



# CONFLICT BAROMETER | 2021

Heidelberg Institute for  
International Conflict Research



disputes  
non-violent crises  
violent crises  
limited wars  
wars

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The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK), associated with the Institute of Political Science of Heidelberg University, is a registered non-profit association. It is dedicated to the research, evaluation, and documentation of political conflicts worldwide.

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).

For more information please visit our website:

[www.hiik.de](http://www.hiik.de)



HIK

Heidelberg Institute for  
International Conflict Research

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## CONFLICT BAROMETER|2021

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Analyzed Period: 01/01/21 – 12/31/21

## PREFACE

With the 30th edition of the *Conflict Barometer*, the HIIK continues its annual series of reports covering political conflicts worldwide.

The global political conflict panorama in 2021 was marked by an ongoing high number of highly violent conflicts. The number of wars decreased from 21 to 20 while the number of limited wars increased from 19 to 20. No wars were observed in Europe and the Americas. The number of wars in the region West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan (WANA) decreased from seven to three. Meanwhile, in Asia and Oceania HIIK observed the first war since 2017. Sub-Saharan Africa remained the region with the highest number of wars. Eleven wars continued while five limited wars escalated to full-scale wars. As in previous years, violent intrastate crises continued to represent the most common conflict type and shaped the global conflict landscape. Finally, ceasefires, such as the one between India and Pakistan, and peace initiatives, for instance the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, aimed to pave the way for more peaceful future relations.

2021 also brought a great loss for the HIIK and the field of conflict research in Heidelberg in general, when Prof. Dr. Frank R. Pfetsch passed away on November 18 at the age of 85. Frank Pfetsch's significance for conflict research in Heidelberg can hardly be overstated. In the 1980s, he initiated systematical, internationally oriented conflict research in the political sciences department of Heidelberg University with a DFG-funded research project. The project led to the creation of both a comprehensive database and a five-volume anthology on violent and non-violent political conflicts worldwide since 1945. A further result of the project was the emergence of the HIIK, as the persons involved felt that the subject and the approach developed by Frank Pfetsch merited more than just a limited research project. They thought it necessary to establish a research group to continuously monitor and document political conflicts both in a database and an annual publication, the Conflict Barometer. The first edition was published in December 1992, covering the developments of that very year. From its very beginnings until long after his own retirement, Frank Pfetsch acted as a guiding mentor and honorary patron to the HIIK while continuing his own work on conflicts and conflict resolution. Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Conflict Barometer together with us in 2012, he guided his audience through the latter's eventful history in his celebratory speech; that he will not be with us for the Conflict Barometer's 30th anniversary grieves us deeply.

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. When time resources seem to be more limited than ever, voluntary efforts spent on a project like this become even more extraordinary.

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Heidelberg, March 2022

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# Methodology



## METHODOLOGY

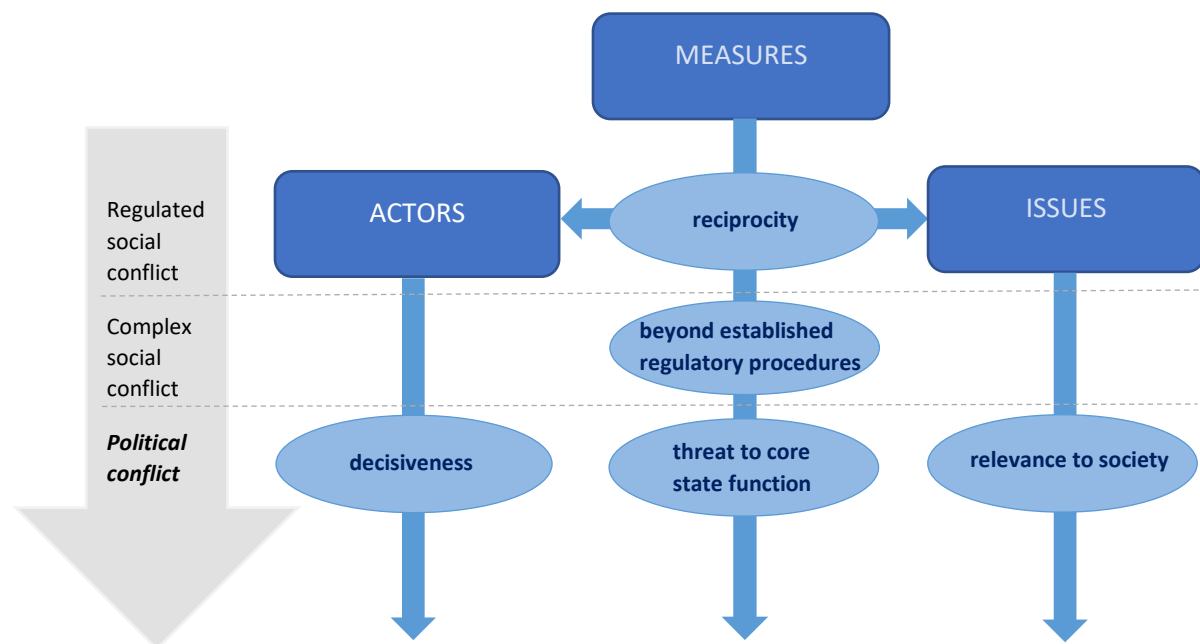
Since 1991, conflict research at HIIK has analyzed political conflicts by focusing on conflict processes rather than purely quantitative thresholds of casualties. Thus, HIIK's methodology is based on a set of specified actions and acts of communication between conflict parties. This process-oriented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

HIK'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, HIK 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.

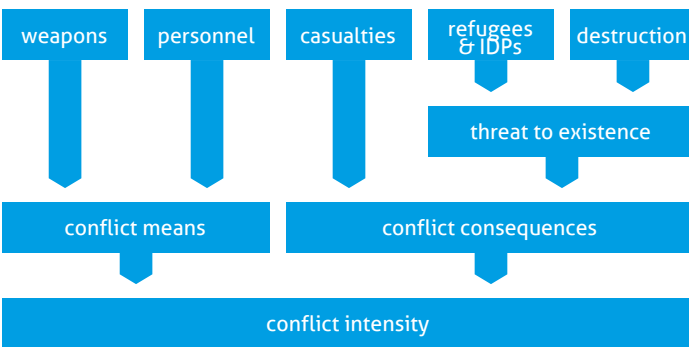
A conflict is actively closed if the basic conflict criteria are no longer fulfilled, with a set date of closure that justifies the decision. This may be the day a peace agreement is enforced between all conflict actors, for instance. Other forms of closure include the annihilation of a conflict actor,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

Updated in 2020 by:

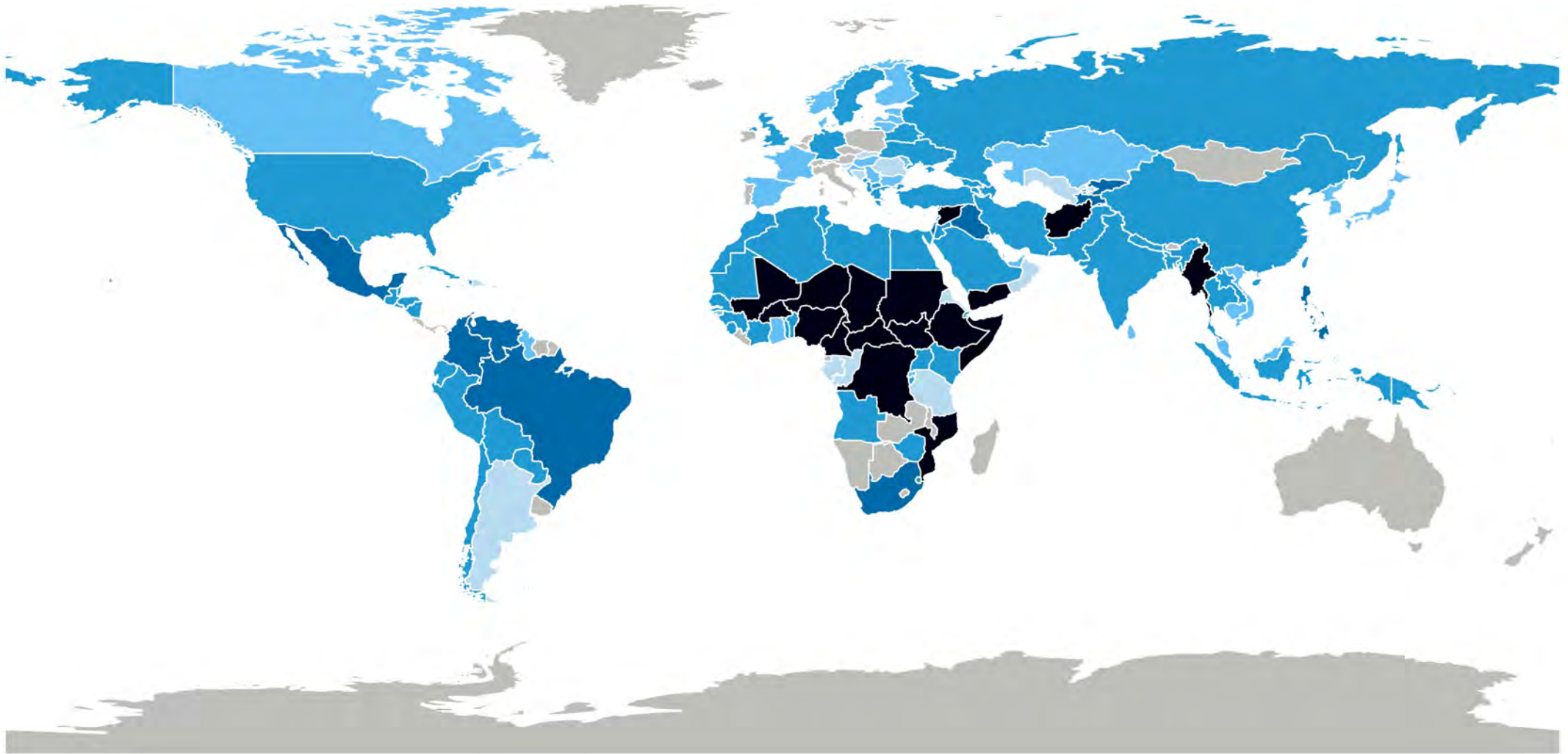
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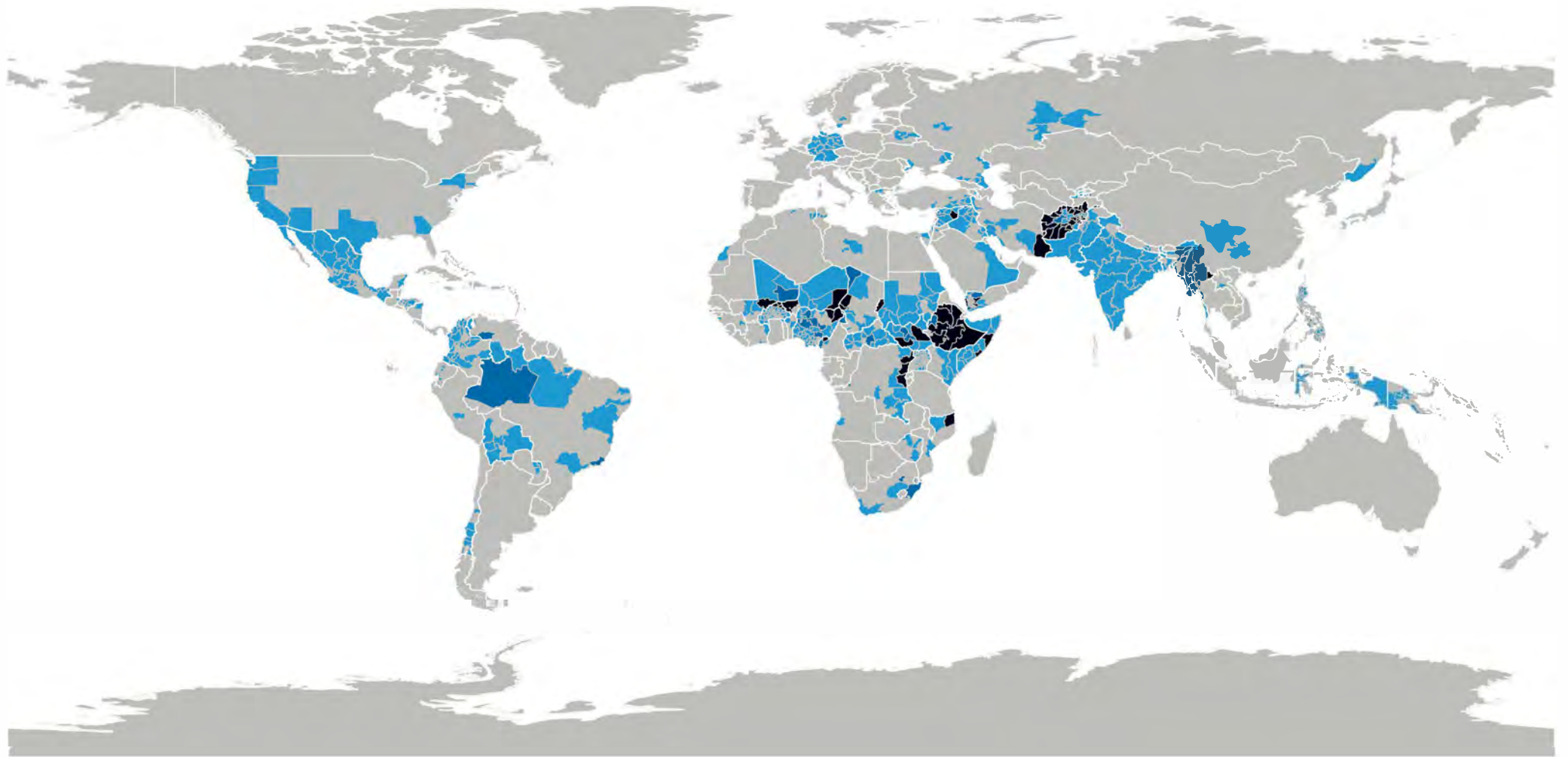
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# Global Conflict Panorama

# CONFLICTS IN 2021 (NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL)



# VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN 2021 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)



## INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS

## HIGHLY VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN 2021

### LIMITED WARS (20)

### WARS (20)

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#### WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN

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Israel ( Hamas et al.)  
 Syria (opposition)  
 Turkey (PKK)

Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)  
 Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)  
 Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)

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#### SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry)  
 Chad (militant groups)  
 DR Congo (Bantu - Batwa)  
 Ethiopia (opposition)  
 Mali (inter-communal rivalry / central Mali)  
 South Africa (opposition)

Cameroon (English-speaking minority)  
 Central African Republic (militant groups)  
 DR Congo (Ituri militias)  
 DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)  
 DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)  
 Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)  
 Ethiopia (OLF / Oromia)  
 Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)  
 Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, ISGS et al.)  
 Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)  
 Mozambique (ASWJ)  
 Nigeria (inter-communal rivalry)  
 Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS-Boko Haram)  
 Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)  
 South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)  
 Sudan (Darfur)

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#### THE AMERICAS

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Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)  
 Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)  
 Mexico (drug cartels)  
 Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)  
 Venezuela (FARC dissidents)

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#### ASIA AND OCEANIA

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Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Tajikistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)  
 Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State)  
 Myanmar (MNDAA / Shan State)  
 Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – government)  
 Philippines (CPP, NPA)  
 Philippines (Islamist militant groups)

Myanmar (opposition)

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#### EUROPE

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## GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, HIIK observed a total of 355 conflicts worldwide. About 60 percent, 204, were fought violently, while 151 were on a non-violent level. Compared to 2020, the overall number of full-scale wars decreased from 21 to 20, while the number of limited wars increased from 19 to 20. HIIK opened four new conflicts in 2021 and eight retroactively. It ended the observation of five conflicts after two or more years of inactivity and of two active conflicts. Additionally, three conflicts ended by being merged with other conflicts. Those seven conflicts, the three merged conflicts, as well as another 21 currently inactive conflicts are not reflected in the above figures and following statistics.

## WARS

HIIK observed 20 wars in 2021, one less than in 2020. This was the second highest number of wars ever documented by HIIK. One violent crisis and five limited wars escalated to full-scale wars. Five of these six conflicts were located in Sub-Saharan Africa and one in Asia and Oceania. Globally, seven full-scale wars in 2020 de-escalated to limited wars or violent crises. 14 wars continued at the same intensity as last year. Moreover, one full-scale war ended in 2021. While the number of wars decreased in West Asia, North Africa and Afghanistan, the Americas, and in Europe, full-scale wars increased in Asia and Oceania from zero to one and in Sub-Saharan Africa from eleven to 16. In 2021, HIIK observed the first full-scale war in Asia and Oceania since 2017. There were no full-scale wars recorded in the Americas and Europe.

West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan remained the region with the second highest number of conflicts on a full-scale war level. While four conflicts de-escalated to either limited wars or violent crises, three conflicts continued at the same intensity as in the previous year. Neither limited wars nor violent crises escalated to full-scale wars, decreasing the number of wars to three. The war between the Taliban and other Islamist militant groups, on the one hand, and the government, supported by the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and especially the USA, on the other, ended at the end of the year [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)]. Following the peace agreement between the US government and the Taliban in the previous year, all US forces and Nato troops withdrew from Afghanistan by August 30, marking the end of RSM. Simultaneously, the Taliban took control of Kabul forming the new de facto government of Afghanistan, after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. Throughout the year, at least 10,260 people were killed and 6,673 injured.

The war between the so-called Islamic State (IS), on the one hand, and different governments such as Syria and Iraq, and several militant groups, on the other, continued. IS remained unable to regain any territory in Syria or Iraq, however, its cells have continued to conduct decentralized small-scale attacks on governments, militias, and civilian targets in various countries such as Afghanistan, Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. The fighting left at least 1,670 dead and 1,061 injured this year.

In Yemen, the war between the al-Houthi forces, supported by the Iranian government, and the internationally recognized Yemeni government, supported by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, continued [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)]. The fighting intensified at the beginning of the year in Marib Governorate and continued throughout 2021, despite ongoing negotiations between both conflict parties initiated

by Oman and Saudi Arabia. According to the Yemeni government, 2,000 al-Houthi fighters and 1,800 Yemeni Army combatants were killed during the so-called Battle of Marib. The war over secession of Southern Yemen de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ Yemen (al-Hirak) / Southern Yemen].

Sub-Saharan Africa remained the region with the highest number of conflicts on the level of full-scale war, with 16 active wars. A total of five limited wars escalated to full-scale wars in 2021, in Sudan [→ Sudan (Dafur)], Nigeria [→ Nigeria (inter-communal rivalry)], Ethiopia [→ Ethiopia (OLF - Oromia)], Cameroon [→ Cameroon (English-speaking minority)], and the Central African Republic [→ Central African Republic (militant groups)]. Moreover, eleven full-scale wars continued, while no war de-escalated.

DR Congo (DRC) and Ethiopia were the countries with the highest number of full-scale wars, with three active conflicts on war-level, respectively. The war between the Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) as well as various other militant groups and the government continued for the third consecutive year in Ituri province. [→ DR Congo (Ituri militias)]. Throughout the year, there were at least 1,100 conflict related deaths, including at least 487 civilians. According to OCHA, the volatile security situation in Djugu and Mahagi territories resulted in at least 500,000 internally displaced people in Ituri. Furthermore, competing militants groups, such as the Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated factions (NDC-R), and several other militant groups originating from local communities, clashed repeatedly in the countries' eastern provinces North Kivu (NK) and South Kivu (SK) and fought the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC), as well as international security forces. At least 1,240 people were killed and at least 100,000 internally displaced [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. The war between the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), on the one hand, and the governments of DR Congo and Uganda, supported by MONUSCO, on the other, continued. As in the previous year, ADF continued to extend its presence and attacks to Ituri province. In 2021, the conflict accounted for 1,702 deaths, including 1,219 civilians.

In Ethiopia, the limited war between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the federal government escalated to a war after government authorities outlawed Oromo formations, closed OLF offices, and raided the OLF Chairman's residence as clashes between government and OLF forces continued. Additionally, Prime Minister Abiy labelled OLF and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) as terrorist organizations on May 3 [→ Ethiopia (OLF/Oromia); Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)]. On August 11, Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) formed a military alliance with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) to overthrow the federal government as the war between Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments continued. For instance, from September 1 to September 15 both parties clashed in over 40 battles along the frontline in Amhara and Afar, killing at least 400 fighters on both sides. In November, after TDF forces advanced towards the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian government was able to regain strategically important territory in Amhara and Afar. In December, TDF declared it would withdraw troops from both regions. Calls for the implementation of a ceasefire by TDF were unsuccessful. The war between various ethnic groups over subnational predominance and agrarian land also continued [→ Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)]. For example, fighting between several ethnic groups, security forces, and civilians erupted in the woredas of Sheko, Guraferda, and South Bench, South West Ethiopia People's Region, killing 151 people and dis-

placing 21,938.

Several wars involving various Islamist militant groups remained on war-level in 2021. Despite ongoing international efforts to combat Islamist militants in the Sahel zone, including MINUSMA, French forces under Operation Barkhane, and European as well as US military contingents, the wars against the Al-Qaeda affiliated group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM) and the so-called Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) continued [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)]. On June 10, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the end of Operation Barkhane, the closing of several military bases in Mali, for 2022, and urged the AU and ECOWAS to take more regional responsibility. Over the course of the year, jihadists mainly targeted civilians, ethnic self-defense militias, and government security forces. Continued targeting of humanitarian organizations and infrastructure by ISWAP worsened the humanitarian situation in large parts of Borno State, Nigeria. The war 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 [→ Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS-Boko Haram)]. The Nigerian government relied on airstrikes across JAS-controlled territories and conducted several ground operations against JAS. For instance, in February, government forces killed 80 JAS militants during ground operations in the Sambisa Forest. Raids and ambushes conducted by JAS decreased compared to the previous year after JAS leader Abubakar Shekau was killed in 2020. As a result of the ongoing violence between the conflict parties, approx. two million people were displaced in the northeast of Nigeria. For the 16th consecutive year, the war between the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab and the governments of Somalia and Kenya continued. Al-Shabaab was not able to expand their control over Somali territory substantially, but continued to control large parts of the southern regions of Somalia and captured several towns close to the capital Mogadishu. In 2021, al-Shabaab was increasingly active in Kenya. By the end of the year, the group controlled more than 50 percent of Mandera county, Kenya [→ Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)]. In Nigeria, the limited war between farmers, pastoralists, and so-called bandits escalated to a war. The conflict dynamics changed after criminal gangs known as bandits emerged, mostly consisting of Fulani pastoralists [→ Nigeria (inter-communal rivalry)]. These gangs conducted several raids on villages and kidnappings for ransom. Bandits reportedly engaged in tactical cooperation with JAS and received military training by JAS militants [→ Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS-Boko Haram)]. Throughout the year, at least 3,483 people were killed and 116,000 internally displaced. In 2021, inter-communal violence continued on war-level in South Sudan. Several local communities fought over subnational predominance and resources, such as cattle and land [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. Over the course of the year, 77,000 cattle were stolen and at least 1,467 people were killed. In neighboring Sudan, violence escalated to a war between the opposition alliance Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), on the one hand, and the government, deploying both the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), on the other hand. The security situation deteriorated further in the aftermath of the military coup on October 25 [→ Sudan (opposition)]. For instance, between November and December, heavily armed militiamen attacked several villages in West Darfur, killing approx. 140 people, injuring more than 100, and internally displacing 60,000 residents. In Cameroon, the limited war between various English-

speaking groups and the French-speaking Cameroonian government escalated to a war. Compared to last year, fighting between government forces and separatists intensified resulting in 583 deaths, which marked a sharp increase compared to previous years [→ Cameroon (English-speaking-minority)]. In the Central African Republic, the limited war between militant groups, on the one hand, and the government, supported by MINUSCA, Russian military contractors, and Rwanda, on the other, escalated to a war. The ongoing violence resulted in approx. 411,000 newly displaced people [→ Central African Republic (militant groups)]. In Mozambique, the war between the Islamist militant group Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma (ASWJ), active in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, and the government continued. International actors like Rwanda and the EU provided increased support to the government via military training missions. At the end of the year, ASWJ conducted an attack targeting civilians in Niassa province, which marked its first attack in Mozambique outside of Cabo Delgado.

For the first time since 2017, the Asia and Oceania region experienced a war-level conflict. In Myanmar, the violent crisis between the National League of Democracy (NLD) and its interim government, the National Unity Government (NUG), supported by the People's Defense Forces (PDF), on the one hand, and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, on the other, escalated to a war [→ Myanmar (opposition)]. Throughout the year, the conflict left at least 1,121 persons dead and 711 injured. 254,025 persons were forced to flee their homes as a result of the conflict.

In the Americas, the number of wars decreased from one to zero, as the conflict in Brazil between various drug-trafficking organizations, militias, and the government de-escalated to a limited war [→ Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)].

In Europe, the interrelated conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the contested territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and the war between the self-declared Republic of Artsakh, better known as Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and the government of Azerbaijan both de-escalated to violent crises [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan; Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)].

#### LIMITED WARS

The total number of limited wars increased by one from 19 in 2020 to 20 this year. Eight conflicts continued on the same level as in the previous year. Nine violent crises escalated to limited wars while six limited wars de-escalated to the level of a violent crisis. Five limited wars escalated to full-scale wars, while three conflicts de-escalated from war-level to limited war-level.

No limited war was observed in Europe. In Ukraine, 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 government, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis. Over the course of the year, at least 60 Armed Forces of Ukraine personnel and 45 militants were killed [→ Ukraine (Donbas)]. Tensions between Ukraine and Russia rose around April and from November onwards, when Ukraine condemned alleged Russian military reinforcement along their shared borders in Crimea and in Donbas, with 100,000 and 90,000 soldiers respectively. Russia denied the allegations, claiming the troop movements were part of military exercises [→ Russia - Ukraine].

In Sub-Saharan Africa, six limited wars were observed in 2021, a decrease of three compared to the previous year.

Three limited wars continued at the same intensity as in the previous year. One limited war de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ South Sudan (opposition)], while three violent crises escalated to limited wars. Five limited wars escalated to war level.

In Burkina Faso, the limited war over subnational predominance and resources between various ethnic groups, such as Mossi, Gourmantché et al., on the one hand, the Fulani ethnic group, on the other, and Islamist groups as a third party, continued [→ Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry)]. After last year's peace efforts between certain communities, total fatalities and injuries declined this year. On the other hand, assumed Fulani supported Islamist killings and IDP numbers remained high, with at least 30,000 IDPs reported for this conflict. In Chad, the violent crisis over national power between various militant groups, primarily the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, escalated to a limited war [→ Chad (militant groups)]. On April 11, Libyan-based FACT militants initiated a military offensive. A convoy of approx. 500 FACT militants crossed the Southern Libyan border into Tibesti Region, Chad, aiming to reach the capital N'Djamena. FACT militants clashed with the Chadian army north of Mao town, Kanem Region, on April 17 and 18. While the government reported the death of at least five Chadian soldiers, it also claimed to have killed approx. 300 militants. On April 20, government officials announced President Idriss Déby's death, after he was injured on the frontline. The same day, both the parliament and the government were dissolved and a transitional military council (CMT) was formed, headed by Déby's son Mahamat Idriss Déby [→ Chad (opposition)]. In DR Congo, the violent crisis between the Bantu and Batwa people over subnational predominance in the Tanganyika province escalated to a limited war. The conflict accounted for approx. 53,000 IDPs [→ DR Congo (Bantu - Batwa)].

