himself in Iskenderun district, Hatay Province. Turkish security forces killed another militant associated with the incident. Both had previously been under observation by the police.

The PKK conducted several attacks in northern Iraq. On March 25, the PKK conducted a mortar attack killing two Turkish soldiers and wounding two in Iraq's Haftanin region, Dohuk Governorate, near the Turkish border. On September 18, PKK attacked a Turkish military base in northern Iraq with rockets, killing two Turkish soldiers and injuring another. Moreover, on October 28, an oil pipeline in Erbil Governorate was damaged by an IED allegedly deployed by PKK. krz

YEMEN (AL-HIRAK / SOUTHERN YEMEN)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **↑** | Start: **2007**

Conflict parties: al-Hirak vs. government
 Conflict items: secession



The violent crisis over secession of southern Yemen between the al-Hirak movement and the government of internationally recognized President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi escalated to a war.

During the year, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and its military wing, the Security Belt Forces, proved to be the dominant force inside the al-Hirak movement. On August 4, the Supreme Council of the Revolutionary Movement for the Liberation and Independence of the South publicly declared that STC was a rival to al-Hirak, opposed al-Hirak's peaceful resistance and was mainly supported by the United Arab Emirates. The STC did not contradict the latter allegation.

In the first half of the year, the 2019 Riyadh Agreement between the STC and the government, which aimed to bring the STC into the government, was implemented neither on a political nor military level. On January 1, the STC announced to suspend its participation in the Riyadh Agreement committees that were responsible for implementing main contents of the agreement such as the composition of a new government or the re-deployment of government forces in the southern governorates. The withdrawal was in protest of violence in the Shabwa Governorate, supposedly initiated by actors loyal to the Hadi affiliated Islah party. Subsequently, both sides failed to subordinate their forces to the authority of the Ministry of Defence and Interior on January 5. Furthermore, on April 26, the STC declared self-rule in Aden City, eponymous governorate, and further governorates in the South, which was rejected by the government and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition. Saudi-brokered talks led to a new implementation framework of the Riyadh Agreement on July 29, resulting in the revocation of STC's declaration of self-rule. In return, the conflict parties agreed on the appointment of STC-affiliated members as the governor and security chief of the city Aden. Negotiation talks between the conflict parties resumed several times but were suspended by the STC due to its accusation of ongoing military escalations by

the government, who rejected these accusations. However, on December 10, the conflict parties agreed to form a new joint government, which Hadi announced on December 18. Half of the new cabinet were STC-affiliated ministers.

Violent clashes took place mainly in the governorate of Abyan and intensified throughout the year. On May 11, attempts by government forces to capture the city Zinjibar, Abyan governorate led to a general mobilization of the Security Belt Forces on the next day. On May 24, heavy clashes near Zinjibar left at least 45 people dead and dozens injured. Attempts by the government to gain territorial control over the governorate led to additional clashes between June 7 and June 11, leaving at least 100 fighters dead, 150 injured, and dozens of persons displaced. On June 22, a general ceasefire was introduced through diplomatic efforts by Saudi Arabia but broke on the following day due to clashes near Zinjibar, resulting in at least 54 dead fighters and more than 50 injured on both sides. On June 29 further clashes near Shaqra left 21 people dead and at least 51 injured. The following months were dominated by truces and sporadic clashes throughout Abyan. Heavy fighting resumed on November 2 and November 13 in al-Tiriya, Abyan Governorate, and Zinjibar, resulting in six dead and eight injured as well as at least 15 dead and over 20 injured, respectively.

Further tensions rose over the control of the Yemeni island Socotra, eponymous governorate, where several clashes between STC and the government took place throughout the year. Most notably, violence escalated on June 16 after the Security Belt Forces had dropped an artillery bomb on neighborhoods in the city of Hadiboh. The clashes ended on June 20 with the announcement by the STC that it had taken control over the archipelago. leg

YEMEN (AQAP – AL-HOUTHİ FORCES)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2010**

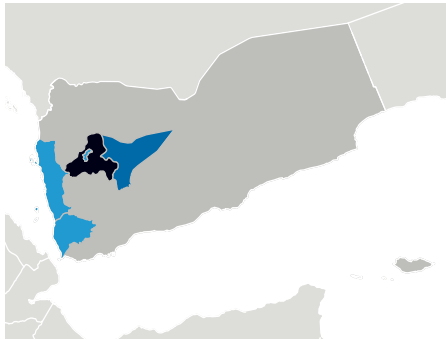
Conflict parties: al-Houthi forces vs. Ansar al-Sharia, AQAP
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

The violent crisis over ideology and subnational predominance between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its local arm Ansar al-Sharia, on the one hand, and al-Houthi forces, on the other, continued.

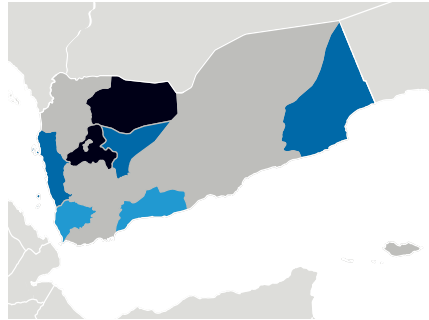
On February 25, AQAP used IEDs in a roadside attack against the al-Houthi forces in al-Qahwa, al-Bayda Governorate, and targeted Houthi barracks in Dahhan, al-Bayda, with no casualties reported. On March 12, AQAP released a statement claiming they had killed one al-Houthi militant in Tayyab, al-Bayda. Furthermore, AQAP killed an al-Houthi official on March 17 in al-Bayda. On April 23, al-Houthi forces claimed to have captured an AQAP base in the Khasaf area, Al-Jawf Governorate. The al-Houthi forces released a video of the group touring the base without providing any further information on clashes or injured fighters on either side. On April 30, the al-Houthi forces released 43 AQAP prisoners based on an agreement made with AQAP leaders in Sana'a city, eponymous governorate, to cooperate with attacks on Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces [→ Yemen (al-Hirak/Southern Yemen)].