In Ethiopia, the limited war over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the government continued [→ Ethiopia (opposition)]. The conflict was closely intertwined with the war over Tigray [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF/Tigray)], which concentrated multiple opposition movements in the conflict in the northern Ethiopian region. In Mali, the limited war over subnational predominance and resources such as water, wood, and arable land between the Dogon and Bambara ethnic communities on the one hand, the Fulani ethnic community, on the other hand, and Islamist groups continued [→ Mali (inter-communal rivalry / Northern Mali)]. After three internationally acclaimed peace agreements between the Fulani and Dogon communities that were signed on January 12, 22, and 24 for the Koro commune, Mopti region, and with the mediative help of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, fighting between the two communities largely ceased. However, over the course of this year, inter-communal fighting between Bambara, Fulani, and allegedly supportive Islamist groups was responsible for at least 341 confirmed deaths in at least 32 confirmed violent confrontations, primarily in the Mopti and Ségou regions. Approx. 70,000 persons were also internally displaced.

In South Africa, the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political and social system between antagonistic factions of the African National Congress (ANC), civil rights 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 ANC, on the other, escalated to a limited war [→ South Africa (opposition)]. On July 7, former president Jacob Zuma, who had been

accused of corruption during his presidency, was remanded in custody after being convicted of contempt of court a week earlier by South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal. Following the arrest, there were violent protests by Zuma's supporters, which quickly spread across KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng Provinces. On July 10, clashes erupted between protesters and police in several major South African cities, with shopping malls looted or set on fire. At the end of July, the government estimated that at least 337 people had died during the protests.

In the Americas, the number of limited wars increased from four to five. Three conflicts continued on the same level as in the previous year. One limited war de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ Colombia (ELN)], while one violent crisis escalated to a limited war. One conflict de-escalated from war level to a limited war. All conflicts involved actors that engaged in drug trafficking.

In Brazil, the war over subnational predominance between the main drug trafficking organizations and the government de-escalated to a limited war [→ Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)]. The favelas of Rio de Janeiro remained a hotspot of violence and police operations. In Colombia, the limited war over subnational predominance and resources between several neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels, as well as the National Liberation Army (ELN), dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) continued [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. Throughout the year, armed groups clashed, attempting to control lucrative regions for illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, resource exploitation, and extortion, and to reinforce their power over territories once owned whilst pushing to take areas which were previously dominated by the FARC.

In Mexico, the limited 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 resulted in the country's homicide rate remaining unchanged from last year's high level [→ Mexico (drug cartels)]. Heavy fighting over local predominance between drug cartels led to over 33,000 killings, of which the majority could be related to inter-cartel rivalry [→ Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry)]. More than 8,000 people disappeared over the course of the year. In Venezuela, the violent crisis over resources and subnational predominance between at least one dissident FARC group, the 10th Front, and the government escalated to a limited war. Clashes had started by the second half of 2020, mainly over illicit profits of drug trafficking, but also rare metals in the Orinoco basin.

In Asia and Oceania, six limited wars were observed in 2021, an increase of two compared to the previous year. Two conflicts continued on the same level as in the previous year, while four violent crises escalated to limited wars. Two limited wars de-escalated to violent crises [→ Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State); Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)]. The violent crisis over territory and international power in the Fergana Valley border region between Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek border communities, backed by their respective governments, escalated to a limited war [→ Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Tajikistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)]. On April 28, violent clashes broke out on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. In Myanmar, violence in its states and administrative regions escalated to highly intensive levels following the military coup on February 1 [→ Myanmar (opposition)] and continued throughout the year. Many ethnic armed organizations opposed the coup and

## GLOBAL CONFLICT PANORAMA

sought to support the newly formed People's Defence Force. The violent crisis over regional autonomy and resources, such as jade, between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), politically represented by the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) escalated to a limited war [→ Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State)]. After the Tatmadaw took power on February 1, KIO and KIA representatives declared limited support for citizens opposing the military rule in Kachin State. On March 11, KIO refused to recognize the military government [→ Myanmar (opposition)]. The violent crisis over the autonomy of Kokang region, Shan State, between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the Tatmadaw also escalated to a limited war [→ Myanmar (MNDAA / Shan State)].

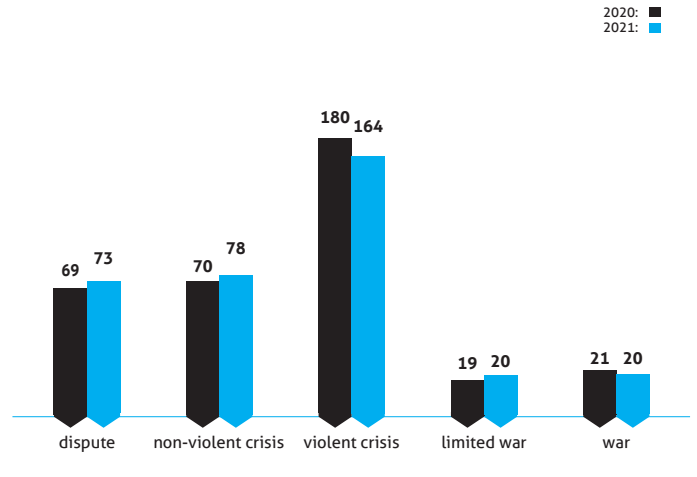
Three limited wars were observed in the Philippines. The violent crisis over subnational predominance and secession of Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao between the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) on the one hand, and the government, supported by Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), on the other, escalated to a limited war [→ Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – government)]. The limited war 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, continued [→ Philippines (CPP, NPA)]. The limited war over ideology, the orientation of the political system between Islamist groups, such as Maute, also known as Dawla Ismailiyyah (DI), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and Ansar al-Khilafah (AKP), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, also continued [→ Philippines (Islamist militant groups)].

In West Asia, North Africa, and Afghanistan, the number of limited wars increased from one to three. Last year's only limited war in the region de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)]. One violent crisis escalated to a limited war while two wars de-escalated to limited wars.

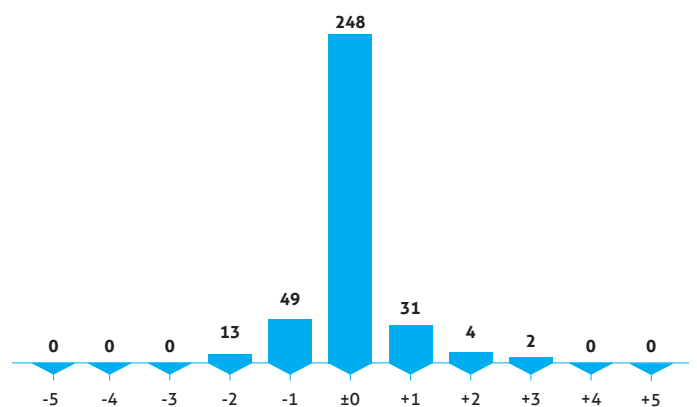
The violent crisis over the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state and over resources between Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and other Islamist militant groups operating in the Gaza Strip, on the one hand, and the government of Israel, on the other, escalated to a limited war [→ Israel (Hamas et al.)]. The conflict experienced a spike of violence in spring. Tensions intensified in May following the forceful eviction of Palestinian families from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. In Syria, the war over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition groups and the Syrian government de-escalated to a limited war [→ Syria (opposition)]. The ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey in March 2020 in the so-called de-escalation zone was mainly respected by the opposing factions. Violent incidents were mainly concentrated in opposition-held areas and on the frontlines between the conflict parties. President Bashar al-Assad was re-elected in a highly contested election. Peace talks were held in different settings, providing only little progress and no effective results. The war over autonomy between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish government de-escalated to a limited war [→ Turkey (PKK)]. The Turkish Armed Forces conducted several military operations in southeastern Turkey as well as northern Iraq.

MAXIMILIAN BRIEN, JANNIK MERTENS

### GLOBAL CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN 2021 COMPARED TO 2020

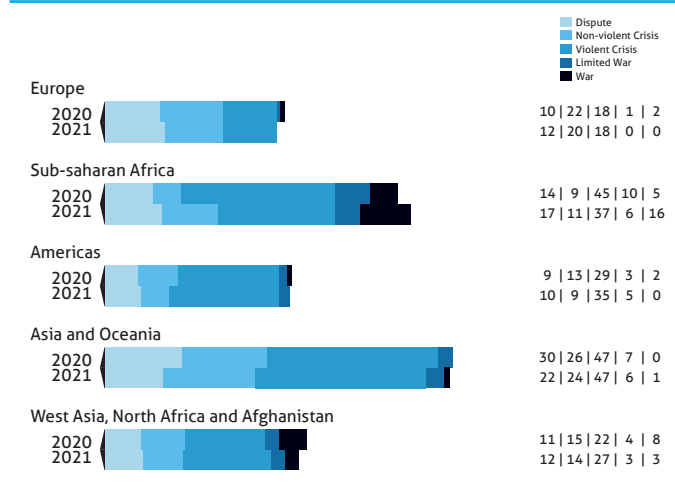


### GLOBAL CONFLICT INTENSITY CHANGES IN 2021

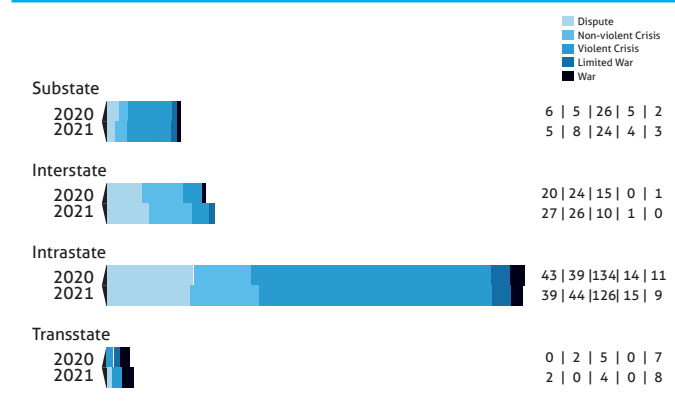


# GLOBAL CONFLICT PANORAMA

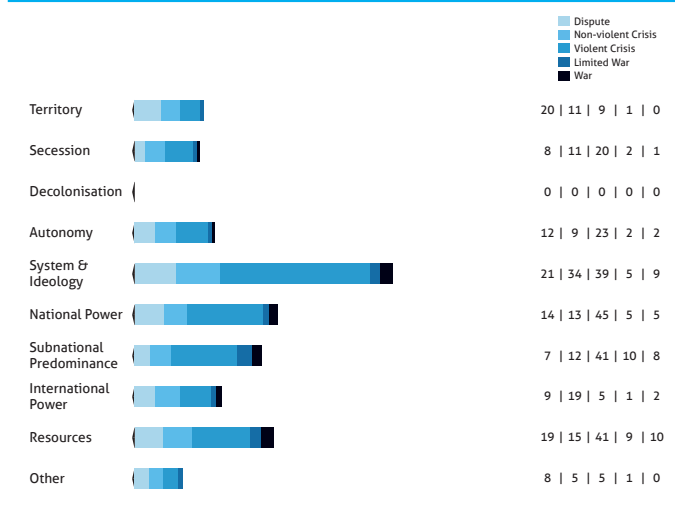
## FREQUENCY OF REGIONAL CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN 2021 AND 2020



## FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN 2020 AND 2021



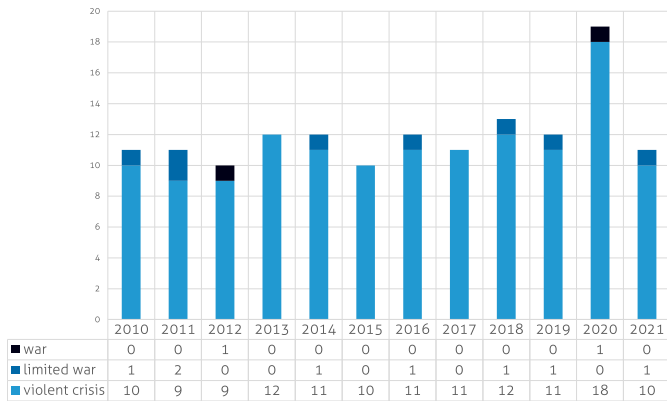
## FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN 2021



## GLOBAL INTERSTATE CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN 2021

In 2021, HIIK observed 65 interstate conflicts globally. Conflicts denote constellations of two or more actors that are concerned with the same set of issues. Disaggregated to the dyadic level, these 65 conflicts entailed 149 dyadic relationships between 97 actors. The actors consisted of 93 sovereign states, the three quasi-sovereign entities of Kosovo, the Republic of China (ROC), and the Palestine National Authority (PNA), as well as the supranational actor the European Union (EU). Ten states partook in interstate conflicts exclusively by virtue of their EU membership (not counted independently and not included in the graph). While the overall number of interstate conflicts and actors remained largely constant compared to 2020, the dyad number rose significantly by 25, increasing the density of relationships among conflict-engaged states. The primary reason for this numerical increase was the escalation of tensions between western states and Belarus, which evolved from the initial discord over a crackdown on post-election protests in 2020 [→ Belarus (opposition)] into a continued, reciprocal clash, blending into the larger international power conflict of EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members and allies with Russia [→ EU, USA et al. – Belarus, Russia].

Violent Interstate Conflicts 2010-2021



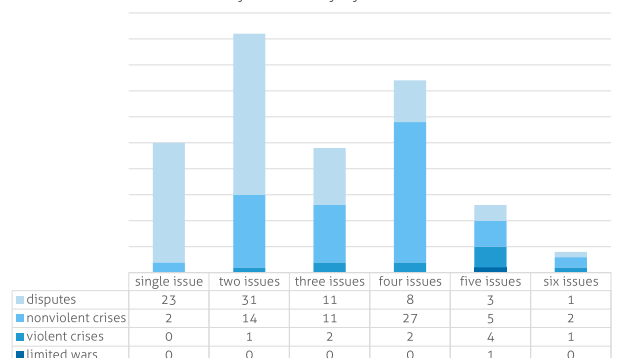
More than 90 percent of the 149 interstate conflict dyads remained non-violent. While 77 dyads remained at the dispute level, 61 involved the threat of violence and/or heavy sanctions, thus reaching the level of non-violent crisis. Given the prohibition of the threat and use of force by international law as well as the wide-ranging impact and destructive capabilities of state actors, the escalation from level one to level two is of higher significance in interstate conflicts than in intrastate or substate conflicts. Ten dyads reached the level of violent crisis. The single high-intensity interstate conflict in 2021 was located in Central Asian Fergana Valley, between Kyrgyz and Tajik border communities and security forces [→ Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Tajikistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)]. Compared to the 2020 peak of 19 interstate conflicts – among them the full-scale interstate war between Armenia and Azerbaijan – the number of violent interstate conflicts significantly decreased. This was owing to a number of successful negotiations and at least in part successful ceasefire agreements, most notably in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which deescalated from a war to a violent crisis, and in the violent crisis between India and Pakistan, where a new ceasefire agreement interrupted a reescalatory trend into a limited war. Reconciliatory steps were also taken in the conflicts between Rwanda and its neighbors, both of which deescalated from violent crises to

disputes [→ Burundi – Rwanda; Rwanda – Uganda]. Between Kosovo and Serbia, an agreement on the issue of Kosovar license plate requirements defused a two-week long border blockade by Kosovar Serbs [→ Kosovo<sup>o</sup> – Serbia]. Global hot spots like the US-Iranian crisis, the South China Sea, and the Korean Peninsula, which witnessed violent incidents in 2020 – most notably the US drone strike on Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani – deescalated in 2021. While the Mexican-US border crisis remained violent, the year saw also a deescalation of the long-standing violent migration crisis on Hispaniola [→ Dominican Republic – Haiti]. While violence between states remained rare, it is important to note states' frequent use of means that are located in a gray zone between interstate violence and nonviolence. For example, eleven interstate conflicts classified as nonviolent crises saw the use of force against state opponent-backed non-state actors. Except Russia-Ukraine and Serbia-Kosovo, all of them were located in the Middle East. Furthermore, 47 conflict dyads involved the attribution of cyberattacks. Most of these dyads were classified as nonviolent crises (35), while violent crises and disputes each counted six. Apart from those involving well-known offensive cyber actors like the People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Iran, and Israel, allegations of cyberattacks were involved in the dyads of Algeria-Morocco, Belarus-Poland, Cyprus-Turkey, and Qatar-UAE.

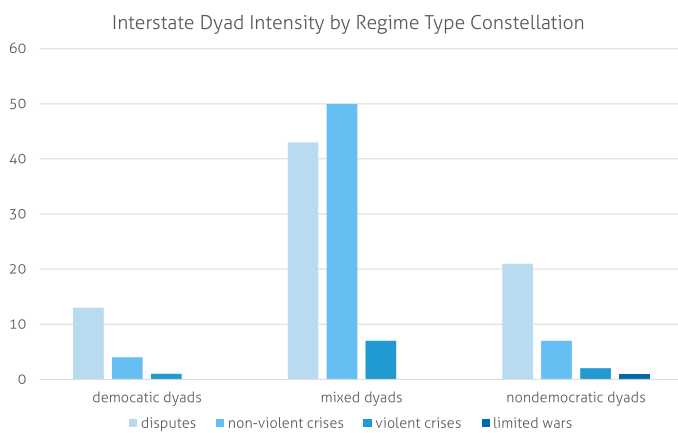
### CORRELATES OF INTERSTATE CONFLICT

The number and type of conflict issues underlying the different interstate conflict dyads varied substantially, and most concerned multiple issues. Using an extended typology of ten interstate conflict issues, 106 dyads involved struggles over international power, 66 were concerned with territorial boundaries (42 maritime and 24 continental), 55 with system/ideology, and 45 with resources. The three most contentious resource types remained fossils (27 dyads), fisheries (20 dyads), and water (11 dyads). Furthermore, 29 dyads involved transnational minority issues, 27 border security issues (such as smuggling and migrating armed groups), 23 history conceptions (usually related to genocide or war crimes), 17 the tensions over refugee & migration policies, and twelve extraterritorial state crimes (such as targeted killings and state-sponsored assassinations or abductions). 45 dyads involved contention over state support for non-state conflict actors ("proxy conflicts"). While there were only 14 single-issue dyads, 53 involved two, 24 three, and 43 four conflict issues. Eleven dyads involved five issues and four reached the maximum of six issues. The low number of three-issue dyads may be due to the frequent co-occurring/ "packaging" of certain issue types, such as territory and resources. On average, a higher number of issues correlated with a higher dyadic conflict intensity.

Interstate Dyad Intensity by Issue Number



Of the 55 interstate observed dyads concerned with system/ideology, 45 were related to the domestic political system, while 29 involved the conflict of international order conceptions (most of them being dyads with Russia, the PRC, and Turkey). One dyad concerned religious ideologies [→ Iran – Saudi Arabia]. Based on the country rankings of two regime datasets (picking the more conservative one), the 2021 EIU Democracy Index and the 2020 Democracy Matrix of the University of Würzburg, all dyads with conflict over domestic political systems except one (Russia vs. Ukraine) were mixed dyads between democratic (including deficient democracies) and non-democratic state actors (including hybrid regimes). In general, the distribution of interstate conflicts and their intensities across different dyadic constellations of regime type mirrors the U-shaped pattern predicted by democratic peace theories: the most conflict-prone and most violent were mixed dyads between democracies and non-democracies (100), while conflicts between similar regimes were relatively rare. Among the 31 dyads between non-democratic states, however, were three of the most intense interstate conflicts: Afghanistan-Pakistan, Ethiopia-Sudan, and Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan, the latter being the sole high-intensity interstate conflict. Conflict dyads between democracies were least common (18 out of 149) and non-violent. The single exception to this in 2021 was the violent Mexican-US border security crisis, although it did not see an immediate exchange of violent action between state actors. The distribution of regime types also dovetailed alliance patterns (see below).



### INTERSTATE CONFLICT NETWORKS

The network analytic perspective adopted here disaggregates conflicts into their basic actors (represented as nodes) and dyads (represented as edges). Based on the recombination of these modular units, conflicts can be reconstructed from the bottom up (proceeding from the local level of the individual dyad) as well as from the top down (beginning with the global properties of the overall network). Zooming in, one can dissect complex multi-party constellations to illuminate how a conflict's overall intensity is distributed across the different dyads involved – for example, in the South China Sea or in the Eastern Mediterranean. Zooming out, one can contextualize interstate conflicts within different subregions on a regional and global level by showing how they relate to each other as involvement of the same actors or via alliance structures. A third possibility is to interrelate local and global dynamics through algorithms to identify local clusters (relationship triangles) and communities (groups of

densely connected nodes). In conflict analytic terms, these can be understood as “conflict systems” or “conflict complexes”. Highlighting conflict interlinkages in these various scales helps to grapple with the problem that boundaries of a conflict can always be drawn at various levels of abstraction/generality (which lead to different overall counts). This is, in fact, an analytical necessity because the intensity cannot be assessed independently from the extensity of the conflict, its defined scope. Empirically, there is always a coevolution between conflict intensity and extensity, turning them into amorphous “moving targets”.

Based on the relative importance granted to the idiosyncratic features of each dyad, one can dissect the network into 149 local conflicts or treat each of its ten components as a single conflict, among them the main component comprising 77 nodes and 115 edges. Based on a qualitative analysis of the three dimensions of its conflict concept, HIIK aggregates 149 interstate dyads into 65 conflicts. This offers an intermediate position between reductionist and holistic approaches. It considers not only linkage by actors, but also linkage by similar or interdependent conflict issues (structural dimension) as well as linkage by diffusion and spillover of conflict measures (processual dimension). While this does greater justice to specific contexts, it does not rest on a uniform and reversible aggregation rule that allows for rescaling and recombination. It thus tends to tie conflicts to a specific level of analysis and lock them into an analytical framework, once adopted. While this “packaging” of dyads ensures the backward compatibility required for longitudinal analysis, it also has its drawbacks. For example, more abstract multi-party frameworks such as the one adopted for the situation in the South China Sea or in the confrontation between Russia and western countries risks losing track of dyadic eigendynamics that flow from specific, historical trajectories. In other cases, conflict frameworks may be defined too narrow, ignoring that they may be subject to the dynamics of even larger constellations – thinking for example of the interactions between territorial disputes in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, between interstate conflicts in the Middle East, or between the different conflicts among NATO and EU-affiliated countries and Russia in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the Arctic. To grapple with this problem of scale, HIIK observes many interstate dyads twice, both at dyadic and at multilateral level. For example, each of the three dyads between the Baltic states and Russia is included in the broader NATO-Russia conflict but is at the same time listed as independent conflict, capturing their idiosyncrasies as congealed in exclusively bilateral issues (i.e. the politics of Russian minorities, language, and memory). While this differentiation can be very useful, it comes with redundancies and potential double-counting (at the level of intensity measurement). More importantly still, it underestimates diffusion processes and issue linkage. The latter often increases with intensity, as the crossing of escalation thresholds also threatens to cross thresholds between issue areas (increasing conflict extensity). A network perspective on conflicts, which overemphasizes diffusion and linkage, can serve here as a complementary corrective.

Positing the primacy of actors over issues and measures, the network-analytic perspective adopted here accepts a loss in contextual richness to gain a uniform and straightforward way to model conflict interlinkage, which is amenable to quantitative analysis. Issues and measures enter the network model through the qualification of the edges, whose relative importance (weight) can be inferred either from the intensity of actions and communications traded between two states (process dimension) or, alternatively, from the type or

number of the contested issues (structural dimension). As intensities denote the dynamic and transmissible aspects of conflict dyads, which are co-shaped by broader diffusion and spillover processes, they are the more appropriate measure of edge weight for an analysis of conflict interlinkages. A drawback here is that HIIK's intensity scale, designed to measure all types of conflicts, is often too crude to capture the various finer grades of non-violent tension and coercion in international diplomacy. Nonetheless, the differentiation of non-violent intensity levels (disputes vs. non-violent crises) is still a huge comparative advantage to established interstate conflict datasets. Defining edge weight, alternatively by the type and number of issues of an interstate relationship, yields insights on the more long-term and idiosyncratic aspects of a dyad that prove obstinate or even reverse de-escalatory pressures or realignment impulses from neighboring dyads. As there is no straightforward way to compare and rank issue types by their amenability to change, the overall number of issues serves as a helpful, ordinal measure. Weighing edges by the number of issues highlight a number of well-known, entrenched interstate conflict dyads ("enduring rivalries") that remain invariant to shifting global alliance structures and retain a significant escalation potential despite temporary phases of detente. Among the dyads involving five to six issues are China-Taiwan, Colombia-Venezuela, India-Pakistan, Sudan-South Sudan, North Korea-South Korea, Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan, as well as Russia's relationships with Norway, Ukraine, and the US.

#### KEY ACTORS

Network analysis provides a number of possible indicators to assess the influence of individual states on regional and global conflict structures. These include the number and intensity of a state's relationships (weighted degree) and its position as a connector between different clusters of a network (betweenness centrality), which also captures how important a state's relationships are, from the systemic perspective of the overall network. In a conflict network, this means that major power status is defined by the number and quality of adversarial ties. This adversarial-relational definition has the advantage of being highly dynamic and agency-oriented. By focusing on actual strategic use and leverage of power resources over their latent possession, the definition becomes sensitive to states that may, more or less successfully, "punch above their weight". To assess whether a state's adversarial relationships translate into influence (e.g. by enabling brokerage and hedging, or by creating powerful allies) or constraints (e.g. by provoking counter-coalitions, or encirclement), it is necessary to look at alliance and community structures / conflict complexes.

As in previous years, the states scoring highest by weighted degree continued to be Russia (with 34 adversaries), now shadowed in most of these by Belarus, the PRC (conflicting with 10 states), as well as the US and Turkey (the last two both having conflicts with 9 states, while those of the US being more intense). Russia and the US ranked highest in betweenness centrality, followed by the PRC and Turkey. Each of these four major powers forms the gravitational center of a group of surrounding states. In this, they are joined by the United Kingdom (UK) as a fifth hub with a considerably lower degree and betweenness centrality. Depending on the prevailing alliance patterns (indicated by the degree of clustering), these groups impose stronger or weaker constraints on a major power's engagement with states from

other groups. Each group comprises minor hubs that could be identified as middle powers – characterized by a relatively high degree and betweenness centrality compared to other group members. In the more multipolar groups around Turkey, the PRC, and the UK, the distance between major and minor hubs is relatively small compared to the more unipolar groups centered around Russia and the US. Turkey has relatively close peers in Egypt, Israel, and Iran, while the UK shares its group with France. In the PRC-centered group, nodes with high betweenness centrality include Japan and, with greater distance, India. The US has a distant rival hub in Venezuela, Russia in the EU and Hungary.

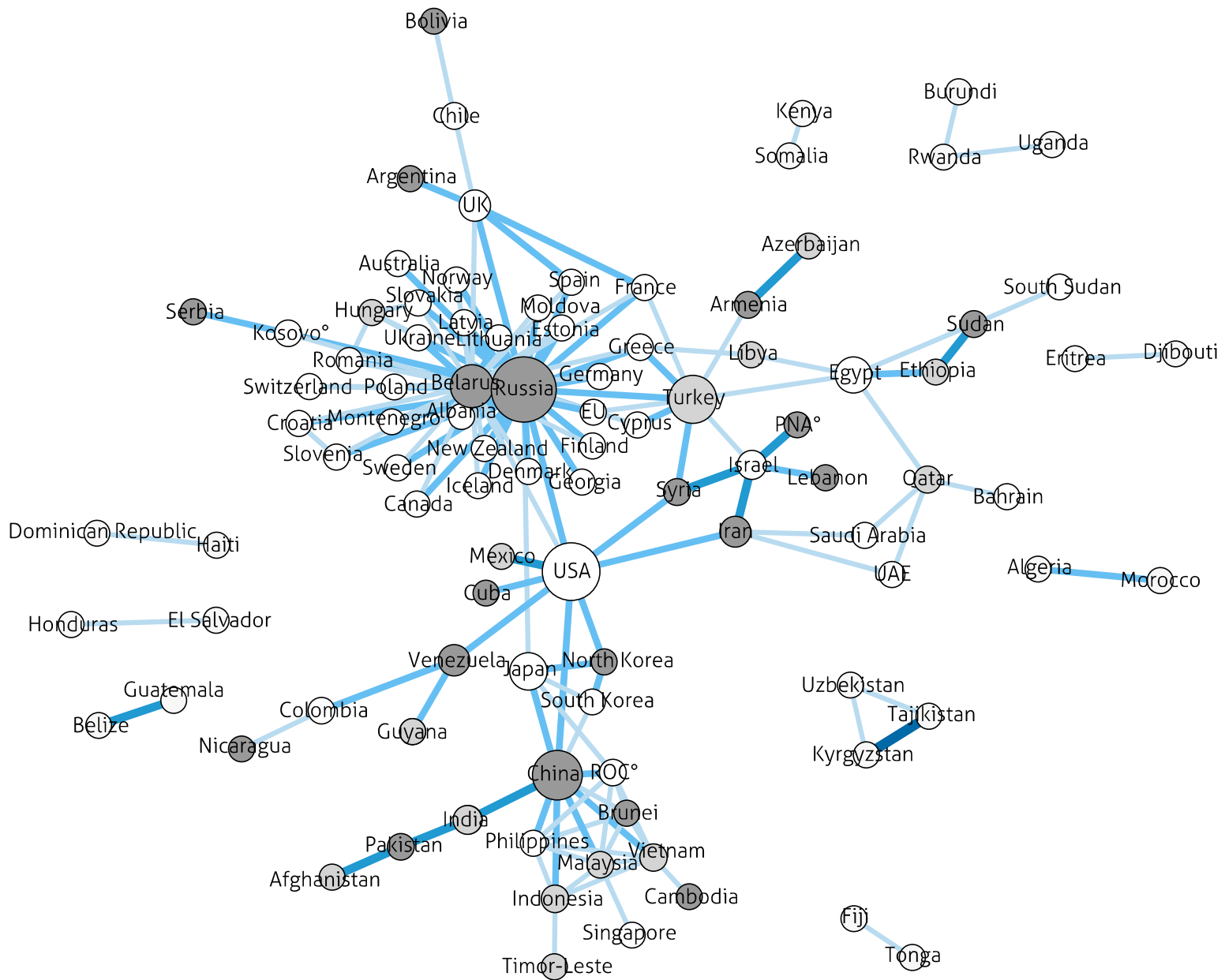
#### ALLIANCE STRUCTURES

From an agent-centered perspective, alliance formation is a crucial mechanism that connects states both within and between different conflict communities. It operates at the basic units of triplets (any group of three connected nodes) under the principle that enemies of enemies (i.e. neighbor nodes of neighbor nodes in the network) are predisposed to be friends / allies. Where this principle holds true, triplets are referred to as "balanced". Mapped onto a conflict network by the color of the nodes, balanced triplets lead to a chessboard-like pattern of alternating colors. In a conflict network, strongly balanced triplets are present wherever three nodes are connected by two edges only, thus taking a linear, "open" form (e.g. the triplet of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, or the triplet of Nicaragua, Colombia, and Venezuela). The balancing logic can be iterated from one triplet to the next (in the examples above, the triplets Pakistan-India-China and Colombia-Venezuela-Guyana) and so forth. In principle, an alliance structure can be extended to any node where a path exists (e.g. from Timor Leste to Bolivia). This means, while inferences about global alliance structures are possible for the 77 states connected to the main component (with a diameter of nine steps as the greatest possible distance between them), they cannot be extended to the 20 states connected in nine isolated components. In line with alliance patterns, states often engage as supporters or interveners in conflicts among other parties. Examples of this include Turkey and Russia's supporting roles in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan], or Iranian engagement in the conflicts between Israel and its neighbors.

Things become more complex when closed triplets occur, within which each of the three nodes is connected to the other two. In conflict networks, such triangles subvert the balancing logic. They indicate unbalanced and unstable relationships, where enemies of enemies are enemies as well. This introduces uncertainty not only at the local but (by iteration) also at the global level, as alliance formation between more distant nodes can take different paths. Take the example of Turkey: depending on the path followed, an alliance is suggested either with Iran and Qatar against Israel, Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia, or, to the contrary, with Israel and the US against Syria, Iran, and Russia. This example highlights that triangles also come with benefits by creating opportunities for hedging and brokerage. When closed triplets occur, it is crucial to look at the relative conflict intensity of the relationships, which indicate the direction in which the triplet is (presently) balanced, even if it is not as clear-cut as in linear triplets. An example would be the triangle between Syria, Turkey, and Israel, which is balanced against Syria. Other examples include the triangles among the littoral states of the South China Sea, most of them balanced against the PRC, or the triangle between



# INTERSTATE CONFLICT ALLIANCES 2021

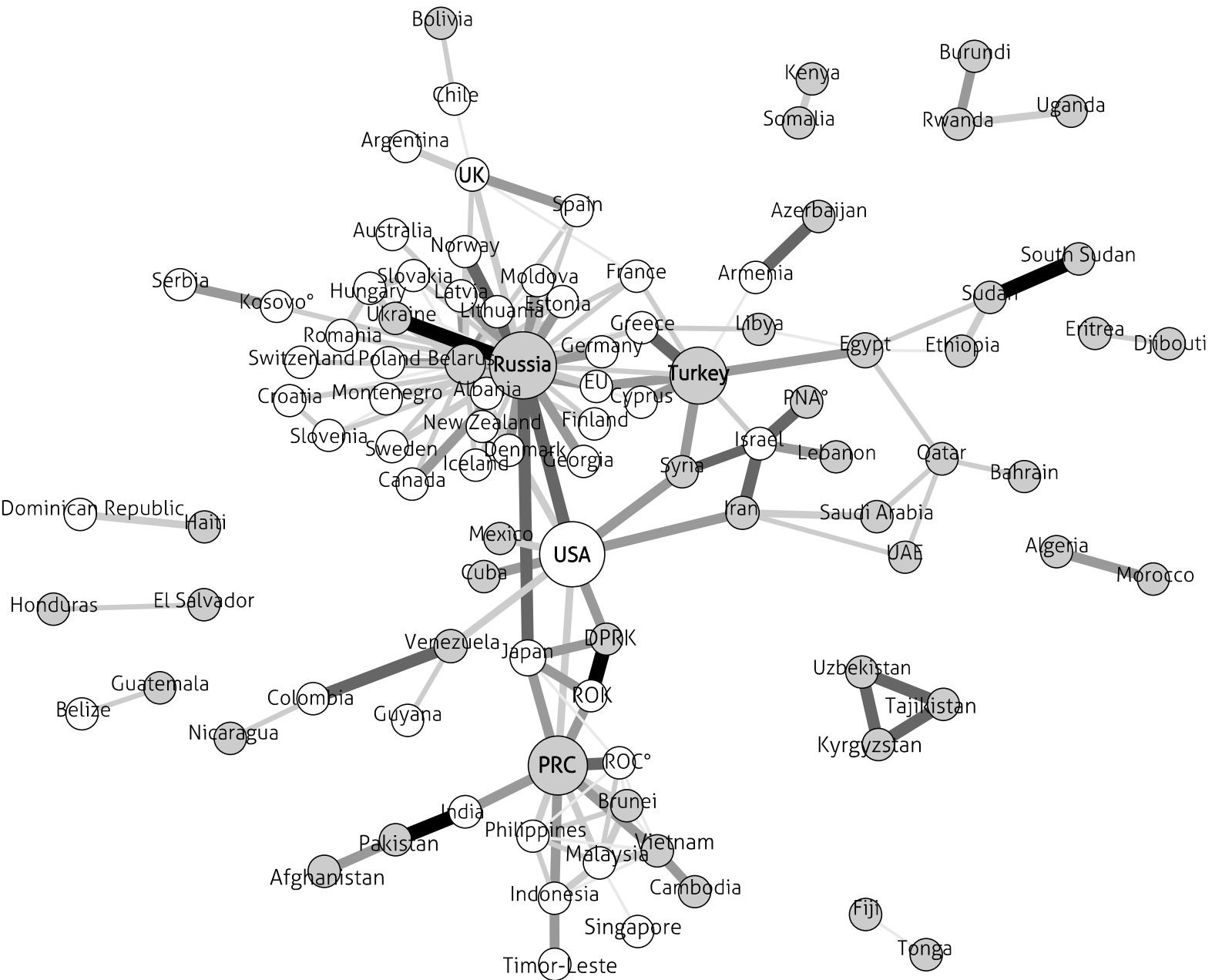


## INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS
- 2 NON-VIOLENT CRISIS
- 1 DISPUTE
- NO CONFLICT

This network maps all conflictive bilateral relationships (dyads) monitored in 2021, employing a force-determined layout. The graph comprises 97 nodes (representing state and state-like conflict actors) and 149 undirected edges (representing conflict relationships). Node size is determined by betweenness centrality. Edges are sized and colored by conflict intensity. The shading of the nodes in the main component indicates affiliations to alliances in a broad sense (not restricted to formalized, mutual defense pacts), determined on the basis of the relative intensity of conflictive and cooperative (not mapped) relationships between states. While the identified alliance patterns are mainly local or regional, they share cross-regional linkages via major powers; While dark grey and white represent relatively unambiguous alliance affiliations, light grey represents ambiguous affiliations, extending into both of the established camps and possibly constituting a third camp. Alliance patterns are not extended to the ten independent components, manually 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 CONFLICT STRUCTURES 2021



This network (97 nodes, 149 edges) maps interstate conflicts with emphasis on long-standing, structural features. Nodes are colored by regime type (white: democracy; dark grey: non-democracy) according to 2021 EIU Democracy Index/ 2020 Democracy Matrix estimates. Edges are sized and colored by the number of issues contested in a relationship. A higher number of issues (indicated by darker shades) is interpreted as an indicator for deeper entrenchment of conflict.

Egypt, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, balanced against the latter. When alliance affinities between more distant nodes are estimated, one should choose the path along the relatively more intense dyads (in the Turkish example above, this would suggest an anti-Syrian alliance). Against the paths suggested by the intensity-weighted network, the paths shown by the structurally-oriented network (indicating regime types and entrenched rivalries) should lead, in cases of divergence, to more robust alliances. Naturally, the identification of global alliance patterns comes with simplifications and brushes over the fact that each group of allied states features significant internal differences, stemming from the embeddedness in different regional constellations as well as from diverging foreign policy histories.

## CONFLICT COMPLEXES

Using the Louvain modularity algorithm, which assesses the actual distribution of (weighed) edges against the model of a random graph, state actors in the main component of the network can be grouped into five non-overlapping communities or “conflict complexes”, providing an analytical first cut to view conflicts in their broader interactions. The identified community structure was conducted with the standard resolution parameter 1.0 and subjected to sensitivity analysis, showing three of the five communities to be highly robust. Each of the five communities gravitated around a major hub: Russia (and Belarus), the United Kingdom (UK), the PRC, Turkey, and the US.

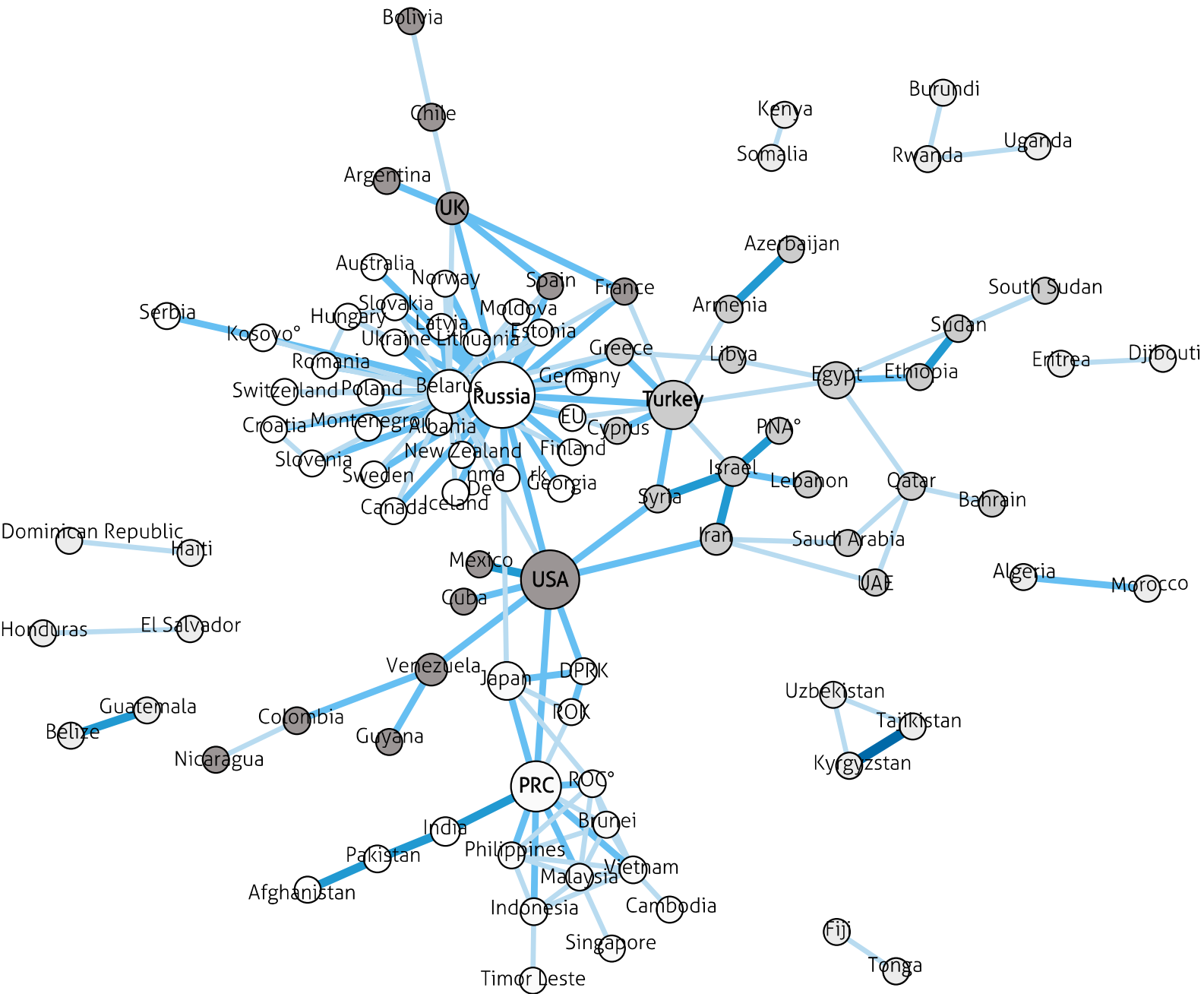
The largest conflict complex consisted of the states of Northern, Eastern, and Central Europe, gravitating around Russia. Since 2021, Belarus’ conflictive relationships with EU and NATO-allied states began to flank those of Russia [→ EU, US et al. – Belarus, Russia], deteriorating over the Lukashenka regime’s internal repression [→ Belarus (opposition)], its forced landing of a civilian aircraft to capture an opposition activist, and its purported instrumentalization of migrant flows, leading to tense encounters between Belarussian and Polish border guards. Over the year, Russia and Belarus conducted the largest joint military exercises for decades, as did NATO members and allies. Major exercises, often the triggers of alerts and air-to-air intercepts, took place in virtually all regions, highlighting the NATO-Russia confrontation’s structuring impact on the conflicts in the Balkans [→ Kosovo<sup>o</sup> – Serbia], along the Black Sea [→ Russia – Ukraine; Russia – Georgia], the Baltic [→ Estonia – Russia], and the Arctic [→ Norway et al. – Russia (Arctic)]. Among the conflicts included in this complex were also those between Hungary and its neighbor states [→ Hungary – Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine (Hungarian minorities)]. Previously identified as a separate community, the triangles between Hungary, its neighbors, and Russia became more balanced against the latter as tensions over minorities de-escalated to dispute level.

A second conflict complex involved Western European and South American states around the hub of the UK. While the UK took a proactive stance in NATO’s conflicts with Russia – both in the Arctic and in the Black Sea, where the dispatch of a destroyer into the disputed waters near Crimea led to a dangerous confrontation – it remained engaged in several interstate conflicts connected to its imperial legacy. Several of them remain marked by the breakdown of conflict-management arrangements that are tied to the respective country’s EU membership, especially the Spanish-British conflict over Gibraltar and the newly erupted Anglo-French conflict over fisheries in the channel [→ Span – United Kingdom (Gibraltar); France – United Kingdom (fishery)]. The

Anglo-French conflict, deepening the rift in the common alliance structures (NATO, EU), is critical as France rivals the UK as a hub. In addition to conflicts with EU-members, the UK faced a resurgent conflict with Argentina over the Falklands / Malvinas, which were excluded from the Brexit deal. In 2021, the conflict saw British military exercises and Argentine sanctions on British oil companies [→ Argentina – United Kingdom (Falklands / Malvinas)]. While remaining within established regulatory procedures, 2021 also saw an uptick in controversy with Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, the main island of which, Diego Garcia, hosts a US military base. In January, a decision of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea confirmed Mauritius sovereignty over the islands.

A third conflict complex was formed by the states of East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, gravitating around the PRC as the major hub. Noteworthy is the addition of the South Asian dyads to the complex. Having consistently featured violent intensities over the past decade, this was previously identified as a conflict complex in its own right. The convergence with the East Asian complex in 2021 reflected the continued, violent tensions between China and India [→ China – India] against a major de-escalation of the India-Pakistan conflict in 2021, after the conclusion of a new and more effective ceasefire agreement [→ India – Pakistan]. In 2016, 2018, and 2019, Indo-Pakistani tensions had reached the level of limited war. In Southeast and East Asia, still the regions with the highest density of interstate conflicts worldwide, conflict interlinkage deepened through alliance commitments and defense cooperation amid high tensions across the Taiwan Strait and on the Korean Peninsula. While the Republic of China government under Tsai Ing-wen became more uncompromising, calling for negotiations “on the basis of parity” as well as international diplomatic and military support, the PRC dispatched dozens of military aircrafts into the Taiwanese Air Defense Identification Zone [→ China (Taiwan)]. The US dispatched a marine unit to Taiwan, approved further arms sales, and sent warships through the Taiwan Strait [→ China – USA]. Together with Japan, whose maritime territorial dispute with the PRC was marked by a shift towards more aggressive rules of engagement [→ China – Japan (East China Sea)], the US conducted major military exercises near Okinawa, in the South China Sea and Hokkaido. In turn, the PRC conducted joint naval exercises with Russia, sending ten warships through the Japanese straits [→ Japan – Russia]. This mirrored the spiral of ever-larger exercises in the western hemisphere. On several occasions, highest officials in the US and Japan made pledges to the defense of Taiwan, deviating from the traditional position of strategic ambiguity. During a summit in May, the presidents of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the US publicly agreed on the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait [→ China – South Korea]. On the Korean Peninsula, inter-Korean tensions de-escalated to non-violent crisis level [→ North Korea – South Korea] amidst a series of Northern tests of new missile types, with which it enhanced capabilities to penetrate missile defenses and advanced second-strike capability. Serving as a boost to trilateral cooperation with the US [→ Japan, South Korea, USA – North Korea], tensions between the South and Japan subsided due to shared concerns over the nuclear threat [→ Japan – South Korea]. In Southeast Asia, tensions decreased in comparison to previous years with no interstate dyad reaching violent crisis level. Most of the local conflict triangles between Southeast Asian states and the PRC rebalanced against China [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. The fourth and most unstable conflict complex comprised

# INTERSTATE CONFLICT COMPLEXES 2021



This network (97 nodes, 149 edges) maps interstate conflicts by their affiliation to greater (cross-)regional conflict systems or "conflict complexes". These affiliations are inferred from the network's community structure as identified by the Louvain modularity algorithm, using a resolution parameter of 1.0 and accounting for edge weight. Edges are sized and colored by conflict intensity.

interstate dyads from the Middle East and its adjacent regions such as the Eastern Mediterranean, the Caucasus, and the Nile Basin. In contrast to other complexes, it had no single major hub. While Turkey came closest to this status with the highest weighted degree and very high betweenness centrality, given its links to the European complex [→ Cyprus (TRNC); Greece – Turkey (Aegean Sea); Russia – Turkey], Israel, Iran, Qatar, and Egypt figured as peer competitors and hubs of potential subcomplexes. Compared to the other four complexes, the delineation of the Turkish complex was least robust to a variation of the resolution parameter, with large parts variably shifting into US orbit. In terms of clustering, the Middle Eastern region featured an intermediate number of triangles compared to the small number in the European complex and the high number in the Asian complex. The first case indicates rigid and formalized alliance patterns (NATO) in line with clear-cut chasms (star-shaped pattern), while the latter indicates the more fluid and issue-specific alliance patterns in line with cross-cutting chasms (grid-shaped pattern). Judging by the lopsided distribution of violent interstate conflicts to the Middle Eastern complex (hosting roughly half of them), one could interpret the intermediate number of triangles – indicating a semi-stable alliance pattern of coalitions between relatively equal powers (hubs) – as relatively conducive to violence, located between the relative equilibria of the European and Asian complexes. While three of the violent dyads were located in the Middle East proper [→ Iran – Israel; Israel – PNA<sup>o</sup>; Israel – Syria], one was based in the Caucasus. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan de-escalated in 2021 from a full-fledged war to a violent crisis, notwithstanding numerous ceasefire violations. The fifth violent dyad in the complex involved Ethiopia and Sudan, which saw deadly military skirmishes in the disputed al-Fashqa border region [→ Ethiopia – Sudan]. Linkage between these relatively distant conflicts was created by the three multi-party conflicts of the complex: the deadlocked water conflict between the riparian states of the Nile over the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project [→ Egypt – Ethiopia, Sudan (GERD)]; the non-violent crisis over the Eastern Mediterranean, linking Turkey's entrenched conflicts with Cyprus and Greece, but involving also Egypt, Israel, Libya and the EU [→ Cyprus, Greece et al. – Turkey, Libya (Eastern Mediterranean)]; and finally, the conflict of the Saudi-led coalition of Bahrain, Egypt and UAE against Qatar, supported by Turkey and Iran. In 2021, this conflict ended with the signing of the multilateral al-Ula Agreement and the suspension of the four-year blockade on Qatar [→ Qatar – Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, UAE].

The last identified conflict complex involved exclusively states of the Americas. It surrounded the US, which held the second highest betweenness centrality in the network despite its relatively low degree compared to Russia. Similar to the UK-centered complex, it featured no triangles, indicating clear-cut alliances. Three of the interstate conflicts in Middle America remained unconnected to the main component [→ Belize – Guatemala; Dominican Republic – Haiti; El Salvador – Honduras], while conflicts involving South American states were linked to UK-centered clusters. Compared to other hubs, the US had only three conflictive relationships with states in its own complex: the border security conflict with Mexico, constituting the only violent crisis among the nine US interstate conflicts [→ Mexico – USA (border security)], and the two long-standing conflicts with Cuba and Venezuela [→ Cuba – USA (system); USA – Venezuela]. Venezuela continued to face non-violent border and migration conflicts with its neighbors [→ Columbia – Venezuela (border security);

Guyana – Venezuela]. As the relatively small conflict complex in the Americas continued to bind only minor resources of the US – excluding intrastate conflicts [→ USA (racial tensions); USA (right-wing extremists)] – it retained the ability to commit to conflicts with adversaries in other conflict complexes (Russia, PRC, DPRK, Iran, Syria) as well as to alliances with their neighboring nodes, such as NATO allies, Japan, ROK, ROC, and Israel. The conflict network puts these well-known facts into perspective. It also suggests the continued importance of the special relationship between the US and the UK as an alliance between two hubs, as it mutually enhances their ability to engage in conflicts beyond their own complexes.

## GLOBAL DYNAMICS

Looking at global dynamics, one should first assess the destabilizing potential of the eleven violent interstate dyads observed. Compared to 2020, where violence occurred in dyads at the center of the network, namely the US-Iranian, the inter-Korean, and the Russo-Turkian dyads, most of the violent interstate conflicts in 2021 were located in the peripheries of the network. 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. From this perspective, the most critical conflict in 2021 was the continuing violent crisis between Iran and Israel, where an Iran-attributed drone attack on an Israeli-operated oil tanker killed two crew members [→ Iran – Israel]. Iran was also accused of coordinated drone attacks on the US al-Tanf military base in Syria, causing no casualties [→ Iran – USA]. Both attacks occurred against the backdrop of an escalating Iran-Israeli exchange of unacknowledged kinetic and cyber strikes on non-state proxies, cargo ships, and facilities, several of them related to the Iranian missile and nuclear programs. Despite that, the latter saw considerable progress in 2021 with the introduction of advanced centrifuges and the enrichment of uranium to 60 percent. Multilateral negotiations to return to the 2015 nuclear agreement resumed on November 29. In contrast to these dyads at the center of the network, conflict dyads located at the outer regions of the network can be expected to have less global impact, least of all those disconnected from the main component. Among the latter was the limited war between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Despite its devastating local impact, with clashes between border communities backed up by security forces leaving 40 people dead and 11,500 displaced, the conflict received only little international attention.