On June 6, al-Houthi forces accused AQAP of killing six of its members in cooperation with the Al-Islah Party in the Al-Taffah area, al-Bayda. On July 5, al-Houthi forces also

Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December



accused AQAP of attacking the Al-Khushaa area, Ma'rib Governorate, killing a tribal sheikh and six of his family members. In August, the al-Houthi forces made territorial advances in al-Bayda from which they attempted to expel AQAP and IS forces. On August 19, al-Houthi claimed their victory in al-Bayda and reported the killing of 250 AQAP and IS members. On November 9, AQAP released a video of seven al-Houthi prisoners calling on al-Houthi forces to organize prisoner exchanges.

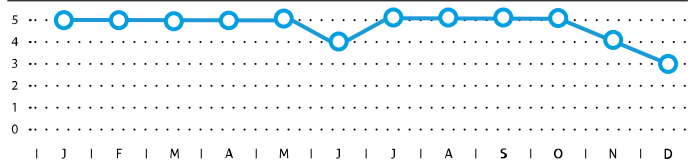
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YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA (AL-HOUTHİ FORCES)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2004

Conflict parties: al-Houthi forces vs. Saudi Arabia, Yemen

Conflict items: national power



The war over national power between al-Houthi forces, supported by the Iranian government as well as popular committees affiliated with al-Houthi forces, on the one hand, and the internationally recognized Yemeni government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, supported by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, anti-Houthi popular resistance and tribal forces, and the Islah party, on the other, continued.

The conflict escalated into a war after al-Houthi forces had occupied the Yemeni capital Sana'a in 2014. This year, al-Houthi forces captured areas in al-Jawf Governorate and advanced towards Ma'rib Governorate. In December, UN-OCHA suggested the war's total death toll had reached 230,000.

Peace negotiations between Saudi Arabia and al-Houthi officials continued without result. The government and the al-Houthi movement announced a pandemic-related ceasefire on March 26. However, clashes continued despite the announcement. Similarly, the Saudi-led coalition announced a unilateral two-week ceasefire on April 4 but resumed airstrikes the following day. Following UN-mediated negotiations in Switzerland, the government and the al-Houthi movement decided to exchange more than 1,000 prisoners in Sana'a city on October 13. Further talks on additional prisoner exchanges were held in November.

The Saudi-led coalition continued to target al-Houthi forces with airstrikes. For instance, on January 22 and 23, several

airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition on al-Houthi positions in Sana'a Governorate killed at least 80 militants and injured 100. On February 4 and September 24, 23 al-Houthi members were killed in another airstrike in al-Jawf Governorate as well as six al-Houthi members in Sa'ada Governorate, respectively. In several instances, civilians were killed in airstrikes. For example, on February 15, an airstrike in al-Jawf Governorate killed 31 civilians and injured another twelve civilians.

Al-Houthi forces attacked the government with ballistic missiles and armed drones throughout the year. On January 18, al-Houthi missiles and drone attacks on a government military camp in Ma'rib Governorate killed at least 116 people and destroyed a mosque. Subsequently, government forces targeted Houthi-held Sana'a city.

In late January, al-Houthi forces started offensives in Ma'rib and al-Jawf Governorates. After al-Houthi forces captured Nihm District on January 26, they advanced eastwards to Sirwah District in Ma'rib Governorate. Additionally, al-Houthi forces captured al-Ghail District and al-Hazm City, the capital of al-Jawf Governorate, on February 29 and March 1, respectively.

In September, al-Houthi forces attacked government forces in Mahliya and Rahabah Districts in Southern Ma'rib Governorate. On September 25, a missile attack on a government troop parade in Ma'rib City, eponymous governorate, killed several persons. Several al-Houthi attacks led to civilian casualties. For instance, on February 2, al-Houthi forces attacked two hospitals in Ma'rib Governorate. On June 3, al-Houthi artillery hit a bus in Taiz City, eponymous governorate, killing one person and injuring four others.

Furthermore, al-Houthi forces used ballistic missiles and UAVs to conduct attacks on Saudi territory. For instance, on July 3, al-Houthi officials claimed the destruction of the control room of the domestic Najran Airport as well as weapon storages at King Khalid Airbase in Khamis Mushait, Asir Province. Saudi sources, however, claimed to have intercepted multiple UAVs. Al-Houthi forces repeatedly attacked Abha International Airport in Asir Province from September 1 to September 17.

In addition to the violent confrontations between both parties, floods in several governorates further worsened the humanitarian situation. On August 12, the government reported a total of 174 deaths due to floods. According to the UN, torrential rains and floods caused 300,000 people to lose their homes, crops, and livestock as of August 21. In March, the US froze humanitarian aid payments to Yemen over reports of misuse by the al-Houthi movement. In June, UN Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator Mark Lowcock announced that without further aid, Yemen would face devastating consequences. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic additionally exacerbated the precarious humanitarian situation.

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