Considering the global alliance structure, one can reapply the logic of balancing from relations within to relations across regional conflict complexes, most notably between the major hubs. On the one hand, these are characterized by the balanced, open triplets of UK-Russia-US and Russia-US-PRC, indicating alliances between the UK and the US and between the PRC and Russia, respectively. On the other hand, the global alliance structure also features an imbalanced, closed triplet: the Middle Eastern conflict complex around Turkey is linked to both the Russian-, the US-, and even the UK-centered complex. If the Iran-Pakistan tensions would be taken into account, it would also be a link to the Asian complex. These multiple linkages highlight the interpenetration of regional dynamics by external powers and a destabilizing co-presence of regional and global alliance patterns that are only partially congruent. By contrast, the neat alliance structure between the Russia-, US- and PRC-centered conflict complexes is reinforced by the absence of alternative linkages between the conflict complexes that

would cross-cut the conflicts between the hubs. For example, Russia's link to the PRC-centered complex via its territorial conflict with Japan or the second US link to the complex via the DPRK served to reinforce the cross-regional alliance structure. The pattern is less clear-cut between the UK- and the Russian-centered clusters, where the Russia-UK dyad constitutes an edge of unbalanced triangles with France and Spain. This highlights the internal rift within the alliance of western states, which can be subdivided into two camps, one aligning more with the position of the US and NATO, the other more with the position of France and the EU. The two camps differ not only in their antagonism towards Russia, but also in their accentuation of conflicts involving NATO members UK and Turkey. Policy towards the PRC marks a fourth source of divergence, despite the general cooling of relations following the Covid-19 pandemic, Chinese policy in Hongkong and Xinjiang, and the extended use of economic coercion against Lithuania. Reinforced by Brexit, this rift saw a new culmination point in 2021 with the diplomatic crisis that followed the September announcement of AUKUS, a new trilateral security partnership between Australia, the UK, and the US. Entailing the sharing of highly enriched uranium-fueled submarine propulsion technology and the cancellation of an Australian-French submarine contract, France denounced AUKUS as a "stab in the back". Strongly condemned by the PRC (and also by Russia), AUKUS epitomized the increasingly antagonistic stance of Australia and the UK towards China, approaching the threshold of entering Sino-US international power conflict [→ China – USA] and deepening security cooperation with allied countries disputing Chinese territorial claims [→ China – Japan; China – India; China – South Korea]. The PRC, in turn, became more vocal in its support for Argentine claims on the Falklands/ Malvinas. Together with the deepening Sino-Russian security cooperation, AUKUS marked the increasing interlocking of alliance structures in Europe and Asia.

Synthesizing the noted developments, the global interstate conflict landscape in 2021 was characterized by a dual trend of regionalization and globalization. The former manifested itself in the densifying local conflict interlinkages within five relatively distinct, regional complexes, the latter in the intensifying conflicts between the hubs of the complexes, exerting pressure to align regional with global alliance patterns. This becomes destabilizing if alliance considerations fail to constrain idiosyncratic/ history-dependent drivers of escalation, which persist in entrenched conflict dyads like Armenia-Azerbaijan, India-Pakistan, or Russia-Ukraine. The potential factors underlying this integration of regional and global conflict dynamics are manifold, ranging from structural forces like global and national inequality, climate change, and post-colonial/post-imperial legacies to more proximate causes like the global pandemic, migration flows, and the proliferation of conflict technologies with global implications. However, the most tangible and pressing factor is the continuing proliferation of nuclear and missile technologies, which has steadily outgrown the nonproliferation and arms control regimes inherited from the Cold War. This development involved not only quantitative but also qualitative changes, with new technologies rendering the boundaries between nuclear and conventional weapons systems more permeable. It was reflected not only by the worsening crisis over the Iranian and North Korean nuclear and missile programs, but also by Australian and South Korean plans to develop nuclear submarines, the former being promoted by the AUKUS pact. The ROK, on the other hand, announced plans to develop a small modular propulsion reactor and became the first non-

nuclear weapons state to test a submarine-launched ballistic missile. Nuclear and missile questions also returned to center stage in conflicts between established nuclear powers, figuring prominently in the re-introduction of exotic weapon systems such as hypersonic missiles. While the US and Russia agreed on extending the New START treaty on strategic arms reduction by five years and continued to decrease their overall stockpiles, both sides upgraded their nuclear programs and slightly increased the number of deployed warheads. The PRC's rapid modernization of its nuclear posture raised US concerns after the satellite discovery of three missile silo fields under construction in its north-western regions. With the PRC offering no explanation, the US interpreted them as signs of a rapidly expanding arsenal of strategic missiles. In addition to the great powers and the DPRK, the UK, India, and Pakistan chose to expand and modernize their nuclear arsenals as well. Creating cross-regional insecurity and driving states into global alliance structures as shelters, the current nuclear and missile buildup is critical to the interdependence of regionalization and globalization dynamics.

JASON FRANZ

AUTHORITATIVE DECISIONS BY THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

In 2021, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had 15 pending cases and issued one merits judgment and two judgments on its jurisdiction. Three new cases were submitted to the ICJ; two of these cases concerned the application of the Convention Eliminating all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In December, the vacancy left on the bench by the late James Crawford was filled by Hillary Charlesworth, following votes in the UN General Assembly and Security Council.

In February, the ICJ sustained jurisdiction over the dispute between Iran and the US over alleged violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity. The treaty emphasizes the friendly relations between the two states and seeks to deepen their economic relationship. Previously, in 2018, Iran had initiated proceedings against the US over the imposition of sanctions against Iran by the Trump Administration. These were established after the US pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) concerning Iran's nuclear enrichment program. The US contended that the dispute over sanctions was restricted to the interpretation of the JCPOA, and thus lay outside of the scope of the 1955 Treaty of Amity and accordingly the ICJ's jurisdiction. The ICJ dismissed this preliminary objection and held that legal disputes between sovereign states frequently arise within wider political disputes. The pertinence of certain measures to a wider political dispute would not exclude its jurisdiction on individual legal questions. Accordingly, it held that there was an ongoing dispute between Iran and the US on the application of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, for which the ICJ has jurisdiction.

Also in February, the ICJ declined its jurisdiction on a dispute between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over the application of CERD. Qatar filed its dispute with the ICJ in 2018 after the UAE allegedly implemented discriminatory measures against Qatari nationals on its territory. In 2017, the UAE had issued travel bans and expulsions to Qataris and shut down Qatari media corporations operating in the UAE. The concerted pressure campaign by members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) against Qatar, which began 2017, has been subject to two further ICJ cases between Qatar and the GCC states concerning the application of the Air Services Transit Agreement and the Convention on International Civil Aviation. The UAE declined the existence of a dispute on the application of CERD, as the measures taken were only based on Qatari nationality and not on ethnicity. As a result, the ICJ engaged in an extensive examination of the term "national origin" in Art. 1 CERD, to determine whether this included discriminations based on current nationality. The ICJ concluded that discriminations on the basis of current nationality are not encompassed by CERD and thus fall outwith its jurisdiction.

In October, the ICJ issued its merits judgment on the maritime boundary dispute between Somalia and Kenya. The longstanding dispute between Somalia and Kenya over a section of the Indian Ocean rich in oil and gas was submitted to the ICJ in 2014 after the breakdown in bilateral negotiations. After the ICJ sustained its jurisdiction in 2017, Kenya postponed oral proceedings three times before deciding not to participate in the proceedings. A week before the judgment was issued, Kenya withdrew from the ICJ's compulsory jurisdiction and declared that it would not respect the ICJ's judgment. The ICJ concluded that the greater part of the disputed area would be allocated to Somalia. During proceedings, Kenya contended that a maritime boundary

existed between the two states following the parallel of latitude 1°39'43.2" S where the land boundary between the two states reaches the Indian Ocean. According to Kenya's submissions, Somalia had acquiesced to this boundary by consistently accepting Kenyan claims between 1979 and 2014. In response, Somalia argued that no maritime boundary existed between the two states, asking instead that the ICJ draw the boundary according to the equidistance method. Firstly, the ICJ dismissed Kenya's acquiescence claim; it could not identify a tacit agreement between the parties based on Somalian acquiescence, as the state parties had frequently disputed the existence of a maritime boundary during negotiations. Accordingly, Somalia had not consistently accepted Kenyan maritime claims. As a consequence, the ICJ applied the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and established the maritime boundary based on the equidistant method. The ICJ also dismissed Somalian allegations that Kenya had violated its sovereign rights by exercising jurisdiction in the disputed maritime area by awarding oil concessions. As the maritime boundary only came into existence with the ICJ's judgment and Kenya had made its maritime claims in good faith, its prior activities in the area did not violate Somalian sovereignty. Nonetheless, the Kenyan President stated that the judgment was biased and therefore declined to recognize and implement it.

In December, the ICJ indicated provisional measures in the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan concerning the application of CERD. It held that Azerbaijan must accord security and equal treatment before the law to all persons captured in relation to the 2020 conflict between the two states. It also ordered Azerbaijan to protect Armenian cultural heritage sites, including from looting and vandalism.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

In 2021, 18 cases were pending before the International Criminal Court (ICC). Of the 18 defendants, seven were in the custody of the ICC awaiting trial and eleven defendants remained at large. Investigations by the Prosecutor of the ICC were also underway into situations in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Kenya, Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Georgia, Burundi, Bangladesh/Myanmar, Afghanistan, State of Palestine<sup>o</sup>, Philippines, and Venezuela. Likewise, preliminary examinations were being conducted into situations in Guinea, Nigeria, Ukraine, and Bolivia. Six new judges were voted into office by the Assembly of State Parties. Karim Khan took up his new position as Prosecutor, replacing Fatou Bensouda. Furthermore, the Biden Administration lifted the US-sanctions that had been levied on the ICC in 2020.

The ICC's Appeal Chamber delivered three decisions. It confirmed two cases decided by different Trial Chambers (Ntaganda conviction and Gbagbo/Blé acquittal). Moreover, it upheld the decision to initiate a proceeding against Ali Abd Al-Rahman for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur, Sudan. The Pre-Trial Chamber had admitted all charges raised by the Prosecutor's Office, however the defendant challenged the entire jurisdiction, since Sudan is not party to the Rome Statute and the situation in Darfur was conferred to the ICC by UN Security Council Resolution 1593 in 2005. In the defendant's view, his prosecution was therefore in violation of the principle *nullum crimen sine lege*, as the prohibition of war crimes and crimes against humanity were not applicable in Sudan at the time of their alleged commitment. The Appeals Chamber, on the other hand, argued that the alleged crimes had already been crim-

inalized under customary international law at the time of their occurrence. In its view, the Rome Statute reflected the state of customary international law at the time of drafting. This decision was important for further referrals to the ICC through the UN Security Council of situations in states that are not members of the Rome Statute, as it confirmed that the prohibition of core crimes is universally applicable. Furthermore, a Pre-Trial Chamber confirmed the Prosecutor's request to initiate investigations in the occupied Palestinian territories. Palestine<sup>o</sup>, party to the Rome Statute, initiated proceedings regarding crimes committed on its territory. Israel, which is not party to the Rome Statute, has continuously denied the ICC's jurisdiction over its soldiers and territories, including those occupied after the war of 1967. However, the Pre-Trial Chamber gave consent for the Prosecutor to investigate crimes in the occupied territories, including Eastern Jerusalem, Gaza, and the entire West Bank. Although the Chamber added several disclaimers on the scope of its findings, it effectively held that Palestine is a state as it acceded to the Rome Statute. Furthermore, it held that the territorial jurisdiction conferred to the ICC through Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute extended to Palestine's internationally recognized borders. Citing UN General Assembly resolution 67/19, which states that Palestine's territory extends to the lands occupied in 1967, it upheld the Prosecutor's request to investigate alleged crimes in these areas. The Prosecutor

will initiate investigations accordingly, although Israel stated that it would not cooperate with the investigation. Moreover, the new Prosecutor concluded three high profile visits in his first months in office. In Sudan, he negotiated with the interim authorities to advance investigations into crimes committed in Darfur. While former Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir was not extradited to the ICC, a new Memorandum of Understanding between the Prosecutor's Office and Sudan has set the scene for further cooperation. A second trip to Colombia saw the closing of the preliminary investigation into Colombia. The question of whether the transitional justice mechanism in the peace agreement between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian government could adequately satisfy the requirements of the Rome Statute had loomed over its implementation since 2016. The Prosecutor has given his approval thereto by closing the preliminary examination. During his third trip to Venezuela, the Prosecutor opened a formal investigation into alleged crimes against humanity (Situation Venezuela I). The Prosecutor's office will investigate the violent response of the Venezuelan authorities to protests in Venezuela since 2017 and has agreed on modalities for the investigation with the Venezuelan government.

FLORIAN KRIENER



# Spotlights

## MAPPING THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT RESEARCH

From bow and arrow to gunpowder, all the way to nuclear weapons – technological innovation has always shaped the dynamics of conflicts. In the 21st century, advances in computing as well as the development of artificial intelligence (AI) will have wide-ranging impacts on nearly every domain of human life. Looking at a simple definition of AI, the broad range of potential applications becomes apparent: “AI is the use of computer systems to carry out tasks previously requiring human intelligence, cognition or reasoning” (ICRC 2019: 1). However, even definitions of AI itself are highly controversial and the subject of ongoing debates. Thus, the discussion on AI – as a “suitcase or umbrella term” (Höne 2019: 9) – and its uses is naturally clouded by overly abstract arguments and sometimes lacks clarity. Only through concrete examples of existing and potential AI applications is it possible to determine the effects these technologies can and may have on conflicts and their research. While the characteristics of AI impacts are not yet clear and will also be subject to political negotiation, scholars and decision-makers are already preparing for a new age of conflict (Kasapoğlu/Kirdemir 2019). While the development of AI is not at its end, it is high time to review the impacts of these technologies on conflict dynamics and conflict research. To this end, this article sheds light on the role of AI from three perspectives: the impact of AI technologies on conflict dynamics with a focus on developments in 2021, the potential of AI technologies in conflict mediation, and the application of AI technologies in conflict research.

Discussions on the impact of AI technologies on future conflicts often employ extremes by evoking revolutions in warfare or painting a dystopian picture of Terminator-style killer robots. The reality of AI is more subtle. Recent examples of early application of AI technologies in conflicts already offer some indication for future trajectories, and demonstrate the urgency of discussions on AI ethics and technological frontiers. In this regard, there was a watershed moment this year: During the Operation Guardian of the Walls [→ Israel ( Hamas et al.)] the Israeli Defense Forces reportedly relied on machine learning technologies as a crucial component of this “first artificial-intelligence war” (Ahronheim 2021), especially in areas of data analysis and targeting. Other reports state that the same campaign also included the deployment of an “AI-guided combat drone swarm” (Hambling 2021), demonstrating a new quality in AI application. Additionally, recent reports confirmed that the killing of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrazadeh in November 2020 [→ Iran – Israel; 2020] involved a “remote-controlled, AI-enabled machine gun” (Friedland 2021) giving additional significance to one of the most explosive episodes in the conflict in recent years. A 2021 report by the UN Panel of Experts on Libya highlights further rapid technological developments as it describes a drone attack on a group of soldiers in the civil war [→ Libya (opposition); 2020] which was described as a “lethal autonomous weapons system” (Hernandez 2021) and used artificial intelligence. Another crucial data point is the use of loitering munitions in the form of so-called Kamikaze drones by Azerbaijan in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh); 2020] which increased interest in autonomous weapons systems and invigorated discussions around the implications of their use (Walker 2021). However, some experts dispute that these examples already represent the use of AI; the level of human control

over (seemingly) autonomous weapons systems is difficult to ascertain and there remain terminological overlaps and inconsistencies (Cramer 2021). Additionally, AI influences conflict dynamics in more indirect ways: The US sanctions against Chinese entities in connection with the oppression of the Uyghurs – a Muslim minority in Xinjiang – increasingly target companies that are involved in the development of AI technology [→ China — USA]. The US government accuses companies such as SenseTime of enabling Chinese surveillance operations in the region and thereby actively contributing to oppression and severe human rights violations (Feng/Fromer 2021). The use of AI for surveillance purposes has worried human and digital rights advocates for some time. Other instances of applied AI technologies appear to underscore these widespread reservations. Especially in the area of law enforcement and policing, AI technologies promise enhanced surveillance capabilities. Their use has already had an impact on (intra-state) conflicts. Perhaps most prominently, the protest movement in Hong Kong [→ China (Hong Kong); 2019] adapted by wearing masks and using umbrellas, or destroying surveillance infrastructure such as CCTV cameras. This was not without cause; reports indicate that authorities used facial recognition and AI technologies against the protesters (Byrne/Davis 2020).

All this demonstrates that AI is already impacting conflicts and their dynamics in various contexts and by diverse means, despite being a novel and, in some cases, immature technology. As AI advances and increasingly permeates various parts of the economy and society, further effects will become visible and have more severe implications than higher precision weapons systems. In general, conflict dynamics (especially with regard to military components) will be shaped by AI through altered costs, a shift in risk perception, enhancement regarding intelligence, as well as shifts in public opinion (Lindström 2020). Not all developments are worrying per se, for example humanitarian relief operations could be improved through AI-enabled efficiency gains. However, ethical and legal concerns about the use of AI in conflict must be considered. While the impact of AI on conflicts can only be projections at this stage, problems and concerns are real and visible. The speed of AI development is ever-increasing and the area of concrete applications is expanding, but so far regulation has been unable to catch up, especially on an international level. In order to realign technological advancements with established principles and to ensure that concepts such as accountability remain relevant, it will remain “essential to preserve human control and judgment” (ICRC 2019: 11). This is yet more important as questions of liability cloud discussions on the use of AI technologies in the context of AI ethics as well as international (humanitarian) law.

From the perspective of agency and the human factor in conflicts, another potential area of AI application deserves special attention: conflict resolution. AI technologies have been described as a promising tool for practitioners and researchers in mediation efforts and could thereby contribute to and facilitate conflict resolution. AI technologies will most likely support conflict mediation in three separate ways (cf. Höne 2019): As AI technologies are increasingly involved in conflict actions, the role of AI will itself become a point of negotiation. Mediation processes will have to address the ethical (and perhaps legal) implications that arise due to the deployment of AI technologies by conflict parties. This is already evident in the EU’s efforts towards AI ethics guidelines. Arms control negotiations have also moved to include these new categories of weapons, for instance, in the framework of

the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Similarly, AI will lead to far-reaching transformations in societies and international dynamics, which means that conflict resolution and mediation can take place in a novel environment. This decrease in human-human interaction will be a parallel to recent changes in business, where automation provides a preview of what is to come in the age of AI. Similarly, the nature of conflict will be impacted by AI through enhanced weapons systems and, more importantly, by a change in overall context as AI technologies permeate societies. Mediation practices have adapted to a changing technological and political environment before but, in order to provide relevant contributions to conflict resolution, a certain degree of AI literacy will be essential for future mediators. Lastly, AI technologies represent a tool for mediation. Just like in other areas, the biggest advantage of AI will be the enhancement of data analysis capabilities. However, the need for vast amounts of data raises concerns regarding privacy and security. Additionally, reliability and accuracy of AI technologies are essential in the politically sensitive environment of mediation, but potential data bias has sparked wide criticism of AI application. Overall, mediation must rely on human agency as long as human interaction remains a central component of conflicts. The incorporation of AI technologies might nonetheless provide additional tools in efforts to resolve or reconcile conflicts.

From the perspective of conflict research at HIIK and particularly important to our research methodologies, the use of AI technology may advance our understanding of conflict dynamics: As approaches in the field of "computational conflict research" (cf. Deutschmann/Lorenz/Nardin 2019) demonstrate, AI will be particularly helpful in advancing conflict simulations which include complex interactions between a variety of actors. Due to the dual-use character of AI technologies, the benefits are not limited to research purposes; conflict actors could also take advantage of these technologies to advance their strategies. While conflict constellations grow ever more complex, continuing datafication will provide an increasing amount of detailed data. AI will be necessary to make sense of big data and to support visualization and simulation tools. Obtaining accurate data is vital for meaningful research, but reliable data is often scarce in conflict research. For example, while protests often play a prominent role in a number of conflicts, detailed information on size and scale of protests is often hard to find. As Göbel demonstrates in an article on protests and repression in China – a country where independent and reliable data is notoriously scarce – AI technologies might offer a valuable asset to close information gaps in future conflict research. The author employs artificial neural networks to estimate crowd sizes on the basis of social media images while also addressing current limitations to conclusions based on AI technologies (Göbel 2021: 175). Comprehensive efforts of conflict research also need to consider public reactions to acts of violence which are increasingly expressed on social media. To structure the deluge of Twitter reactions to the 2016 terrorist attack on a Berlin Christmas market, Fischer-Pressler, Schwemmer, and Fischbach use a machine learning approach. Using topic modelling, the expression and evolution of different public sentiments such as grief, xenophobia or togetherness can be identified and compared (Fischer-Pressler/Schwemmer/Fischbach 2019: 11-22, Appendix B). In the wider area of conflict research, the use of AI technologies such as machine learning has been discussed widely to enhance conflict prediction or prevention. Forecasting has long been an important part of conflict research, especially to

bridge the gap between conflict researchers and practitioners as well as decision-makers, but the over-reliance on linear models in the discipline has faced increased criticism. The Global Conflict Risk Index - an integral part of the EU's early warning system - recently created an extended version based on artificial intelligence. The AI model follows a random forest approach and overall has "good predictive power" (Halkia et al. 2019: 16) but data quality for input remains an issue as this is crucial for the model's predictive power. Nonetheless, conflict research has increasingly embraced opportunities provided by AI technologies.

Innovation through AI technologies is fast-paced and will bring about transformative changes in politics, economies, and societies. By spotlighting concrete technological developments and assessing the impacts that are already apparent in conflicts and conflict research, we can get a good idea of the areas and issues that will become the most heavily contested. From the perspective of conflict research, AI technologies are not only of interest because of their impact on conflict dynamics but because they pose opportunities and risks to the discipline itself.

PHILIP LOTT

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## TWENTY YEARS OF WAR ON TERROR AND LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING: LESSONS FROM AFGHANISTAN

Just over 20 years ago, the US and allied forces invaded Afghanistan in a first attempt at a "war on terror". Its aims were to capture Osama Bin Laden, dismantle Al-Qaeda, and bring down their supporters, the Taliban. This invasion was followed by attempts to establish a stable nation-state according to liberal democratic standards. After the US withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan in August 2021, the US-aligned government immediately collapsed and the Taliban reclaimed power. Twenty years after the launch of "war on terror" and the subsequent "liberal peacebuilding" in Afghanistan, the failure of both would provide a critical juncture to reconsider the merits and outcomes of two ideologically-charged enterprises that suffered from lack of legitimacy.

The first part of this spotlight text reviews an inherent problem associated with countering terrorism in the international community, which is the absence of a comprehensive legal approach to the problem of international terrorism under international law. Such a gap in international law has enabled the US to adopt a case-by-case strategy to counter terrorism since the September 11 attacks, building on political myths of "good" vs. "evil". It also elaborates on the failure of this approach to counter terrorism in Afghanistan and on a global

level. The second part addresses the liberal statebuilding efforts in Afghanistan since 2003, against the backdrop of the dramatic collapse of the Afghan government. Hereby it focuses on the "one size fits all" approach recognizable under the more general concept of "liberal peacebuilding" enterprise which operates on the basis of an ideal nation-state model.

Both parts emphasize the importance of legitimacy as a basis for the success of interventions and peacebuilding. Consequently, this spotlight outlines two pathways to failure: The ideological, arbitrary, and unilateral approach to an inherently collective problem in international arena - striving to "eradicate terrorism" - along with an equally ideologically-charged approach to peacebuilding, aspiring to consolidate "liberal peace" in Afghanistan. While the former suffered from the lack of consistent international legal architecture to counter terrorism and was built upon arbitrary case-by-case decision-making, the latter applied a uniform framework, ignoring case-specific differences in historical, cultural, and social contexts. Both prioritized ideological objectives. The analysis highlights some lessons that could be drawn from such an approach to interventionism and peacebuilding in conflict settings.

Global War on Terror: Uprooting International Terrorism or new US Exceptionalism?

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in 2001, the US announced "a comprehensive plan to seek out and stop terrorists around the world" under the name of Global War on Terror (GWOT). Yet, before taking any action to counter terrorism, there was an obvious need for an international consensus on the definition of terrorism and the legitimate ways of countering it within the international community. Such a legal definition did not exist at the time and it is still yet to be agreed. Despite several rounds of convention negotiations at the United Nations (UN) that began in the 1970s, the schisms in international society about the nature of international terrorism have not been yet bridged. After 11 September 2001, the debate was renewed and reinvigorated. Despite considerable progress and agreement on different UN conventions against certain manifestations of terrorism such as skyjacking and hostage-taking, no final agreement on a comprehensive anti-terrorist convention with a clear, legal definition of international terrorism has been reached (Friedrichs 2006).

Against this backdrop, and in the absence of clear legal criteria, the US anti-terrorism discourse turned to other sources of legitimization including "political myth", most notably the myths of "good" vs. "evil" and "civilization" vs. "barbarism" (Esch 2010). The dual logic of such political myths brings about a dichotomy that excludes any variation in response or position. These can and were used politically, for instance to form political alliances and actions. The US use of this logic in its GWOT is best observed in President Bush's address to Congress and the nation as he described a black-and-white scene clear and free from any complication, according to which "every nation" in every region had a "decision" to make: "either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (The Washington Post 2001). In real-world politics this was operationalized on a case-by-case strategy to ascertain and act against acts of terrorism and terrorist groups or terror-sponsored states. This led to a series of wars in the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region and elsewhere. GWOT started in 2001 in Afghanistan with Al-Qaeda and its primary supporter group, the Taliban, but it was not supposed to end

“until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” GWOT, as its name suggests, was not a war with specific actions, groups, or even states; the target was eradicating “terrorism”, and “the first war of the 21st century” was also supposed to be “the last” (George W. Bush Library n.d.).

This paved the way for the formation of a coalition of allies under US leadership in Afghanistan, though the legal justifications for the use of force were, from the perspective of international law, questionable at best. Numerous established lines in international law were blurred, such as the distinctions between unilateral retaliation and legitimate self-defense; between international criminal prosecution and international armed conflict; and between fair trial and arbitrary executions by drone strikes (von Bernstorff 2021). Further controversial acts of human rights infringement that the US committed in later stages of GWOT such as detention, surveillance, torture, and extra-ordinary rendition, among others, were also justified partly as exceptions allowed due to the sense of emergency and as necessary measures to eliminate “terrorism”, supported by the political discourse of “good” fighting “evil”.

Reviewing the final scenes of international presence in Afghanistan led by the US might be helpful to assess the achievements of this approach in countering terrorism and the final fate of GWOT, given the original claims it would eradicate “terrorism” globally. The “Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan” signed in February 2020 between the Taliban and the US government brokered the withdrawal of the US and coalition forces from the country in return for the Taliban’s commitment neither to pose a threat to US or other allied forces, nor to cooperate with any “individual” or “group” who might do so, such as Al-Qaeda, plus committing to an intra-Afghan dialog and ceasefire negotiations with the government [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.); 2019]. A year and a half later, the US and coalition forces withdrew hastily from Afghanistan, the government collapsed shortly after, and the Taliban regained power with little resistance or negotiation [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)].

The new government is led by Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, one of the founders of Taliban who is on a UN black-list. He is assisted by his interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, the FBI-wanted leader of Haqqani Network that is designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) since 9/19/2012 (U.S. Department of State n.d.). Other groups designated an FTO such as Al-Qaeda, an early target of GWOT, are still active in Afghanistan and new militant groups such as the so-called Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) have emerged and mobilized in Afghanistan [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS); Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)]. The same applies to countering terrorism on the global stage. The longer established Jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda and its affiliates are still present and active. Together with the new actors, such as IS and its affiliates, they have escalated their fighting strategies, increased their fighter base, and increased presence in more countries, most notably in Sub-Saharan and West Africa [→ Somalia (ISS); Nigeria (Boko Haram); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)], compared to the year 2001 and before the launch of GWOT. The failure of GWOT in Afghanistan has reinvigorated such groups and movements, taking the Taliban’s success story as “proof of a winning strategy” (Zimmerman 2021).

#### Liberal Peacebuilding: Never Again?

Liberal peacebuilding is a set of policies, norms, and legal provisions that are based on the normative ideal of

the superiority of liberal thought. It is understood as a civil phase located temporarily after a military intervention (Richmond 2007: 162f.) Within this phase, external actors typically engage in the establishment of a liberal-democratic system, the rule of law, and a liberal market economy. These measures should bring stability, peace, and socioeconomic improvements (Richmond 2007: Part II). The academic and political debate over liberal peacebuilding is too extensive to be reproduced in detail here. Generally, more radical views understand liberal peacebuilding - framed as a logical consequence of, and legitimization for military interventions - as harmful and responsible for prolonging suffering (e.g. Herbst 2003), or as a liberal form of imperialism (e.g. Chandler 2006). Though supporters of the approach have generally lost their enthusiasm for the possibilities of liberal peacebuilding due to disappointing empirical findings on its effects, in the 2000s, publications that praised one-size-fits-all measures of the subject were still common (Paris 2010: 337; Dodge 2021: 54).

Despite calls for a general rejection of liberal peacebuilding, especially by the so-called local turn and post-colonial and feminist approaches, the case of Afghanistan offers a juncture point to amend the approach towards modest and case sensitive proceedings in post-war-contexts. The following summarizes critique for the Afghan case, which can be divided into political, economic, and military aspects.

Local ownership of the political processes by Afghan elites and agency of the population was structurally neglected – though shortcomings in understanding the cultural and social context of conflict zones have been deemed crucial for the failure of peacebuilding in the past. Despite efforts at national decentralization, local and regional government bodies lacked clear roles and authority, leaving a void in capacity building endeavors (Brown 2021: 5f.). Socio-political reasons for the communication gap, especially between the rural population and local government institutions, were often misinterpreted as a lack of skill in governance and not as evidence for political divides (Richmond 2007: 150; Paris 2010: 343; Brown 2021: 4f.).

Furthermore, political institutions facilitated corruption, clientelism, and electoral fraud, ultimately alienating the population from the political project. Thus, the institutional setting was unable to maintain sufficient levels of legitimacy for the democratic process among large parts of the population. This was displayed most impressively by Afghanistan ranking 165th of 180 countries in the 2020 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, and by the severe decrease in voter turnout for elections from 2004 to 2019, shrinking from 83 percent to 19 percent respectively (TI 2021; Dodge 2021: 52; Suhrke 2012: 485).

Economic institutional arrangements were unsuccessful in providing prosperity to the population. Investments by the development and humanitarian sectors were neither well-orchestrated nor distributed reasonably among the diverse sectors in the country. Infrastructure projects were executed poorly and neglected peripheral areas. Foreign investment focused on extractive industries and left other economic sectors underfunded within a globalized market. International aid produced a heavily exploited rentier state. Ultimately, this led to 97 percent of Afghan GDP coming from international donors. The state’s dependence on external support also played a role in the government’s deficit in legitimacy: Traditionally, Afghan rulers relied on religion, local identities, and nationalism to legitimize their rule. As these concepts were rendered obsolete on the creation of a liberal-democratic system, the post-Taliban government’s

legitimacy was founded on the idea of “good governance”. The failure to deliver goods and services to its citizens only further undermined its legitimacy (Suhrke 2012: 486; Dodge 2021: 51ff.).

The growing presence of international military forces also decreased support for the coalition countries and their personnel. Afghans increasingly interpreted ISAF as occupying forces, contributing to a war harming the population and stabilizing the elites. In this way, the military presence fueled the conflict (Suhrke 2012: 485; Goodhand & Sedra 2013: 242). Although more than half of the US-reconstruction budget was allocated to reforming and building the Afghan security sector, the final goal of which was 352,000 trained personnel, the events leading up to the mid-August takeover of Kabul also caused these attempts to fail (Dodge 2021: 51ff.). The 2020 withdrawal deal between the US-administration under Donald Trump and the Taliban pushed for a quick exit with only vague commitments by Taliban forces, with a calculable risk of Afghanistan slipping back into conflict afterwards (Suhrke 2012: 488; Masala 2007: 4; Paris 2010: 343).

With its hugely diverse ethnic setting, a history of strong disconnection between (central) state and (especially rural) population, and the strong record of irregular warfare, Afghanistan may represent a special case (Dodge 2012: 53f.; Masala 2007: 3; Kulakov 2006). But the findings above pinpoint several lessons learnt from the case. Liberal peacebuilding in Afghanistan failed because it ignored local realities, stabilized a corrupt elite, and perpetuated an illegitimate war. The case of Afghanistan shows that peacebuilding attempts were at first embraced by a promising part of the population but failed to deliver recognizable impact. Ultimately, the US-led attempt of Security Sector Reform could have only been successful with a legitimate government and state in place, while the latter depends on a functioning security sector. Ultimately, this raises the question of whether ambitious normative objectives of liberal peacebuilding should make way for more modest, case-sensitive approaches.

## Conclusion

Defining terrorism, though initially appearing a legal problem, has inherent political dimensions. It involves distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate power on the international stage. In the absence of agreement in international society about the definition of international terrorism and the governing rules to address it, hegemonic powers could drive their politics and result in political discourses based on normative-ethical notions such as “good” vs. “evil”. The failure of GWOT in Afghanistan serves to remind international society about the non-exchangeability of “politics” with “ethics” and the inescapability of revisiting the problem of international terrorism. When it comes to liberal peacebuilding, the case of Afghanistan has proven the validity of critique against

the concept, most prominently a lack of legitimacy due to over-ambitious peacebuilding objectives and the neglect of case-specific circumstances. If one does not generally reject third-party intervention, peacebuilding as such may still be a valuable tool in international politics. We call for a careful amendment of existing peacebuilding strategies.

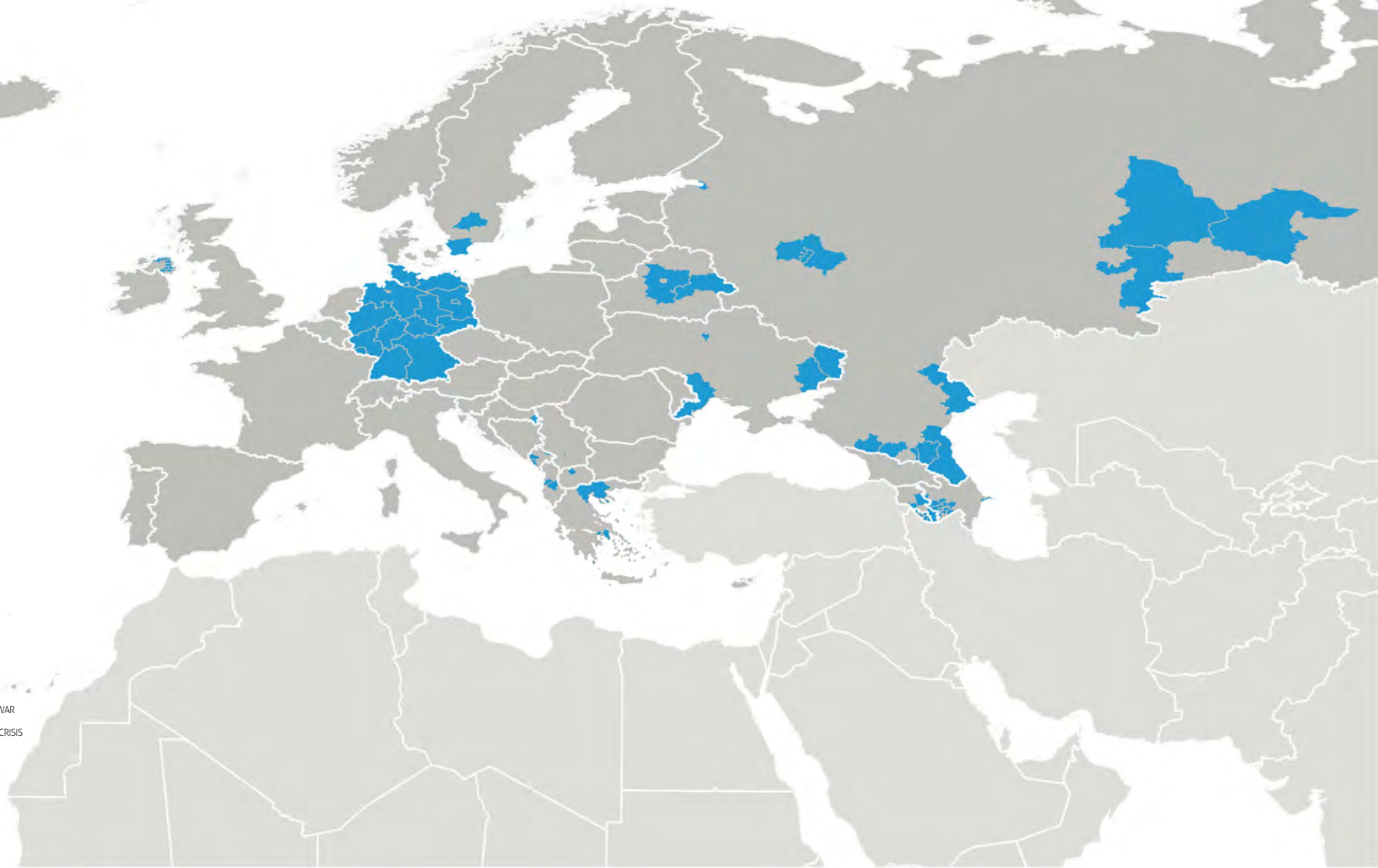
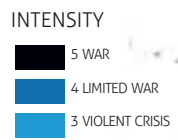
MOSTAFA BOSTANI, HANS STANKA

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EUROPE

# VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN EUROPE IN 2021 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)





## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, HIIK observed 50 conflicts in Europe. This constitutes a decrease of three compared to the previous year. This year 18 conflicts were on a violent level. No highly violent conflicts were observed.

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], Arctic states [→ Norway et al. – Russia (Arctic)], and the EU, the USA and several other states [→ EU, USA, et al. – Belarus, Russia] on the other hand, continued. In the EU and the US, public attention was drawn to alleged cyber attacks as well as to territorial violations from both sides, and the Russian withdrawal from the Treaty on Open Skies on December 18.

In Belarus, the 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, supported by Russia, on the other, continued. Protests and marches continued throughout the country, although these were decentralized and smaller compared to last year [→ Belarus (opposition)]. On May 24, a Belarusian Air Force fighter jet forced the landing of a Ryanair passenger plane in the capital Minsk, and authorities arrested blogger and former editor of the Belarusian oppositional telegram channel NEXTA. Numerous states condemned these actions and reacted with sanctions against Belarus [→ EU, USA, et al. - Belarus, Russia].

In Moldova, the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between several opposition parties and the government de-escalated to a dispute [→ Moldova (opposition)]. On July 11, snap parliamentary elections were held, with Maia Sandu's PAS winning a 53 percent majority. The non-violent crisis over the secession of Transnistria continued [→ Moldova – Transnistria].

In Ukraine, several conflicts remained active. Most prominently, the limited war over secession in the Donbas region de-escalated to a violent crisis. Ukrainian forces employed a UAV for the first time to target pro-separatist holdings [→ Ukraine (Donbas)]. Moreover, right-wing groups clashed with police forces and civil rights groups and protesters on several occasions. Freedom of the press also remained contentious in the country. Several news outlets were closed down by governmental and private actors and journalists, having been attacked, primarily at right-wing demonstrations [→ Ukraine (right-wing / opposition)]. In Russian-occupied Crimea, the non-violent crisis over autonomy between Crimean Tatars, on the one hand, and the Crimean regional government, pro-Russian activists, and the Russian government, on the other, continued [→ Ukraine (Crimean Tatars)].

The non-violent crisis over territory, international power, and resources between Russia and Ukraine continued. As in previous years, the conflict was marked by the contested status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and closely linked to the violent crisis in Donbas [→ Ukraine (Donbas)]. Military tensions between Russia and Ukraine rose in April and again from the beginning of November onwards, when Ukraine condemned increased Russian military presence along their shared borders in Crimea and in Donbas. Russia denied the allegations, claiming troop movements were part of military exercises. On July 12, Putin published an article claiming, "that true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia". In Russia, the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the Russian government continued. In January, police arrested opposition activist Alexei Navalny upon his return to Russia. He was later sentenced to 2.5 years in a penal colony. During mass protests in support of Navalny, police detained thousands of protesters. In the run-up to the September parliamentary, regional, and municipal elections, authorities banned numerous independent and opposition candidates from running. The ruling United Russia party won 49.8 percent of the vote. The party took 324 of 450 parliament seats, representing a two-thirds majority. In December, the established human rights group Memorial International was shut down [→ Russia (opposition)].

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, on the one hand, and the central and regional governments, on the other, continued [→ Russia (Islamist militants/Northern Caucasus)]. Overall, 16 people were killed in security and law enforcement operations against Islamist militants, all of them militants.

The violent crisis over international power and Russian regional influence in the two breakaway regions of South Ossetia [→ Georgia (South Ossetia)<sup>o</sup>] and Abkhazia [→ Georgia (Abkhazia)<sup>o</sup>] between Georgia and Russia de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. In January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled against Russia and in favor of Georgia in a court case on the August 2008 war between the two countries. The violent opposition conflict in Georgia was predominantly marked by tensions and protests surrounding the nationwide municipal elections and the arrests of high-profile opposition leaders [→ Georgia (opposition)]. Furthermore, in Georgia's breakaway-region South Ossetia – the State of Alania<sup>o</sup>, violent confrontations and detentions took place due to attempted crossings of the administrative boundary line. The so-called borderization process, the erection of border fences along the administrative boundary line between Tbilisi-controlled territory and South Ossetia, continued [→ Georgia (South Ossetia)<sup>o</sup>].

In the South Caucasus, the war over contested territories, particularly the Nagorno-Karabakh region, between Armenia and Azerbaijan de-escalated to a violent crisis [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan]. Throughout the year, fighting continued to flare up at the shared border while both countries accused each other of violating last year's ceasefire agreement. Conflict dynamics were closely related to the conflict over secession between the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh and the government of Azerbaijan [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)].

In Azerbaijan, the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition and the government under President Ilham Aliyev continued. Although the government rallied widespread support for its nationalist agenda in the aftermath of last year's war with Armenia, it continued its repressive policy against journalists and activists [→ Azerbaijan (opposition)].

In Armenia, the violent crisis over national power between various opposition parties and the government continued, especially in the context of the Armenian armed forces' defeat in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war and subsequent pressure on Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign [→ Armenia (opposition)].

## EUROPE

In Spain, two conflicts over autonomy or secession continued [→ Spain (Catalan Nationalists / Catalonia); Spain (Basque Provinces)]. On June 13, at least 25,000 people demonstrated in the capital Madrid against Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez plans to pardon nine imprisoned leading Catalan separatists. They were pardoned on June 22. The non-violent crisis between Spain and the UK over the territory of the Gibraltar peninsula continued [→ Spain – United Kingdom (Gibraltar)].

A new non-violent crisis erupted between the UK and France [→ France – United Kingdom (fishery)]. On January 1, the new Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the UK and EU came into force, guaranteeing UK fishers a larger proportion of the catching quota, yet still allowing EU fishers to pursue their work. However, the UK and Jersey, the largest of the UK's Channel Islands, repeatedly denied or postponed the issuing of fishing licenses to French fishers. Public attention in the EU, France, and the UK was drawn to France's subsequent threat to cut power to Jersey in response to new post-Brexit regulations.

In France the non-violent crisis over autonomy or secession of Corsica continued [→ France (Corsican nationalists / Corsica)]. On June 20, Corsican nationalists won the election to the Corsican Assembly with 68 percent. All winning Corsican nationalist parties proposed a renegotiation of autonomy to pass independent laws for Corsica. The French President Emmanuel Macron rejected this proposal.

Moreover, two secession conflicts continued in the UK [→ United Kingdom (Scottish Nationalists / Scotland); United Kingdom (Nationalists / Northern Ireland)]. Both conflicts were rich in political symbolism, with violent measures occurring in the latter conflict. For instance, on April 7, several hundred Protestant and Catholic youths clashed with each other and with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in west Belfast. PSNI used rubber bullets, while loyalists threw petrol bombs and stones and torched a bus. The clashes continued, leaving a total of 41 PSNI officers and several loyalists injured, and property damaged.

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 of Germany continued [→ Germany (xenophobes)]. The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system in Sweden continued as well [→ Sweden (xenophobes)].

Minority marginalization also persisted in Hungary, with right-wing politicians and activists pressuring members and allies of a wide range of minority groups [→ Hungary (right-wings – minorities)]. The conflict over Hungarian minority rights living in Hungary's neighboring states Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine, and the Hungarian influence in these countries, de-escalated to a dispute [→ Hungary – Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine (Hungarian minorities)].

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the dispute over secession between the Bosnian-Serb entity, Republika Srpska (RS), on the one hand, and the central government as well as the government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina [→ Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska)], on the other, continued.

In Croatia, the non-violent crisis over subnational predominance between the Serb minority and ethnic Croats escalated to a violent crisis [→ Croatia (Serb minority – ethnic Croats)].

The dispute over the secession of Kosovo<sup>o</sup> between the Kosovar government, on the one hand, and the Serbian government and the Serbian minority in Kosovo [→ Kosovo<sup>o</sup> - Serbia], on the other, escalated to a non-violent crisis. Protests erupted among Kosovar Serbs on September 15 when Kosovo passed a law requiring a license plate swap when entering Kosovo from Serbia by car.

In Montenegro, the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition, and various other opposition groups and the government and pro-Serbian groups continued [→ Montenegro (opposition)]. On September 5, a demonstration turned violent when thousands of Montenegrin nationalists attempted to prevent the inauguration of a Serbian orthodox bishop. Protesters clashed with police forces and threw fireworks, while police used tear gas and batons. Approx. 30 protesters and 20 policemen were injured. The government accused the opposition of attempting a coup d'état.

In North Macedonia, the dispute over national power and the orientation of the political system between the government led by SDSM and the opposition [→ North Macedonia (Opposition)], continued.

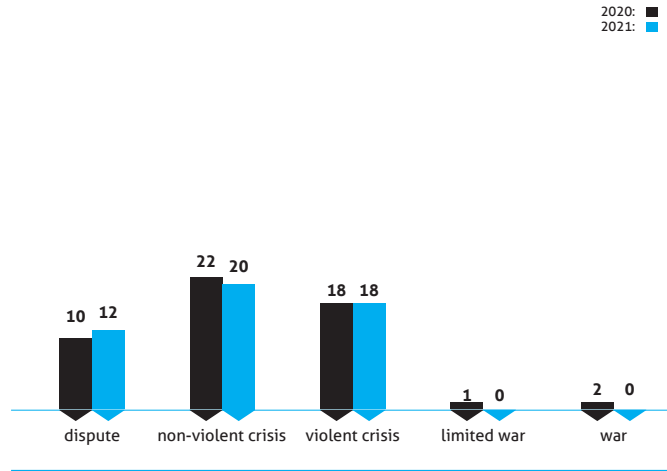
In Bulgaria, the violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between a broad opposition movement including various electoral alliances and non-parliamentary groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. President Boyko Borisov, the main target of demonstrations which began in 2020, resigned on April 16 after he was unable to form a government coalition. However, protests continued demanding the resignation of Chief Prosecutor Ivan Geshev on grounds of malpractice [→ Bulgaria (opposition)].

In Greece, the violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various left-wing and anarchist groups as well as various workers' unions, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued [→ Greece (Social protests, left-wing militants)]. Demonstrations erupted throughout the year over issues of legal bills and police brutality. On several occasions the demonstrations turned violent.

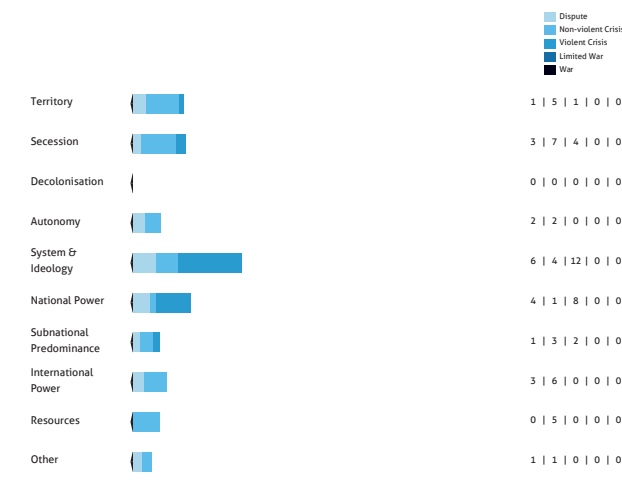
In Cyprus, the non-violent crisis over resources and secession of Northern Cyprus between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)<sup>o</sup> and the Cypriot government continued [→ Cyprus (Northern Cyprus<sup>o</sup>)]. The non-violent crisis over international power, oil, and gas resources, and the conceptions of international law in the Eastern Mediterranean region between Turkey and Libya, on the one hand, and EU members Greece, Cyprus, and France as well as Egypt, the UAE, and Israel, on the other, continued. This year, the conflict was marked by an increased interest to discuss bilateral issues, such as the delimitation of maritime zones, particularly between Greece and Turkey [→ Cyprus, Greece et al. - Turkey, Libya (Eastern Mediterranean)].

# EUROPE

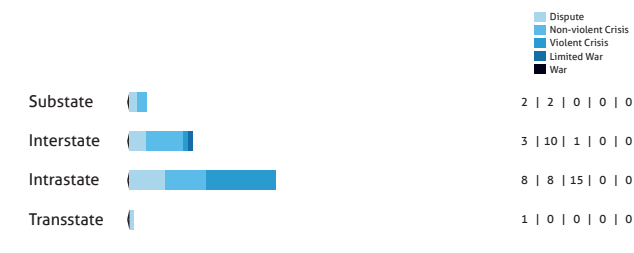
## CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN EUROPE IN 2021 COMPARED TO 2020



## FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN EUROPE IN 2021



## FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN EUROPE IN 2021



## EUROPE

### Overview: Conflicts in Europe in 2021

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
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	↓	3
Armenia – Turkey*	Armenia vs. Turkey	international power, other	1991	↘	1
Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Republic of Artsakh vs. government	secession	1988	↓	3
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)	opposition movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2020	↘	2
Croatia (Serb minority – ethnic Croats)	Serb minority vs. ethnic Croats	subnational predominance	1991	•	2
Croatia – Slovenia (border)*	Croatia vs. Slovenia	territory	1991	•	1
Cyprus (Northern Cyprus <sup>o</sup> )	TRNC <sup>o</sup> vs. government	secession, resources	1963	•	2
Cyprus, Greece et al. - Turkey, Libya (Eastern Mediterranean)	Libya (GNA), Turkey vs. Cyprus, Egypt, EU, France, Greece, Israel, UAE	system/ideology, international power, resources	2002	•	2
Estonia – Russia*	Estonia vs. Russia	territory, international power	1991	•	2
EU, USA et al. – Belarus, Russia	Canada, Denmark, Estonia, EU, France, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA et al. vs. Belarus, 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
France – United Kingdom (fishery)	France vs. United Kingdom	resources	2021	<b>NEW</b>	2
Georgia (Abkhazia <sup>o</sup> )*	Republic of Abkhazia <sup>o</sup> vs. government	secession	1989	•	2
Georgia (opposition)	ENM, various opposition groups vs. government	national power	2007	•	3
Georgia (South Ossetia <sup>o</sup> )	Republic of South Ossetia – the State of Alania <sup>o</sup> vs. government	secession, subnational predominance	1989	↘	2
Georgia – Russia	Georgia vs. Russia	international power	1992	↘	2
Germany (xenophobes)	various right-wing groups, xenophobes et al. vs. government	system/ideology	2014	•	3
Greece (left-wing militants – right-wing militants)*	left-wing militants vs. right-wing militants	system/ideology	1976	↗	3
Greece (right-wing militants)*	right-wing militants vs. government	system/ideology	1985	↓	1
Greece (social protests, left-wing militants)	left-wing militants, social groups, workers' union vs. government	system/ideology	2010	•	3
Greece – Turkey (Aegean Sea)*	Greece vs. Turkey	territory, other	1973	•	2
Hungary (minorities – right-wings)	right-wing groups vs. civil society groups	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2008	•	2
Hungary – Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine (Hungarian minorities)	Hungarian minorities (Transylvania / southern Slovakia / Transcarpathia), Hungary vs. Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine	system/ideology, international power	1989	↘	1
Kosovo <sup>o</sup> (opposition)*	opposition groups, opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power, subnational predominance	2015	•	1
Kosovo <sup>o</sup> – Serbia	Kosovar government vs. Serbian government, Serbian minority (in Kosovo <sup>o</sup> )	secession	1989	↗	2
Latvia – Russia*	Latvia vs. Russia	international power	1991	↘	1
Moldova (opposition)	opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2009	↓	1

## EUROPE

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
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	↑	3
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
Russia (Islamist militants / Northern Caucasus)	IS Caucasus Province, other Islamist militants 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	↓	1
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	↘	1
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 Tartars vs. Crimean regional government, pro-Russian activists, Russia	autonomy	1988	•	2
Ukraine (Donbas)	DPR, LPR vs. government	secession, system/ideology	2014	↘	3
Ukraine (right-wing / opposition)	right-wing groups vs. civil-rights groups, minorities, opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2013	↗	3
United Kingdom (nationalists / Northern Ireland)	DUP, Red Hand Commando, UDA, UVF vs. Army of the Republik, Continuity IRA, nationalist youth, NIRA, Sinn Féin vs. government	secession, subnational predominance	1968	•	3
United Kingdom (Scottish nationalists / Scotland)	AUOB et al., SNP vs. government	secession	2007	•	2

<sup>1</sup> Conflicts marked with \* are without description

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

<sup>3</sup> 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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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")

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**ARMENIA (OPPOSITION)**


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


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

 Conflict items: national power

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The violent crisis over national power between various opposition parties, such as Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia, on the one hand, and the government led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, on the other, continued. The opposition blamed Pashinyan and his government for losing last year's war against Azerbaijan [ → Armenia - Azerbaijan; Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)].

Since the 2020 ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan, months of anti-government protests put Pashinyan under pressure to resign. For instance, on January 21, Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia dismissed Pashinyan's offer to hold fresh parliamentary elections, reiterating that he must resign and hand over power to an interim government. Several thousand demonstrators rallied outside the government headquarters in the capital Yerevan on January 28, demanding Pashinyan's resignation. On February 25, thousands protested against Pashinyan, with the Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces Onik Gasparyan and more than 40 other top-ranking generals demanding Pashinyan's resignation. Pashinyan called this an attempted coup, causing a political crisis that ended in Gasparyan's dismissal.

On April 25, Pashinyan announced his formal resignation, prompting the dissolution of the National Assembly and triggering snap elections on June 20. Four alliances and 23 parties participated in the elections, while the ruling My Step Alliance dissolved. Pashinyan's Civil Contract party participated independently and received 54 percent of the vote and thereby winning a majority of parliamentary seats. The newly formed Armenia Alliance, consisting of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Reborn Armenia, and One Armenia Party, led by former president Robert Kocharyan, came second. The opposition claimed electoral fraud and requested the Constitutional Court to overturn Pashinyan's election victory. On June 28, the Armenian election body confirmed the election result while denying the opposition's accusations.

In August, three fistfights broke out in the Armenian parliament over the course of two days between members of the ruling party and the opposition. One of these altercations started after a member of the Armenia Alliance was heckled for accusing Pashinyan of being "a lying populist".

On November 9, Armenia Alliance held a rally in Yerevan and bloc leaders announced the launch of a nationwide resistance movement to remove Pashinyan and Civil Contract from power. In the midst of ongoing border clashes with Azerbaijan, the opposition announced on November 16 that the formation of a new government could resolve the current tensions.

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**ARMENIA – AZERBAIJAN**


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


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Conflict parties: Armenia vs. Azerbaijan

 Conflict items: territory

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The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh de-escalated to a violent crisis. The conflict dynamic was closely related to the conflict over secession between the self-declared Republic of Artsakh, better known as Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), and the government of Azerbaijan [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)].

On January 11, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met for negotiations, by invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin, for the first time since last year's ceasefire agreement. In the aftermath of last year's war, both Russia and Turkey sent military personnel to the Nagorno-Karabakh region. 1,960 Russian servicemen were stationed as peacekeeping forces. Negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan continued in the following months with Russia and the OSCE Minsk Group contributing to the peace talks.

In May, tensions in the Armenian border provinces of Syunik and Gegharkunik increased. For instance, on May 12, Armenian officials reported that Azerbaijani soldiers crossed into Armenian territory in Syunik. In the following days, both parties conducted large-scale military exercises. On May 20, Armenian military personnel clashed with Azerbaijani servicemen, who had allegedly crossed into Armenian territory, leaving eleven Armenian soldiers injured. Azerbaijan denied these allegations. On May 28, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated that the Armed Forces of Armenia attacked positions of the Azerbaijani army in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, the landlocked exclave of Azerbaijan, injuring one soldier.

Following a recommendation by Russia, a joint Armenia-Azerbaijan commission on demarcation and delimitation of the border was created by the end of May.

Several clashes occurred along the border between the Armenian province Ararat and the Azerbaijani district Sadarak as well as between the Armenian province Gegharkunik and Azerbaijani district Kalbajar. Both governments confirmed five servicemen were killed and eleven injured in July. During the night of July 28, the fighting intensified at the border close to Kalbajar. The parties targeted each other with heavy artillery and tank fire, until a Russian-brokered ceasefire on the same day was reached. The tense situation continued in August with frequent fire exchanges at the border between Armenia and Nakhchivan. On August 17, fighting increased at the border of Gegharkunik, leaving one Armenian soldier dead and one injured. On September 1, the Armenian MoD accused the Azerbaijani military of opening sniper fire at the border in Ararat, killing one Armenian serviceman.

In November, Azerbaijan and Armenia accused each other of continuous ceasefire violations. On November 16, heavy fighting took place in the Lake Sev area, killing at least seven and wounding ten Azerbaijani servicemen. According to the Armenian MoD, one Armenian soldier was killed, 13 captured and 24 soldiers went missing.

Amid efforts to improve diplomatic relations between the two countries, Pashinyan and Aliyev held talks with Putin on November 26 and the President of the European Council on December 15. Nonetheless, the conflict continued to flare up at the shared border. On December 9 and 10, both countries

accused each other of violating the ceasefire and for being responsible for two casualties and ten injured servicemen in Kalbajar.

jmk

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## AZERBAIJAN (NAGORNO-KARABAKH)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: **↓** | Start: **1988**

Conflict parties: Republic of Artsakh vs. government

Conflict items: secession

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The war over secession of the Nagorno-Karabakh region between the self-declared Republic of Artsakh, better known as Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), and the government de-escalated to a violent crisis. The Nagorno-Karabakh region is inhabited primarily by ethnic Armenians and supported by Armenia, but is internationally recognized as a territory of Azerbaijan. The conflict was closely related to the conflict over territory between Armenia and Azerbaijan [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan].

Throughout the year, the de facto authorities of NKR and the Azerbaijani government mutually accused each other of violating last year's ceasefire agreement following altercations. For instance, on April 22, NKR's Ministry of Defense (MoD) accused Azerbaijani armed forces of violating the ceasefire and called on the government to refrain from further provocation. Reportedly, from April 19 to 25, NKR counted 180 shelling attacks committed by Azerbaijani forces. On July 6, the Azerbaijani MoD reported fire on its positions near Aliagali village, Aghdam District by NKR armed forces, leaving one Azerbaijani soldier injured. On August 9, the NKR MoD reported that Azerbaijani armed forces used firearms and anti-tank grenade launchers in an attack in the Khojaly District. On August 12, NKR armed forces prevented an attempted crossing of the Line of Contact (LoC) by Azerbaijani armed forces in western Nagorno-Karabakh. On December 3, Azerbaijani armed forces allegedly abducted and killed a civilian from Chartar village, Khojavend District, along the LoC. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of NKR accused Azerbaijan of "state-level genocidal and anti-Armenian policy".

Many reported clashes occurred in the Shusha District. For instance, on May 26, the Azerbaijani MoD accused the Armenian armed forces of opening fire on its positions in Gadabay and Kalbajar districts as well as near Shusha city, eponymous district, which was denied by both Armenia and NKR. On August 11, Azerbaijani armed forces used strike drones against NKR military positions near Yeghtsahogh village, Shusha. On August 15, Azerbaijan's MoD reported machine gun fire on military positions near Shusha from NKR military positions of Mukhtarkend and Gaybal. On September 17, fire exchange between NKR armed forces and Azerbaijani armed forces was reported near Shusha, leaving one NKR soldier injured. The ceasefire violation was confirmed by the MoD of the Russian Federation. On November 8, Azerbaijani armed forces killed one civilian and injured three near Shusha.

In total, the altercations left three civilians and one Azerbaijani soldier dead, while three civilians, eight NKR soldiers and four Azerbaijani soldiers were injured.

Hundreds of thousands of mines were placed on Azerbaijani soil by Armenian armed forces during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. Throughout the year, explosions of leftover mines killed three Azerbaijani soldiers and six Azerbaijani civilians, while another 24 persons were injured. nie

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## AZERBAIJAN (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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

Following last year's war with Armenia, the government under President Ilham Aliyev garnered widespread support for its nationalist agenda, even among opposition parties. Throughout the year, however, the government continued its repressive policy against journalists and activists while many critics remained in exile.

On March 8, during a feminist protest in the capital Baku, police forces attacked and detained dozens of protesters, injuring several. The march was preceded by police detaining and later releasing several feminist activists. Later that month, a prominent political opposition leader blamed Aliyev for orchestrating the leak of an intimate video of his daughter as a form of "political blackmail" to resign from politics. This incident was allegedly one of several cases where dissident women were targeted with leaks relating to their personal lives.

On April 15, the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party (APFP) accused the government of preventing its chairman from accessing the Internet. This alleged harassment is reportedly part of Aliyev's public denouncement of the opposition. For instance, on February 14, Aliyev called the opposition "traitors and enemies", while on April 12, he referred to opposition leaders as "dogs" at a public ceremony in Baku. On May 7, an oppositional blogger was arrested in Baku at an anti-government rally. Following the arrest, he was held in custody for 15 days and claimed afterwards that he had been subject to torture. Two months later, the blogger died under unclear circumstances in exile in Tbilisi, Georgia.

On July 18, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project published a report stating that the government used surveillance software to spy on hundreds of local activists and journalists. Officials denied these accusations.

Furthermore, throughout the year, court rulings concerning members of the opposition sparked small-scale protests in Baku. For instance, on October 8, a member of the APFP was sentenced to 13 years in prison after being found guilty of financing terrorism. The ruling was accompanied by demonstrations in front of the court building. Police detained several supporters of the opposition. In November, an opposition activist of the APFP went on hunger strike to demand his release from detention along accusations of torture. His hunger strike led to support rallies in Baku on December 1 and 15 that were both violently dissolved by the police. Several protesters were detained and alleged that they were beaten, ill-treated and tortured while in police custody. Among the activists was a veteran opposition politician who was severely beaten. The Ministry of Internal Affairs denied these claims and stated that the protesters violated the quarantine regime. On December 30, the parliament adopted a controversial law "on media", which according to the OSCE poses "significant limitations and restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media". jmk

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**BELARUS (OPPOSITION)**


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


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

 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The 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, supported by Russia, on the other, continued.

In January, the authorities began to work on a new law to ban the public display of the white-red-white flag and the Pahonia symbol of the pro-democracy movement. Protests and marches continued to take place throughout the country. Unlike last year, they were limited to more decentralized and smaller protests. For instance, on January 23, police detained at least 150 people in nationwide protests.

Independent journalists were particularly affected by reprisals for filming and reporting about anti-government protests. On February 18, two Belsat-TV journalists were sentenced to two years in prison. Between March 18 and March 27, authorities arrested at least 16 journalists of the Belarusian Association of Journalists and revoked the organization's license on August 27. On May 18, local authorities shut down the largest independent, non-state media portal TUT.BY. Reporters Without Borders classified Belarus as the most dangerous country in Europe for journalists.

On May 24, a Belarusian Air Force fighter jet forced the landing of a Ryanair passenger plane in the capital Minsk. The plane was flying from Athens to Vilnius but was forced to make an abrupt change of route due to an alleged bomb threat on board. The claim turned out to be false. However, authorities arrested two passengers, a blogger, and former editor of the Belarusian oppositional telegram channel NEXTA, who was listed on the terrorist list of the authorities, and his partner. The EU, the UK, Ukraine, USA, and Canada condemned these actions and put into force a ban on flights to Belarus and through the Belarusian airspace, placing the Belarusian state airline on their sanctions lists. On June 24, the EU adopted its fourth package of sanctions against Belarus [→ EU, USA, et al. - Belarus, Russia].

On September 6, the Minsk Regional Court sentenced two members of the opposition Coordination Council to eleven and ten years of imprisonment, respectively. The trial was conducted without public observers. Following that, on December 14, the Homel City Court sentenced the husband of opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya to 18 years in prison.

The government cracked down on civil society activists throughout the year. For instance, more than 200 NGOs have been liquidated throughout the year. Moreover, security personnel carried out over 200 raids against pro-democracy activists between June and August. According to the NGO Viasna, 801 individuals were jailed for political reasons this year, and more than 5,000 criminal cases have been opened since August 2020 regarding participation in opposition protests. The International Federation for Human Rights also stated that the conditions in Belarusian prisons continued to deteriorate. nbu

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**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (REPUBLIKA SRPSKA)**


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


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

 Conflict items: secession

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The dispute over secession between the Bosnian-Serb entity, Republika Srpska (RS), on the one hand, and the central government as well as the government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other, continued.

On February 16, Bosniak political parties announced the would boycott of local election reruns, claiming that authorities were unwilling to combat irregularities, which had allegedly benefited Serbian candidates in the original vote on 11/15/2020. On March 10, the parliament of RS demanded the abolishment of the Office of the High Representative (OHR). President Milorad Dodik, Serbian member of the Bosnian tripartite presidency, accused the OHR of abusing its power and benefitting Bosniak political parties, and threatened an independence referendum if Bosnian Serbs' interest continued to be neglected.

On October 8, Dodik announced plans to end the joint military cooperation between the entities. The EU, the USA, and the OHR condemned this as a dangerous development that threatens the institutions of the 1995 Dayton Accords and the internal peace of Bosnia and Herzegovina. jhb

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**BULGARIA (OPPOSITION)**


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


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Conflict parties: opposition movement vs. government

 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between a broad opposition movement including various electoral alliances and non-parliamentary groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

A parliamentary deadlock originating from accusations of corruption against the former prime minister Boyko Borissov of the party Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) and the Chief Prosecutor Ivan Geshev led to three consecutive elections in April, July, and November. After the last election, the successful formation of a new coalition under Prime Minister Kiril Petkov in December represented an end to the political stalemate.

In the first half of the year, non-parliamentary protest groups continued to stage small-scale protests that called for the resignation of Borissov and Geshev. On January 24, protesters tried to enter the Council of Ministers building in the capital Sofia, clashing with police forces. On April 4, the first parliamentary election of the year took place, which was won by the ruling party GERB. The results sparked protests by the non-parliamentary opposition in front of GERB's headquarters. Protesters reiterated their demands for Borissov's conviction and incarceration. Moreover, parties in parliament refused to enter into a coalition with GERB due to the allega-



tions of corruption, leading to Borissov's resignation on April 16.

After a ruling coalition could not be formed, President Rumen Radev appointed an interim government and announced another election for July 11. Meanwhile, with Borissov out of office, protests focused on Geshev. On June 2, hundreds protested in front of the Palace of Justice, demanding his resignation on grounds of malpractice. One week later, on June 9, protesters occupied the entrances of the main courthouse. Parties again failed to form a government coalition after the elections on July 11, resulting in the announcement of new elections on November 14.

After a landslide victory, the newly-formed party We Continue the Change formed a coalition with the Bulgarian Socialist Party, Democratic Bulgaria and There Is Such A People, and parliament elected Petkov as Prime Minister on December 13. abu

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## CROATIA (SERB MINORITY – ETHNIC CROATIANS)

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Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1991**

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Conflict parties: Serb minority vs. ethnic Croats

Conflict items: subnational predominance

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The non-violent crisis over subnational predominance between the Serb minority and ethnic Croats continued. Since the eruption of the conflict in the wake of the Croatian War of Independence, hostilities between ethnic Croats and the Serb minority continued.

On May 2, 14 Croatian football fans marched through the municipality of Borovo, Vukovar-Syrmia county, which is mainly populated by ethnic Serbs. They chanted anti-Serb slurs, including "We will slaughter Serbs". While the police did not intervene, they took the men into custody on charges of publicly inciting violence and hatred the following day. Police suspected an ethnically motivated attack when an Orthodox church in Vrginmost town, Sisak-Moslavina county, a town predominantly inhabited by ethnic Serbs, was attacked on the night of June 13. On October 1, anti-Serb graffiti reading "Hang Serbs from the willow trees" appeared in the town of Pazin, Istria county, causing public indignation and condemnation. On November 21, three ethnic Serbs severely injured an ethnic Croatian man in Stari Jankovci village, Vukovar-Syrmia. The three perpetrators were subsequently charged with attempted murder. dod

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## CYPRUS (NORTHERN CYPRUS<sup>o</sup>)

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

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Conflict parties: TRNC<sup>o</sup> vs. government

Conflict items: secession, resources

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The non-violent crisis over resources and secession between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC<sup>o</sup>) and the government continued.

Renewed interest of the international community in a resolution of the conflict as well as Turkey's involvement shaped the interaction of the conflict parties during the year. On January 29 and July 29, the UNSC routinely extended the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for six months, respectively. On February 25, UN

Secretary General Antonio Guterres announced a meeting of the conflict parties in April, following a breakdown in negotiations in 2017. In the run-up to the meeting, TRNC Prime Minister Ersin Tatar and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan repeatedly ruled out a federal model and advocated for a two-state solution. From April 27 to 29, an informal 5+1 meeting took place in Geneva, Switzerland, which included representatives of the Republic of Cyprus and the TRNC, the three guarantor nations Greece, Turkey, and the UK as well as the UN. However, no agreement was achieved and a decision on formal talks was postponed. On April 29, Guterres announced his intention to resume talks in the coming months. On June 4, UNFICYP officials welcomed the reopening of border crossings on June 4 that had been closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

On July 20, Erdoğan visited the TRNC to commemorate the anniversary of the 1974 invasion. On the same day, Turkish Cypriot authorities announced their intention to proceed with a partial reopening of the TRNC-controlled town of Varosha, Famagusta District, which was abandoned in 1974. The move prompted criticism and condemnation from the Republic of Cyprus as well as the EU and USA. On July 23, the UNSC condemned the announcement and called for an immediate reversal of all steps taken regarding Varosha since October 2020. plo

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

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Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **2002**

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

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power, resources

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The non-violent crisis over international power, oil and gas resources, as well as the conceptions of international law in the Eastern Mediterranean region between Turkey and Libya, on the one hand, and Greece, Cyprus, France, as well as Egypt, the UAE, and Israel, on the other, continued.

This year, the conflict was marked by an increased interest in negotiations, particularly between Greece and Turkey. During the first half of the year, Greek and Turkish officials met on several occasions to discuss bilateral issues, such as the delimitation of maritime zones. They agreed on a direct channel of communication.

Turkey continued its exploration activities. On May 24, Turkey's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources announced that Turkey would drill additional boreholes in the region. On October 3, the Turkish Ministry of Defense accused Greece of "unlawful, provocative and aggressive" maritime actions, such as exploration and military maneuvers, in contested waters in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea [→ Greece – Turkey (Aegean Sea)]. On November 11, in response to Turkey's continued unauthorized drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, the EU extended the restrictive measures issued against Turkey in 2019, for another year. On December 2, Cyprus announced that it would issue licenses for hydrocarbon exploration in its EEZ, which was strongly criticized by Turkish authorities.

Negotiations between other actors also continued. On April 14, the Greek Prime Minister and the President of the Libyan Presidential Council agreed to hold talks to discuss a formal

delineation of their maritime zones in the Eastern Mediterranean. On May 6 and September 8, Egyptian and Turkish officials held talks, addressing peace and security in the Eastern Mediterranean. Nonetheless, both sides strengthened their respective military capabilities in the region. On October 7 and 14, Greece confirmed defense pacts, including procurement agreements, with France and the US respectively. plo

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## EU, USA ET AL. – BELARUS, RUSSIA

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

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

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

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The non-violent crisis over ideology and international power between the EU, USA, and several other states, on the one hand, and Russia and Belarus, on the other, continued. Both sides employed deterring rhetoric and strategies. Putin repeatedly remarked on Russia’s opposition to Ukraine becoming a NATO member state. On July 12, he published an article claiming “that true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia” [→ Russia - Ukraine]. As in previous years, both sides accused one another of territorial violations and threats. For instance, on March 3, at least one US B-1 bomber accompanied by NATO fighter jets flew a sortie heading toward the NATO-Russian border [→ Estonia – Russia; Latvia – Russia]. The B-1 bomber was intercepted by at least one Russian fighter jet from Kaliningrad oblast, Russia. On March 29, NATO fighter jets scrambled ten times in less than six hours to intercept Russian warplanes over the North Atlantic, North Sea, Black Sea, and Baltic Sea. Similarly, in an incident during a naval exercise in the Black Sea on June 23, British warship HMS Defender sailed from Odessa, Ukraine, to Batumi, Georgia, through Ukrainian waters, which Russia has claimed since its 2014 annexation of Crimea. Russia claimed it had intercepted the HMS Defender with a fighter jet, firing warning shots. The UK denied this [→ Russia – Georgia].

Moreover, both sides conducted multiple military maneuvers throughout the year. For example, NATO held a 20-day exercise in Estonia from May 11 to 31, involving approx. 14,000 personnel from the Estonian armed forces and from NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence. From September 10 to 16, Russia conducted a large-scale collaborative military exercise between Russia and Belarus involving approx. 200,000 troops, 290 tanks, at least 240 artillery guns, 80 aircraft, as well as a minimum of 15 ships taking place simultaneously in several Russian and Belarusian military bases and training grounds.

Cyberattacks were a main concern of both sides. For instance, on September 26, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Joseph Borrell warned Russia not to interfere in the German federal election, with “malicious cyber activities,” such as cyberattacks by the hacker group Ghostwriter with alleged links to the Russian military intelligence service.

Both sides imposed sanctions, used diplomatic actions, and media strategies against each other. For example, on March 22, the EU imposed sanctions against two Russian officials

over human rights violations and misconduct against minority groups in Chechnya, Russia. [→ Russia (Islamist Militants/North Caucasus)]. On December 15, a German criminal court found the suspect of the so-called 2019 Tiergarten killing guilty of murder. Five days later, Russia expelled two German diplomats in response to the verdict and denied all accusations.

On May 24, a Belarusian Air Force fighter jet forced the landing of a Ryanair passenger plane in the capital Minsk. The plane was flying from Athens to Vilnius but was forced to make an abrupt change of route due to an alleged bomb threat on board. The claim turned out to be false. However, authorities arrested two passengers [→ Belarus (opposition)]. The EU, UK, Ukraine, US, and Canada condemned these actions and implemented a ban on flights to Belarus, through the Belarusian airspace, and put the Belarusian state airline on their sanctions lists. On June 24, the EU adopted its fourth package of sanctions against Belarus. It involved 166 individuals, including Lukashenka, and 15 state-owned companies. In addition, sectoral sanctions were introduced on the trade of oil, potash, and tobacco products, and in the financial sector.

Moreover, international contracts over disarmament, non-proliferation, and unrestricted aerial passage were weakened. For instance, Russia officially withdrew from the Open Skies Treaty on December 18. However, the strategic arms reduction treaty New START was extended. tcr

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## FRANCE (CORSIKAN NATIONALISTS / CORSICA)

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

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

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

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The non-violent crisis over autonomy and secession between the Corsican regional government, formed by Free Corsica (FC), a nationalist pro-independence alliance, the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC), a paramilitary organization, and nationalist activist groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other hand, continued. On May 5, a group of more than ten nationalists, armed with machine guns and handguns, announced the formation of the group FLNC Maghju 21 at a press conference. The group stated its aim to enforce the sovereignty claims of Corsica against France. The National Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor’s Office announced investigations into the group. On September 2, FLNC claimed it would not abandon its objective of autonomy and would initiate armed struggle. On June 20, Corsican nationalists won the election to the Corsican Assembly with 68 percent. All winning Corsican nationalist parties proposed the renegotiation of autonomy over passing its own laws for Corsica. President Emanuel Macron rejected this proposal.

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**FRANCE – UNITED KINGDOM (FISHERY)**


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 Intensity: **2** | Change: **NEW** | Start: **2021**


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 Conflict parties: France vs. United Kingdom  
 Conflict items: resources
 

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A new non-violent crisis between France, supported by French fishers, on the one hand, and the UK, supported by British fishers, on the other, over resources, in particular fishing rights in the English Channel, erupted.

On January 1, the new Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the UK and EU came into force, guaranteeing UK fishers a bigger part of the catching quota, yet still allowing EU fishers to pursue their work. However, the UK and Jersey, the largest of the UK's Channel Islands, repeatedly denied or postponed the issue of fishing licenses to French fishers.

On May 4, France threatened to cut power to Jersey in response to new post-Brexit regulations relating to the time, place, and the technical equipment of shipping boats that EU and French fishers are allowed to operate, effectively blocking access to fishing grounds specifically in the waters around Jersey. Subsequently, the UK declared that Jersey was responsible for its own territorial waters.

On May 5, French trawlers allegedly blocked the port of St. Helier town, Jersey, thereby preventing British fishers from pursuing their work. In turn, the UK sent two Royal Navy vessels to patrol, which prompted France to send two French Navy vessels on May 6. On September 29, Jersey refused 75 French fishing boats access to its waters from October 30 onward.

On October 27, France seized a UK trawler in the Port of Le Havre, Seine-Maritime department, and threatened economic sanctions. On November 1, the UK Foreign Minister threatened France with legal action over the trade agreement if France continued its course of action. On November 25, French fishers set up burning barricades on the French side of the Channel tunnel in Coquelles, Pas-de-Calais department, meanwhile five French trawlers blocked the mouth of the Port of Calais, Pas-de-Calais department. On December 12, the EU and the UK allegedly settled the crisis. However, French fishers threatened to blockade the Port of Calais, on December 23. tcr

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**GEORGIA (OPPOSITION)**


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


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 Conflict parties: ENM, various opposition groups vs. government  
 Conflict items: national power
 

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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 under the Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party (KO), on the other, continued.

In the first half of the year, the conflict centered around the political deadlock after KO won the 2020 parliamentary elections. Opposition parties refused to recognize the results. On February 18, then-Prime Minister announced his resignation over an arrest order concerning Nika Melia, the chairman of ENM. On February 22, parliament approved a new govern-

ment led by Irakli Garibashvili, while ENM and smaller parties boycotted proceedings. On February 23, police detained Melia and used tear gas in a raid on opposition party offices, injuring at least twelve. On February 26, thousands protested in the capital Tbilisi, calling for snap parliamentary elections and the release of political prisoners.

On April 20, KO and parts of the opposition signed an EU-mediated deal. As part of the deal, on May 10, Melia was freed from prison after the EU posted his bail. Three months later, on July 28, KO annulled the deal, blaming the opposition for the failure of the agreement.

On July 5, organizers of an LGBTQ+ Pride march in Tbilisi called off the event following attacks from homophobic groups on activists and at least 50 journalists. One cameraman later died from his injuries. On July 11, thousands protested in Tbilisi to demand Garibashvili's resignation and the prosecution of those responsible for the cameraman's death. Police detained twelve. Critics accused the government of orchestrating a violent campaign against journalists and tacitly supporting homophobic groups. Garibashvili had previously said holding the Pride march was "unacceptable for a large segment of Georgian society". Georgia's Interior Ministry announced that a criminal investigation had been opened into the cameraman's death.

The second half of the year was dominated by tensions around the nationwide municipal elections and the arrest of former president Mikheil Saakashvili. On October 1, Saakashvili was arrested, after returning from self-imposed exile in Ukraine. In 2018, he had been convicted in absentia for fraud-related charges and sentenced to six years in jail. Based on exit polls on October 30, KO won 19 of the 20 contested mayoral posts, including all five of the country's major cities. The opposition alleged that ballots had been rigged. The second round of the local elections was generally well administered but OSCE stated "widespread and consistent allegations of intimidation, vote-buying, pressure on candidates and voters."

Saakashvili's arrest prompted huge rallies, with thousands marching in his support. For instance, on October 14, tens of thousands protested in Tbilisi, demanding his release. On November 6, thousands of his supporters gathered in front of the prison where he was kept. On December 18, an independent medical commission examined Saakashvili and ruled that his health had been seriously compromised "as a result of torture, ill-treatment, inadequate medical care, and a prolonged hunger strike." In the wake of the report, on December 21, several thousand protested in Tbilisi. tav

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**GEORGIA (SOUTH OSSETIA<sup>o</sup>)**


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


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 Conflict parties: Republic of South Ossetia – the State of Alania<sup>o</sup> vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance
 

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The violent crisis over the secession of South Ossetia and subnational predominance between the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia – the State of Alania<sup>o</sup>, supported by Russia, on the one hand, and the government on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. As in previous years, the conflict focused on the demarcation of the administrative boundary line.

Throughout the year, at least 19 Georgian citizens were de-


tained for trying to cross the administrative boundary line. Although most detainees were released, seven remained in custody until the end of the year. For example, on February 27, South Ossetian border guards detained but later released a Georgian citizen for allegedly crossing the de facto border illegally near the village of Bershueti, Shida Kartli region.

On February 2, the Supreme Court of South Ossetia sentenced a Georgian citizen, who had been arrested last year, to 12.5 years in prison for illegally crossing the administrative boundary line and opening fire on Russian soldiers. Georgia, the USA, and the EU, among others, condemned the ruling as a Russian attempt to control South Ossetia. In the following months, his relatives and NGO activists carried out several protest actions, demanding the government to negotiate his release. On July 14, he was pardoned by the president of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia, Anatoly Bibilov. On January 21, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in the case of Georgia v. Russia (II) that Russia had been involved in the violation of human rights in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008. Bibilov rejected the ruling the next day. Over the course of the year, representatives of Georgia and South Ossetia held several meetings under the aegis of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism and the Geneva International Discussions. The main topics of negotiations were the demarcation of the administrative boundary line and the detentions of Georgian citizens. clp

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## GEORGIA – RUSSIA

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Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **1992**

Conflict parties: Georgia vs. Russia  
Conflict items: international power

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The violent crisis over international power and Russian regional influence in the two breakaway regions of South Ossetia [→ Georgia (South Ossetia)<sup>o</sup>] and Abkhazia [→ Georgia (Abkhazia)<sup>o</sup>] de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. Tensions had increased in 2019 and 2020, after anti-Russia protests took place in the Georgian capital Tbilisi, and the closure of bilateral borders, which remained closed throughout this year.


On January 21, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled against Russia and in favor of Georgia in a court case on the August 2008 war between the two countries. The court held that Russia had violated several articles of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Russian Ministry of Justice stated that it did not agree with the conclusions of the ECHR. A day later, on January 22, NATO welcomed the ECHR's ruling. Russia had repeatedly called the ECHR biased and politicized. On April 8, the Georgian Prime Minister, President, and ministry of foreign affairs accused Russia of being responsible for an incident on April 7, where four persons drowned while trying to cross the Abkhazian-Georgian border river. Furthermore, on April 28, the State Security Service of Georgia declared Russia to be an "existential threat" to Georgia due to its activities in the Black Sea and South Caucasus region, especially in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

On October 13, the 54th round of the Geneva International Discussions on the Russian-Georgian conflict took place. The Georgian delegation raised the issue of Russia granting citizenship to residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Georgia considers a step towards future annexation of the breakaway territories. Negotiations on the issue of IDPs were unsuccessful due to a walk-out of several participants. tos

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## GERMANY (XENOPHOBES)

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

Conflict parties: various right-wing groups, xenophobes et al. vs. government  
Conflict items: system/ideology

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

Throughout the year, according to the government, 21,514 politically motivated criminal offenses with a right-wing background were registered in Germany, including 1,020 acts of violence of which 368 had a xenophobic background. 298 people were injured and seven arrest warrants issued in connection with right-wing extremism.

On March 30, the government issued the Law on Combating Right-Wing Extremism and Hate Crime.

The same day, a Syrian-born refugee and human rights activist running for a seat in the German federal parliament withdrew his candidacy after receiving several xenophobic threats and attacks targeting him and his family.

Over the course of the year, xenophobes attacked and threatened people with apparent migratory background all over Germany. For instance, on January 1, a group of xenophobes made racist insults towards a man of Afghan-origin and injured his head with an object in Luckenwalde town, Brandenburg state. On September 17, in Eberswalde town, Brandenburg state, two unknown perpetrators insulted two women of Syrian-origin, injuring one.

Additionally, xenophobes conducted attacks on infrastructure for refugees and asylum seekers. For example, on May 29, a xenophobe conducted an arson attack on a refugee shelter in Oldenburg city, Lower-Saxony state.

Moreover, throughout the year, the authorities found various connections to right-wing extremism within state police forces and the German Federal Armed Forces. For instance, in September, the Military Counterintelligence Service stated that it would continue to investigate allegations of right-wing extremism against two members of the elite military unit Special Forces Command (KSK). The KSK was already set to be partly disbanded in 2020 over 20 suspected cases of right-wing extremism. On another occasion, the Ministry of the Interior and Sports Facilities of Saxony Anhalt suspended a police officer who allegedly exchanged letters with the imprisoned right-wing extremist that had conducted the 2020 attack on the synagogue in Hanau town, Hesse state. Similarly, on October 13, the Ministry of the Interior of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia stated that 53 police officers were revealed to have connections to right-wing extremism.

Furthermore, several demonstrations took place throughout the year. Most of them were organized by the so-called Querdenker movement to protest against the Covid-19 policies. However, during the rallies several far-right symbols were spotted in multiple protests. For instance, on December 19, Querdenken 911 mobilized approx. 2,500 people to protest in Nuremberg city, Bavaria state, supported by right-wing influencers. tcr

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## GREECE (SOCIAL PROTESTS, LEFT-WING MILITANTS)

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

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

Conflict items: system/ideology

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

During the months of January, February, and March, protests took place in several cities against a new education bill of the Ministry of Education, which created a university police force mandated to arrest individuals considered troublemakers. For instance, on January 28, approx. 5,500 protesters demonstrated in the city of Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia region, and in the center of the capital Athens.

Protests heightened in response to the hunger strike of a former member of the far-left Revolutionary Organization 17 November, who had previously been sentenced to life imprisonment. On February 10, riot police using tear gas clashed with protesters throwing stones and gasoline bombs in Athens. Police arrested two protesters.

Protests against police brutality erupted on March 7 in the Nea Smyrni district of Athens, due to a viral video showing a police officer beating a civilian with an iron baton. Approx. 500 protesters marched towards the local police station and clashed with riot police forces, leaving one police officer injured. Police arrested eleven protesters. On March 9, approx. 5,000 protesters clashed with riot police forces leaving three police officers injured. Protesters threw stones and Molotov cocktails while police responded with stun grenades, water cannons, and tear gas.

On May 18, the two biggest workers' unions organized a nationwide strike in response to a new labor bill, resulting in the disruption of public transportation, public, and media services.

On August 9, large protests were staged in Athens responding to the wildfires that occurred throughout the country in the summer. Additionally, police forces clashed with firefighters on November 5 in Athens, injuring one firefighter.

On September 11, during Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' visit in Thessaloniki, approx. 15,000 protesters gathered to express dissatisfaction with the government's economic and Covid-19 policies. The police used tear gas and stun grenades to disperse the crowd. gap

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## HUNGARY (MINORITIES – RIGHT-WINGS)

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

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Conflict parties: right-wing groups vs. civil society groups

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

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The non-violent crisis over ideology and subnational predominance between activists, minority groups, such as Romani, Jewish, Muslim, LGBTQI+ communities, and refugees, on the one hand, and right-wing parties and groups, consisting of

Fidesz, Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom, Mi Hazánk Mozgalom, Arrow Cross Party – Hungarian Movement, Légió Hungária, and the Carpathian Brigade, on the other, continued. Minority groups' marginalization persisted, with right-wing politicians and groups repeatedly issuing discriminatory policies and statements, as well as conducting discriminatory activities.

In the first week of January, the independent mayor of the ninth district of the capital Budapest received threats after it was announced that a statue in support of the Black Lives Matter movement would be placed in the district. On April 2, the groups Mi Hazánk Mozgalom, Arrow Cross Party – Hungarian Movement, and the Légió Hungária covered up the statue, and the latter eventually destroyed it.

In another incident on June 15, the government passed a law prohibiting the exposure of minors to homosexual content. On the same day LGBTQI+ activist groups protested against the implementation of the law in Budapest. A wide range of human rights groups as well as EU member states' governments and the European Commission criticized the law. On July 15, the latter announced legal action against the government. On July 22, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced that the government would hold a referendum on the law.

During soccer games held in Budapest on June 15 and 19, Hungarian soccer fans, some of whom were associated with the right-wing soccer fan-group Carpathian Brigade, harassed French and Portuguese players with homophobic chants. During the first game, Hungarian soccer fans displayed a homophobic banner.

On October 12, Hungarian fans made discriminatory comments against a steward during a soccer game in London, United Kingdom. The police entered the stand to arrest a spectator, which led to a turmoil.

mzs

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## HUNGARY – ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, UKRAINE (HUNGARIAN MINORITIES)

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

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Conflict parties: Hungarian minorities (Transylvania / southern Slovakia / Transcarpathia), Hungary vs. Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

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The non-violent crisis over minority rights and the influence of the Hungarian government on neighboring states between Hungary, on the one hand, and Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine, on the other, de-escalated to a dispute.

On January 27 and May 13, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó met his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba in a mediation effort to discuss disagreements over a Ukrainian law as well as raids conducted by the Ukrainian state security service on Hungarian minorities in the second half of last year.

On August 5, the Hungarian House Speaker condemned the alleged discrimination of Slovakia against Hungarian minorities during a visit to Somorja town, Trnava region, Slovakia. On August 8, in a diplomatic letter to Hungary, Slovak Foreign Minister Ivan Korcok criticized this statement as disrespectful. Furthermore, on October 10, Korcok criticized Hungary in a meeting with Szijjártó due to a resolution creating a

fund for Hungarians to purchase land in neighboring countries, announced on July 17. On October 12, the Hungarian government halted plans for the resolution. mzs

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## KOSOVO<sup>o</sup> – SERBIA

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

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Conflict parties: Kosovar government vs. Serbian government, Serbian minority (in Kosovo<sup>o</sup>)

Conflict items: secession

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The dispute over the secession of Kosovo<sup>o</sup> between the Kosovar government, on the one hand, and the Serbian government and the Serbian minority in Kosovo, on the other, escalated to a non-violent crisis.

Serbia has refused to acknowledge Kosovo as a sovereign state since 2008. In 2015, the EU stated an agreement between both conflict parties as a condition for the eventual accession of either to the union. Throughout the year, the parties resumed their talks, which had been paused due to the change of government in Kosovo. However, tensions increased in September.

On February 15, Albin Kurti and his party, Vetevendosje, won the Kosovar parliamentary elections. He stated that the dialog with Serbia was not a priority for his political agenda. Furthermore, the issue over the more than 1,600 missing persons from the Kosovo War and proposals of the Balkan non-paper, which suggested redrawing borders along ethnic lines, strained the relationship between the two parties.

On June 15, Serbian President Aleksander Vucic and Kurti resumed the EU-mediated dialog in Brussels, Belgium, after it was paused last September. Both Vucic and Kurti stated that the meeting and its follow-up on July 19, ended without significant result.

After the expiration of an agreement with Serbia permitting cars with Serbian license plates to enter Kosovo on September 15, the Kosovar government passed a law requiring those license plates to be switched to a temporary Kosovar one when crossing the border to Kosovo. The following days Kosovar Serbs blocked the road leading to the border to protest the newly enforced rule. On September 30, a temporary agreement between the parties was made in Brussels bringing an end to the protest at the border, which had raged for two weeks. met

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## MOLDOVA (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **1** | Change: **↓** | Start: **2009**

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Conflict parties: opposition parties vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between several opposition parties, especially the pro-EU Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), on the one hand, and the government under former president Igor Dodon from the pro-Russian Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM), on the other, de-escalated to a dispute.

On 11/15/2020, PAS's Maia Sandu was elected president, defeating PSRM's incumbent Dodon. Sandu called for early elections, whereas Dodon, with PSRM's parliamentary ma-

jority, delayed elections, citing the Covid-19 pandemic and legal concerns.

Snap elections were held on July 11. PAS won a majority of 53 percent. PSRM received 27 percent. According to the OSCE, the elections were competitive, despite shortcomings regarding election disputes and campaign finance.

On October 5, the government suspended a PSRM-backed prosecutor general detained on corruption charges. Dodon accused Sandu of capturing state institutions. In response, PSRM and others organized protests in the capital Chisinau and in Comrat, Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, on October 10. hgr

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## MONTENEGRO (OPPOSITION)

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

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Conflict parties: opposition groups, opposition parties vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition, and various other opposition groups, on the one hand, and the government and pro-Serbian groups, supported by the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, Montenegrin nationalists protested against the pro-Serbian government coalition. For instance, on January 20, a group of protesters demonstrated against the amendments to the Law on Religious Freedom, condemning the empowerment of the SOC in front of the parliament in the capital Podgorica. On July 21, several dozen individuals protested the dismissal of primary school principals in Podgorica, condemning it as an attempt to replace the former principals with Serbian nationalists. On November 25, students and professors of the Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature alongside hundreds of citizens protested the suspension of funds, accusing the government of denying the existence of the Montenegrin language.

On April 8, the government announced amendments to the existing Law on Citizenship. Propositions included a liberalization of citizenship acquisition and the removal of Montenegrins permanently living abroad from the electoral roll. Pro-Montenegrin groups immediately denounced the advance as benefiting predominantly ethnic Serbs and accused the government of "demographic engineering". On the same day, several hundred anti-government protesters rallied in different cities and blocked the main road to Podgorica at the exit of Niksic city, eponymous municipality. During confrontations between protesters and security forces at least five people were injured. Subsequently, the government halted the legislative process on April 8. On April 11 and 12, 47 Montenegrin diaspora organizations called for the boycott of the government and suspension of their financial transactions to Montenegro.

On August 18, the SOC announced that the inauguration of the new Montenegrin bishop would take place in the former royal capital of Cetinje, eponymous municipality, on September 5. Pro-Montenegrin groups perceived it as a symbolic attack on the country's independence. On September 4, several thousand SOC opponents rallied in Cetinje and blocked the main roads. Police forces failed to disperse the gathering using tear gas. On September 5, thousands of Montenegrin nationalists attempted to prevent the ongoing inauguration. Protesters clashed with policemen, throwing fireworks, while

the police used tear gas and batons. Approx. 30 protesters and 20 policemen were injured. The government accused the opposition of attempting a coup d'état.

On October 18, the State Property Directorate decided to transfer the ownership of the disputed Cetinje monastery to the SOC. Opposition politicians called the move "theft" and announced plans to file criminal charges. Approx. 1,000 protesters gathered in front of the government building in Podgorica the same day to object to the decision. dkd

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## NORTH MACEDONIA (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **2014**

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Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The dispute over national power and the orientation of the political system between the government, led by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia party (SDSM) on the one hand, and the opposition party Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) on the other, continued.

On February 26, the Criminal Court of the capital Skopje ruled in favor of the VMRO-DPMNE and convicted the former head of the secret police for the 2017 wiretapping political scandal. Additionally, on May 13, North Macedonia's Organized Crime Prosecution filed charges against the country's fugitive former prime minister, Nikola Gruevski, and some of his associates, in a case linked to the illicit purchase of building sites.

On October 17 and 31, respectively, the first and second round of the local elections were held, with VMRO-DPMNE winning 42 out of 80 municipalities. In response to SDSM losing important municipalities, such as the capital, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev resigned. Zaev revoked his resignation after the opposition failed to hold a vote of no-confidence to oust the SDSM-led government on November 11. dkl

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## NORWAY ET AL. – RUSSIA (ARCTIC)

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

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Conflict parties: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, USA vs. Russia

Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

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

Both sides conducted military overflight missions and maneuvers within the disputed Arctic area. For example, on January 19, two Russian heavy bombers flew across the Arctic Ocean. On February 8, the US announced plans for the United States Air Force to deploy B-1 bombers to Norway on March 9. In response, on February 9, two Russian Tu-160 Bombers flew over the Barents and the Norwegian seas. Between February 18 and 24, the Russian military conducted missile tests in international waters north of Norway.

Russian military exercises continued throughout March, while in April the Russian Air Force intercepted Norwegian and

NATO aircraft on two occasions. Additionally, in April, Norway and the US signed an agreement expanding their cooperation by allowing the US to build new facilities at Norwegian military bases. This agreement coincided with the decision that, in 2022, Norway will host a large-scale NATO military exercise in the Arctic which is set to involve more than 40,000 troops.

During the meeting of the Arctic Council on May 19 and 20, Russia assumed chairmanship until 2023. dkl

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## RUSSIA (ISLAMIST MILITANTS / NORTHERN CAUCASUS)

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

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

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

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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, 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 Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and North Ossetia-Alania, as well as the region Stavropol Krai. Although violence decreased compared to last year, IS Caucasus Province was still the dominant Islamist organization in the North Caucasus. Throughout the year, 16 people were killed in security and law enforcement operations against Islamist militants in the North Caucasus, all of them militants. A further six persons were injured during these operations.

The IS Caucasus Province drastically reduced its activities compared to the previous year. Attacks against officials or civilians by Islamist militants in the North Caucasus did not occur. However, according to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, security personnel detained and killed several militants. For instance, on January 20, Russian security personnel tried to arrest members of an Islamist underground group in Chechnya. Five of the militants were killed and one detonated an IED, subsequently dying in the explosion. Furthermore, five officials were injured. The same day, Ramzan Kadyrov, Head of the Chechen Republic, stated that there were no more Islamist militants on the Chechen territory.

On February 17, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) announced the detention of 19 members of the illegal Islamist group At-Takfir wal-Hijra in different regions, such as the Karachay-Cherkessia, the Krasnodar Krai, the Rostov Oblast, and on Crimea, as well as the confiscation of their equipment.

On September 10, the Russian National Anti-Terrorism Committee reported that two Islamist militants had been killed in a counter-terrorist operation after they refused to surrender and had opened fire on Russian officials. In a similar incident, on November 26, the FSB reported another counter-terrorist operation, in which two Islamist militants were killed in the southeast of Karachay-Cherkessia. bba

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**RUSSIA (OPPOSITION)**


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

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

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

On January 17, police arrested opposition activist Alexei Navalny upon his return to Russia. On February 2, a court sentenced him to 2.5 years in a penal colony for not reporting to detention authorities in person while abroad, following his poisoning in 2020. On March 3, the USA and the EU imposed new sanctions against Russia in the context of Navalny's poisoning [→ EU, USA et al. – Belarus, Russia].

On January 23, tens of thousands joined protests in more than 100 cities in support of Navalny. In some places, police violently detained protesters and beat them with batons. Several protesters and police personnel were injured. On January 31, protests took place in more than 80 cities. Thousands of protesters were detained. On April 21, unauthorized protests took place in several cities. In the federal city St. Petersburg, police used electric-shock devices against protesters.

Throughout the year, many opposition leaders were detained and sentenced. For example, on August 3, a court sentenced a Navalny associate to 1.5 years of restricted freedom for violating sanitary rules at the January 23 protest in the capital Moscow.

In the run-up to the elections, authorities banned numerous independent and opposition candidates from running, based on recently passed election legislation. For instance, on June 4, President Vladimir Putin signed a law that prevented members of allegedly extremist organizations from candidacy. On June 9, Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation was declared an extremist organization and was subsequently liquidated. From September 17 to 19, parliamentary, regional, and municipal elections were held. The ruling party United Russia won 49.8 percent of the vote, taking 324 out of 450 parliament seats for a two-thirds majority. The Communist Party came second with 18.9 percent of the votes, taking 57 seats. OSCE observers were not present during the vote due to limitations imposed by Russian authorities. Domestic observers and international media alleged electoral fraud and ballot stuffing. Issues included a lack of significant opposition presence and a new online voting system, criticized for facilitating fraud. On September 20 and 25, the Communist Party organized protests against the election results in Moscow. On September 29, it filed several lawsuits to contest online voting results in Moscow.

Authorities used the recently tightened foreign agent law to curtail activities of independent media organizations, NGOs, and politically active individuals who receive foreign donations. The government applied these measures numerous times throughout the year, including on media outlets Dozhd TV, The Insider and Meduza as well as on the election monitor Movement for Defence of Voters' Rights "Golos". On September 4, dozens of protesters gathered in Moscow to protest the government's recent media restrictions. On December 28, the Supreme Court decided to close down the established human rights group Memorial International, citing systematic violations of the foreign agent legislation. hgr

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**RUSSIA – UKRAINE**


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

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Conflict parties: Russia vs. Ukraine  
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

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The non-violent crisis over territory, international power, and resources between Russia and Ukraine continued. As in previous years, the conflict was marked by the contested status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and closely linked to the violent crisis in Donbas [→ Ukraine (Donbas)].

Military tensions between Russia and Ukraine rose around April and from the beginning of November onwards. On March 30, the Ukrainian Armed Forces accused Russia of gathering military troops along their shared border and in Crimea. Russia claimed that the troop movements were part of a military exercise and announced on April 22 that they would withdraw their more than 10,000 soldiers by May 1. Following the announcement, Ukraine repeatedly accused Russia of not having fully withdrawn its troops. On November 3, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense stated that Russia had again stationed approx. 90,000 soldiers near their shared border and in Donbas. Russia denied the allegations of increasing its military presence. The military development was accompanied by public statements and diplomatic exchanges between Russian President Vladimir Putin and leaders of Western states, during which Putin repeatedly voiced Russia's opposition to Ukrainian NATO membership [→ EU, USA et al. – Belarus, Russia]. On July 12, Putin published an article claiming "that true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia."

The status of Crimea remained contentious. On August 23, Ukraine held the first summit of the Crimea Platform, a diplomatic initiative to reverse the 2014 annexation of Crimea. In response, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized all attempts to return Crimea to Ukraine as illegitimate. nbr

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**SPAIN (BASQUE PROVINCES)**


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

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

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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 government, on the other, continued.

Euskadi Ta Askatasuna's (ETA) self-dissolution on 02/05/2018 marked the end of its 59-year activity in the Basque Provinces. However, judicial confrontations around ETA continued. In June 2021, both the ECHR and the Paris Court of Appeals were involved in conviction of and extradition requests of former ETA members. A former Basque pro-independence politician was sentenced to one year in prison and suspended from running in elections for seven years for paying tribute to former ETA members. ECHR also ruled that the government had violated his freedom of speech under Article 10. Steps towards resolving the conflict were also taken. On October 17, the EH Bildu coalition and its Basque French counterpart EH Bai published a manifesto



asking ETA to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the peace conference of Ayete in Irun, Basque autonomous region. mso

## SPAIN (CATALAN NATIONALISTS / CATALONIA)

Intensity: **1** | Change:  | Start: **1979**

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

Conflict items: secession, autonomy


The non-violent crisis over secession or autonomy of the autonomous community of Catalonia between the Catalan regional government and various civil society groups, on the one hand, and the government as well as political parties, on the other, continued.

The election of the new Catalan regional parliament on February 14 saw a tight majority for separatist parties. Although the Socialists' Party of Catalonia emerged the strongest party, the two separatist parties, the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) and Together for Catalonia formed the new Catalan government by absolute majority, supported by the separatist party Popular Unity Candidacy.

ERC politician Pere Aragonès, was appointed President of the regional government of Catalonia (PC). He declared he would work toward a legitimate referendum on independence, comparable to the Scottish referendum on independence [→ United Kingdom (Scottish nationalists / Scotland)], and the full amnesty for all Catalans who received jail sentences in relation to the 2017 referendum. Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez stated that he could never agree to a legal referendum, as it would be unconstitutional. On June 22, Sánchez pardoned nine imprisoned Catalan separatists who had held leading positions during the referendum, as a gesture of reconciliation. On June 13, at least 25,000 people demonstrated in the capital Madrid against the pardons. Polls showed that a majority of the Spanish population opposed the pardons, whereas in Catalonia around two thirds were in favor.

On September 11, Catalan national day, at least 100,000 people demonstrated for independence in the regional capital Barcelona. Pro-secession civil society groups claimed a total of 400,000 participants. In the aftermath, protesters attacked police officers with various objects and stones. On December 12, up to 35,000 protested against the verdict that 25 percent of lessons in all schools in Catalonia be conducted in the Spanish language. sso

## 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, Spanish military and police vessels entered contested waters around the British overseas territory Gibraltar on several occasions. For instance, on January 15, a Spanish police boat sailed into the Bay of Gibraltar and was escorted back to international waters by the Royal Navy. Later in the year, on September 24, a Royal Navy boat chased and

hit a Spanish police boat in Gibraltarian waters, preventing them from boarding a pleasure boat allegedly involved in smuggling. Both sides blamed each other for the collision.

On 12/31/2020, the UK and Spain had preliminarily agreed to unrestricted movement between Gibraltar and Spain, placing Frontex in charge of border checks. This agreement was to be transformed into a treaty. However, post-Brexit relations deteriorated shortly afterwards when both sides claimed the final say on the Spanish-UK border. On July 20, the EU executive mandate demanded Spanish border officials to conduct the checks. The UK Foreign Secretary claimed this mandate "directly conflicts" with the preliminary agreement and accused the EU of "undermin[ing] the UK's sovereignty". The Spanish Foreign Minister traveled to the UK's capital London to negotiate the EU mandate the next day.

On December 21, Spain criticized the UK's Cape Vantage project, the aim of which is landbuilding, effectively enlarging Gibraltar's shoreline and thereby the contested waters around the peninsula. 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 xenophobic actors as well as several far-right political organizations, on the one hand, and the government, supported by social activists, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, several violent xenophobic incidents took place. On March 20, a woman in Vetlanda municipality, Jonkopings province, protested against a demonstration by the neo-Nazi group Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR). An NMR activist attacked and injured her. Police arrested the attacker. On November 4, police arrested a man with ties to NMR in Västra Götaland province, for planning a bombing. Due to the increasing spread of hate speech by xenophobic actors, police classified the current threat of right-wing extremist's violence as elevated. dko

## UKRAINE (CRIMEAN TATARS)

Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **1988**

Conflict parties: Crimean Tartars vs. Crimean regional government, pro-Russian activists, Russia

Conflict items: autonomy

The non-violent crisis over autonomy between Crimean Tatars, supported by the government, on the one hand, and the Crimean regional government, pro-Russian activists, and the Russian government, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, Russian courts sentenced at least 18 Crimean Tatar muslims to prison sentences of between 12 and 19 years, on the grounds of allegedly forming part of the Islamist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir, which has been outlawed in Russia but is largely allowed to operate freely elsewhere. For example, on this basis, on September 16, a military court in

Rostov-on-Don city, Russia, sentenced seven Crimean Tatars to prison terms of between 13 and 19 years. Human rights organizations, the EU, and several national governments rebuked the courts' rulings.

Russian authorities arrested more than 190 Crimean Tatars in the context of house searches and court hearings. For instance, on January 11, Russian police arrested 120 Crimean Tatars on the Kerch Strait Bridge attempting to attend a court hearing of a Hizub ut-Tahrir case in Rostov-on-Don. On September 4, Russian police detained more than 50 Crimean Tatars in the Crimean capital Simferopol, who protested against the arrests of five Crimean Tatar activists.

On March 5, the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation barred Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev from entering Crimea for the next 13 years. On June 1, the Simferopol court sentenced Refat Chubarov, Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, Crimean Tatars' highest self-governing body, to six years in prison. It also issued a fine after finding him guilty of organizing mass riots in 2014 and of issuing calls to violate Russia's integrity. hle

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## UKRAINE (DONBAS)

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

Conflict parties: DPR, LPR vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

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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 government, supported by Western countries, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis. The territories claimed by militants comprised parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in eastern Ukraine.

Over the course of the year, at least 60 Armed Forces of Ukraine (ZSU) personnel and 45 militants were killed, and at least 175 ZSU and 27 militants injured, mostly in clashes with low numbers of casualties. This year the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine recorded a total of 93,902 ceasefire violations from all parties, mainly along the contact line in Donetsk and Luhansk. Ceasefire violations were particularly high in December with 22,613 recorded violations. However, neither party tried to breach the contact line. Artillery, automatic grenade launchers, and landmines were frequently employed. For instance, on March 26, militants killed four and injured two members of ZSU in an attack near Shumy settlement, Donetsk. On May 25, ZSU killed three DPR militias near Styła village, Donetsk. ZSU shelling killed four DPR members and injured five during artillery fighting between the localities of Lozovoye and Krasnogorovka, Donetsk. On October 26, ZSU utilized a Bayraktar TB2 drone in the conflict for the first time, destroying a D-30 howitzer near Hranitne village, Donetsk. Ukraine had acquired the AUV in 2019 by Turkey, training drone operators for the past two years. Though ZSU claimed not to have violated the contact line, Russia condemned the airstrike for its potential to destabilize the conflict.

Civilians continued to be affected by the limited war. At least six were killed and 21 injured over the course of the year. Furthermore, both parties continued to destroy civilian infrastructure. On March 26, ZSU shelling damaged a school and several residential houses in Zolotoye-5 village, Luhansk.

Military tensions rose between Ukraine and Russia around

April and from November onwards, when Ukraine condemned alleged Russian military reinforcement along their shared border, in Crimea, and in Donbas, with 100,000 and 90,000 soldiers respectively. Russia denied the allegations, claiming the troop movements were part of military exercises [→ Russia - Ukraine].

Throughout the year, mediation efforts faced various challenges. For instance, on March 29, Russia announced preparations for a video conference between Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and French President Emmanuel Macron, but added that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would not be invited to join the talks. On April 5, Zelenskyy announced his refusal to send a delegation to the capital of Belarus, Minsk, for talks with the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), after declaring that Russia had shown excessive influence in Belarus. Nevertheless, a round of talks between the Normandy Four took place on April 19, with all parties present. Zelenskyy's Office remarked that leaders would continue to coordinate working groups on the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Following a meeting of the TCG on December 22, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the TCG reported that officials from Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE were able to negotiate the restoration of a full ceasefire. ewo

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## UKRAINE (RIGHT-WING / OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2013**

Conflict parties: right-wing groups vs. civil-rights groups, minorities, opposition parties vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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

On March 8, clashes between feminist demonstrators, the police, and right-wing counter-demonstrators occurred on International Women's Day in Odessa city, Odessa oblast. The police arrested at least 51 members of a right-wing group while 27 police officers were injured during the clashes, mainly through tear gas utilized by the police themselves.

In the first half of the year, the monitoring network of the Nash Mir Center documented 81 cases of homophobic and transphobic acts, discrimination and other violations of LGBTQI+ rights in Ukraine. Throughout the year, right-wing groups such as C14, Right Sector, National Corps, and Azov remained active, monitoring and targeting LGBTQI+ events, organizations, and activists. For instance, on May 31, alleged right-wing activists attacked the office of the LGBT association LIGA in Odessa. On August 28, the Odessa Pride March saw clashes between police and members of a right-wing group, leaving numerous people injured.

Right-wing groups also targeted the Roma community. On October 17, about 50 members of right-wing groups marched with torches through Irpin city, Kyiv oblast, calling for violence against Roma residents, after an attack on a man by two alleged Roma teenagers two days before.

Government personnel were attacked when, on September 22, gunmen ambushed the car of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's top aide in a rural area near the capital Kyiv. The men fired with automatic rifles, injuring the driver of Zelenskyy's aide.

Throughout the year, freedom of the press was restricted

by several actors. For instance, on August 14, right-wing protesters severely assaulted at least three journalists during a right-wing rally in the center of Kyiv. On August 21, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy banned one of Ukraine's largest news sites, Strana.ua, by decree. This decision came just six months after the closure of three television stations on February 3. The blocked television stations condemned the ban as political repression. Furthermore, on November 8, the Kyiv Post was closed down by its owner in what was interpreted by the newspaper's staff as an attempt to infringe the outlet's editorial independence. Three days later, 30 members of the former Kyiv Post started the Kyiv Independent in a countermove. sdr

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## UNITED KINGDOM (NATIONALISTS / NORTHERN IRELAND)

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

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Conflict parties: DUP, Red Hand Commando, UDA, UVF vs. Army of the Republik, Continuity IRA, nationalist youth, NIRA, Sinn Féin vs. government

Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance

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The violent crisis over secession between dissident republican groups and the government, on the one hand, as well as over subnational predominance between loyalist and nationalist groups, on the other, continued.

The 2019 Northern Ireland (N-IRL) protocol of the UK's withdrawal agreement with the EU, which includes a trade border in the Irish Sea, remained contested. Unionist associations such as the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) repeatedly voiced dissatisfaction with the protocol for undermining the UK's national unity, while nationalists, the Irish government, and the EU repeatedly rejected unionist calls to suspend it. Concurrently, as in previous years, unionists as well as the British and Irish governments repeatedly refused demands from nationalist Sinn Féin (SF) for a referendum on Irish unification.

The EU and all N-IRL main parties condemned loyalist threats against border officials, which from February 1 to 5 led to the withdrawal of EU and N-IRL staff and the suspension of border checks in the ports of Larne, County Antrim, and the Northern Irish capital Belfast. Protesting the trade border, on February 2, DUP announced the suspension of all protocol-related cross-border cooperation with the Republic of Ireland. On March 3, the three leading loyalist paramilitary organizations Red Hand Commando, Ulster Defence Association (UDA), and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) announced the withdrawal of their support from the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA).

On 06/30/2020, 24 SF politicians had allegedly breached pandemic guidelines at a nationalist's funeral. The Public Prosecution Service did not pursue the allegations, sparking further loyalist indignation. For instance, on March 29, clashes ensued in the Protestant areas of Derry City and Strabane district. Dozens of loyalist youths and minors torched pallets, bins, hijacked vehicles, and attacked the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) with petrol bombs, stones, and other projectiles. The riots continued until April 9, spread to other loyalist parts of N-IRL, and affected among others south Belfast, Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Antrim as well as Mid and East Antrim, leaving 47 PSNI and several loyalists injured, as well as various properties damaged. On April 7, several hundred Protestant and Catholic youths

clashed with each other and with PSNI in west Belfast. PSNI used rubber bullets, while loyalists threw petrol bombs and stones into nationalist Springfield Road and torched a bus. The clashes continued over the course of the following evenings, spreading to north Belfast, with PSNI using water cannons, K9 units, and riot squads, predominantly against nationalists. Overall, the clashes left 41 PSNI officers and several loyalists injured as well as property damaged. Nationalists and unionists accused each other of stoking the tensions, while authorities blamed UDA, its splinter South East Antrim UDA, and UVF for orchestrating the riots.

On September 9, DUP announced the withdrawal from all GFA-established North-South institutions and threatened to collapse the power-sharing Northern Ireland executive if the protocol was not removed by October 31. After the deadline had passed without the DUP leaving the executive, armed UVF hijackers torched buses in various districts such as Newtownards and Newtownabbey, on November 1 and 7. On November 3, about 100 loyalists clashed with PSNI in west Belfast, resulting in three PSNI vehicles damaged and two minors arrested.

Additionally, dissident republican groups continued attacks. For instance, the Continuity Irish Republican Army claimed an attack on a PSNI station in Enniskillen on March 15. Overall, PSNI listed five IED and 53 paramilitary-style attacks by dissident republican and loyalist groups, and arrested 130 people. Paramilitary intimidation forced several hundred people to flee their homes. hiik

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## UNITED KINGDOM (SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS / SCOTLAND)

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

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

Conflict items: secession

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The non-violent crisis over secession 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) and pro-independence supporters, on the one hand, and the British government led by the Conservative and Unionist Party supported by pro-unionists, on the other, continued.

The legal standoff concerning a second referendum on Scottish independence persisted. Backed by the results of the Scottish general elections on May 6, in which SNP won 64 of 129 seats in the Scottish Parliament, one seat short of a majority, Sturgeon said a second referendum on the independence of Scotland was "the will of the country," and that there was "no democratic justification" for UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson to prevent this move. Johnson, in turn, called her statements "irresponsible and reckless."

Moreover, protests took place throughout the year. For instance, on May 2, hundreds marched in two opposing protests, with pro-independence supporters demanding a second referendum, showing pro-independence symbols and national Scottish insignia, while pro-union supporters expressed their support for the UK, showing the Union Jack in Glasgow city, eponymous council area. On another occasion, on November 27, hundreds protested in the capital Edinburgh, demanding a date for the second referendum to be set. Amidst these protests, AUOB started a social media campaign demanding that rhetorical attacks the AUOB stop, further claiming that being against AUOB equates to being against the second referendum. tr

# United Kingdom (nationalists / Northern Ireland)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November

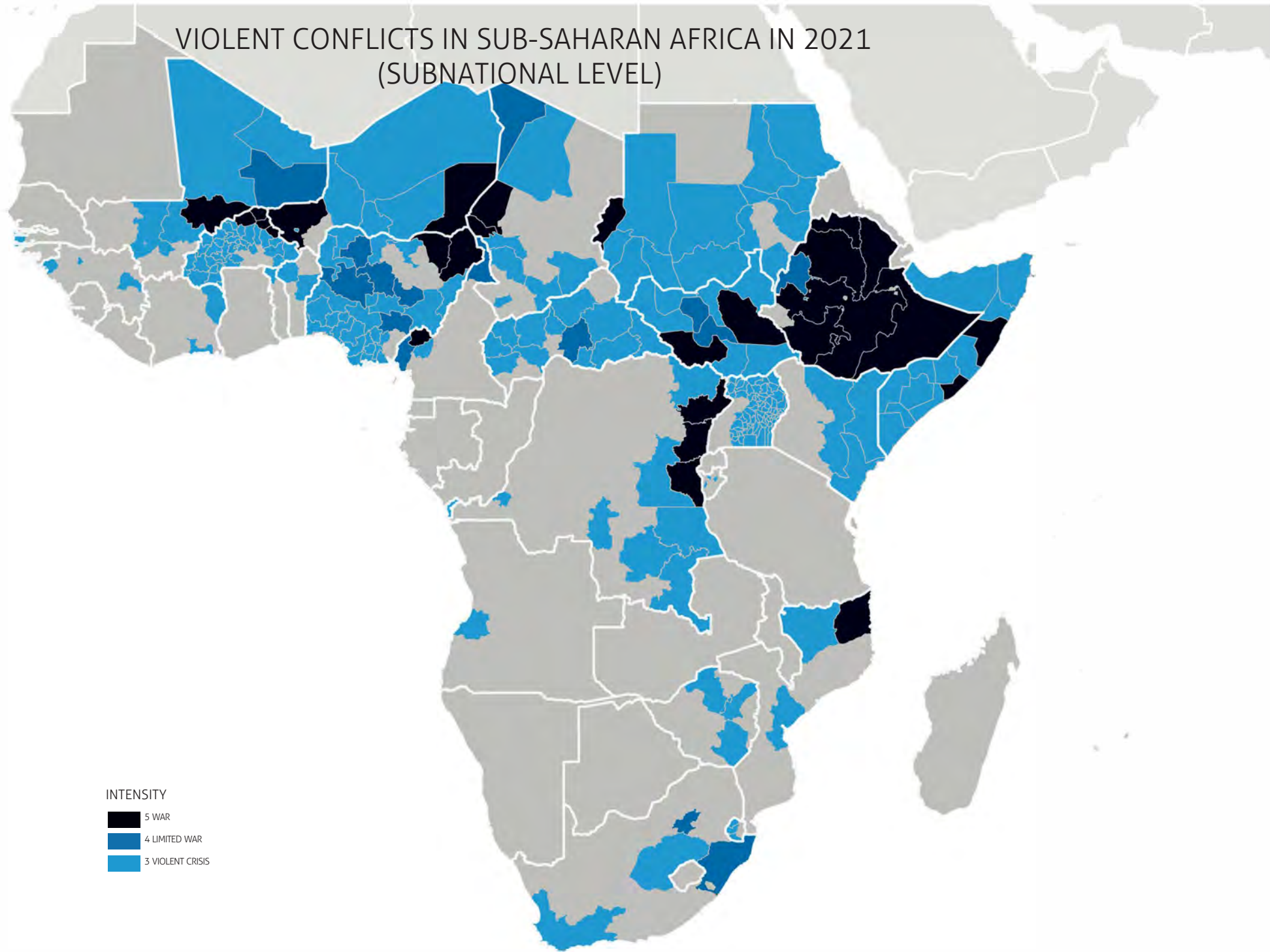


December



SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

# VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2021 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)



## INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, HIIK observed 87 active conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, an increase of one compared to the previous year. Overall, 59 conflicts were on a violent level, seven less than in the previous year. Eleven wars continued, while another five limited wars escalated to the level of war. As in the previous year, Sub-Saharan Africa was the region with the most observed conflicts at war-level. Moreover, six limited wars were observed in 2021, a decrease of three compared to the previous year. Three limited wars were fought on the same level as in 2020, while three violent crises escalated to the level of a limited war, and one limited war de-escalated to violent crises. In total, HIIK observed 22 highly violent conflicts in the region in 2021.

In Chad, the political and security situation deteriorated. The conflict between various militant groups and the government escalated to a limited war, resulting in the death of President Idriss Déby [→ Chad (militant groups)]. Following his death, both parliament and government were dissolved, and a transitional military council formed. Furthermore, the violent crisis between the opposition and the government sparked several large protests [→ Chad (opposition)]. Meanwhile, while clashes between herders and farmers over subnational predominance left fewer people dead than in previous years, violence swept over to the Central African Republic [→ Chad (inter-communal rivalry)].

In Cameroon, the limited war over autonomy or secession of the Anglophone regions escalated to a war as the conflict saw a sharp increase in deaths [→ Cameroon (English-speaking minority)]. In total, clashes between separatist groups and the government resulted in more than 583 deaths. The increased violence on both sides sparked nationwide protests.

In Uganda, the violent crisis between the government, led by President Yoweri Museveni, and various opposition groups continued [→ Uganda (opposition)], while the conflict between Bakonzo members and the government ended [→ Uganda (Bakonzo / Rwenzururu)]. In Kenya, the violent crisis over resources and subnational predominance between various ethnic groups and their sub-groups continued [→ Kenya (inter-communal rivalry)].

The security situation in the Central African Republic remained volatile, resulting in a total of approx. 400,000 IDPs. On 12/15/2020, numerous ex-Séléka militias, the Fulani militia Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R), and the Mokom and Ndomaté anti-Balaka wings formed the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), which continued its offensive throughout the country until end of January [→ Central African Republic (militant groups)]. The Armed Forces of the Central African Republic supported by MINUSCA, Russian private military contractors from the Wagner Group, and Rwandan troops repeatedly clashed with CPC militants, culminating in the recapture of strategic towns that had been under militia control for several years.

DR Congo's eastern provinces remained profoundly affected by militant activity. Thousands were killed throughout the year and the number of IDPs in the DR Congo rose to a total of 5.6 million. Amid the escalating security situation, the Congolese government in May declared a state of siege in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces, replacing civilian authorities with military administration and imposing martial law.

Ituri's Djugu, Mahagi, and Irumu territories remained the focus of CODECO and FPIC operations and military offensives by government forces [→ DR Congo (Ituri militias)]. The war in Ituri accounted for at least 1,100 deaths. The volatile security situation in Djugu and Mahagi territories and the expansion of large-scale violent attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Irumu and Mambasa territories [→ DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)] displaced at least 500,000 people, taking the total number of IDPs in Ituri to 1.9 million since 2017.

North Kivu continued to be conflict-ridden with various militant groups operating throughout its territories. In Beni territory, at least 1,700 deaths were attributed to ADF attacks and clashes with the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) [→ DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)]. As ADF attacks also resurged in Uganda, FARDC and Ugandan forces began to conduct joint operations against ADF by the end of the year. Masisi, Walikale, Rutshuru, Kalehe, and Lubero territories were affected by militant groups such as Mayi-Mayi and Nyatura groups, who mostly recruited among local communities [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. Militants continued to attack civilians, loot livestock, destroy houses, and clash with FARDC and other militias. Further Mayi-Mayi and armed groups affiliated with the Banyamulenge, Bafuliuro, Babembe, and Banyindi communities were active in South Kivu's Fizi, Uvira, and Mwenga territories. Overall, at least 1,240 people were killed by Mayi-Mayi et al. in North and South Kivu.

Further militant groups operated in Tanganyika and Katanga provinces such as Bantu and Batwa groups as well as Kata Katanga, respectively [→ DR Congo (Bantu -Batwa); DR Congo (Kata Katanga)]. Attacks by Batwa militias displaced approx. 53,000 in Nyunzu and Kalemie territories, Tanganyika.

On the national level, tensions between the government and opposition involved disputes over the National Independent Electoral Commission, sparking protests among their supporters [→ DR Congo (opposition)]. After the breakdown of the power-sharing coalition in December 2020, opposition forces shifted once again and a new ruling coalition was formed.

The violent crisis over regional power between Uganda and Rwanda de-escalated to a dispute amid continued diplomatic efforts between both countries, but also allegations of espionage and mistreatment of their respective citizens [→ Rwanda – Uganda].

The violent crisis between various Burundian opposition groups, on the one hand, and the governments of Burundi and DR Congo, on the other, continued in the two countries' border region with several clashes during the year [→ Burundi, DR Congo (FNL, RED-Tabara, Forebu)].

In Mozambique's northern province of Cabo Delgado, the war between the Islamist militia Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma (ASWJ) and the government continued unabated [→ Mozambique (ASWJ)]. Various actors supporting the government entered the war against ASWJ, including the Southern African Development Community mission in Mozambique, approx. 1,000 Rwandan Defense Forces deployed by the Rwandan government, and a new set of private security contractors such as the South Africa-based Paramount Group and Dubai-based Burnham Global. Amidst these new dynamics, ASWJ was forced to withdraw from its informal capital of Mocimboa da Praia, but also advanced into new provinces for the first time since the war began. Meanwhile, the government continued its program to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate the main opposition party RENAMO. The program was increasingly joined by members of the so-called RENAMO Military Junta, whose leader was killed by Mozambican Armed Defense Forces in October [→ Mozambique (RENAMO)].

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In South Africa, residents of informal settlements continued to block major roads to protest poor electricity, water, housing, and widespread poor service delivery [→ South Africa (socioeconomic protests)]. In the meantime, the violent crisis between various opposition groups and the government escalated to a limited war, amid rioting and looting in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng after the arrest of former president Jacob Zuma [→ South Africa (opposition)]. In addition, xenophobic South African nationals continued to protest and attack suspected foreign truck drivers and shops owned by foreigners [→ South Africa (xenophobes)].

In eSwatini, the violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between various opposition groups and the government continued with pro-democracy protests for the introduction of a democratic multi-party system throughout the year [→ eSwatini (opposition)].

Sudan's transition to democracy suffered a setback due to a military coup in October [→ Sudan (opposition)]. Despite the military government signing a power sharing agreement with Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok one month later, this sparked pro-democratization mass protests all over the country in which 52 people were killed and more than 1,000 injured by security and paramilitary forces.

While the war in Darfur de-escalated to a violent crisis in 2019, it escalated to war level again in 2021 [→ Sudan (Darfur)]. One splinter of the Sudan Liberation Movement remained the only armed group fighting government forces. However, the conflict shifted towards a fight over subnational predominance due to the increased appearance of well organized and heavily armed 'Arab' militias, regularly described as affiliated to the government-backed Rapid Support Forces and loyal to the former regime of Omar al-Bashir, engaging in and exacerbating communal violence between 'Arab' and 'non-Arab' communities. Indeed, the number of clashes between communities without militia involvement remained relatively steady on the level of a violent crisis [→ Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. The conflict line was, for the most part, set between either farming or herding communities as well as between communities that identify as Arab or African respectively.

The dispute over autonomy of Blue Nile and South Kordofan between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N) and the government remained unsettled due to the splinter group SPLM/A-N al-Hilu's continued refusal to sign the 2020 Juba Peace Deal [→ Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)].

The inter-communal conflict in South Sudan over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and land, between various local communities such as Dinka, Nuer, and Murle communities remained on war level, even though the number of deaths decreased compared to the previous year [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. Tambura County in Western Equatoria was especially affected by a wave of violence between the Azande and Balanda communities. According to the UN, the communities had been armed by the former rivaling Sudan People's Liberation Army/In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) and South Sudan People's Defence Forces army.

The opposition conflict over national power and the orientation of the political system between the government and the former opposition group SPLM/A-IO, on the one hand, and the National Salvation Front, on the other, was marked by the breakaway of the splinter group SPLM/A-IO-Kitwang, which clashed with the SPLM/A-IO on several occasions [→ South Sudan (opposition)].

The security situation in the disputed border region Abyei remained fragile. The Ngok Dinka community and the pastoralist Misseriya community continued to clash over cattle [→ Sudan, South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry / Abyei)]. Moreover, the governments of the Sudan and South Sudan did not solve the disputed status of Abyei, which is claimed by both countries [→ South Sudan – Sudan].

In the Horn of Africa, the war between the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab, on the one hand, and the Somali and Kenyan governments supported by, among others, the African Union Mission in Somalia as well as US Africom, 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 [→ Somalia (ISS)]. 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 Ethiopia, the 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, continued [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)]. 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)]. The limited war over subnational predominance between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the federal government also escalated to a war [→ Ethiopia (OLF / Oromia)]. The war over subnational predominance and resources between various ethnic groups continued [→ Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)].

In Djibouti, violent protests as well as frequent arrests of opposition members continued [→ Djibouti (opposition)].

In Guinea, the violent crisis over national power between various opposition groups and the government was marked by a military coup d'état on September 5, which led to the capture of President Alpha Condé by the military junta National Rally and Development Committee. Coup leader Mamady Doumbouya announced an interim government under his leadership, which led to the suspension of Guinea's membership in ECOWAS and the African Union. The coup sparked violent protests between the opposition and security forces [→ Guinea (opposition)].

Similarly, in Mali, the 08/18/2020 coup d'état and the establishment of a transitional government under then-interim president Bah N'daw resulted in the continuation of an unstable political situation. After violent protests between the June 5 Movement – Rally of the Patriotic Forces and the government continued throughout the first half of the year, a new government was announced on May 24. On the same day, the Malian Armed Forces staged another coup d'état and arrested N'daw and then-Prime Minister Moctar Ouane. On May 28, Assimi Goïta was announced as the new interim president, who declared a transitional government on June 11 [→ Mali (opposition)].

In Burkina Faso, protests against the government led by President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré turned violent, with protesters



## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

accusing the governing People's Movement for Progress Party of corruption and lacking response against growing jihadist influence in the country [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, ISGS et al.)]. Various opposition parties called for Kaboré's resignation [→ Burkina Faso (opposition)]. In Niger, general elections declared Mohamed Bazoum as new president on February 23, which led to violent opposition protests and a coup attempt by members of the Democratic and Republican Renewal party on March 31 [→ Niger (opposition)]. In Gambia, President Adama Barrow was reelected on December 14, after Barrow's National People's Party and the Alliance of Patriotic Reorientation and Construction party joined forces. This resulted in the creation of the oppositional No Alliance Movement, which waged violent protests against the government throughout the second half of the year [→ Gambia (opposition)]. Violent protests also erupted between the government and the oppositional All People's Congress in Sierra Leone [→ Sierra Leone (opposition)]. Oppositional conflicts in Togo [→ Togo (opposition)] and Cote d'Ivoire [→ Cote d'Ivoire (opposition)] remained relatively peaceful this year.

In Senegal, the secession conflict over the Casamance region between government military forces and the Movement of Democratic Forces in Casamance turned violent again for the first time since early 2018, resulting in several injuries after attacks on both sides [→ Senegal (MFDC / Casamance)].

The Sahel experienced continuous and increased 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, ISGS et al.); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)]. French Operation Barkhane announced it would end on June 10, which led to proposed international downsizing of deployed European and US troops in the fight against Islamist jihadism in the region. MINUSMA and the EU Task Force Takuba, however, increased their presence. Meanwhile, the countries' political and security-related instability spurred discontent among the population, increasing demands for better living conditions and reforms. Local communities and their self-defence militias, some of them supported by the respective governments, continued to carry out a high number of attacks against rivaling groups and fought against Islamist militants throughout the region [→ Mali (inter-communal rivalry / Central Mali); Mali (inter-militant rivalry / Northern Mali); Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry)].

In Nigeria, the number of observed wars increased from two to three compared to last year. As in previous years, the north-eastern and north-western parts as well as parts of north central states of Nigeria were particularly affected by inter-communal violence and Islamist militant attacks. In the northeastern states of Borno State, Yobe State, and decreasingly Adamawa State, the war between the Boko Haram affiliated factions, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) and its splinter Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP), on the one hand, and the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, on the other, continued for an eleventh consecutive year [→ Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS Boko Haram); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)]. As a result of the ongoing violence, approx. two million people have been displaced in the northeast of Nigeria and the adjacent states of Lake Chad since the beginning of the conflict.

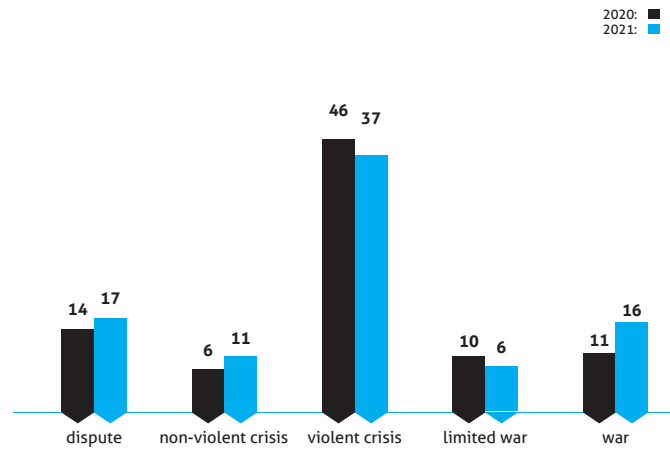
However, the killing of JAS leader Shekau by ISWAP militants in May [→ Nigeria (ISWAP JAS)] led to a subsequent decrease of Islamist militant attacks in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria, particularly Borno State. Following Shekau's death, ISWAP was joined by many JAS fighters and increased its power in the former JAS-controlled regions.

Further, several remaining JAS fighters relocated to the north-western parts, strengthening its cell in Niger State and establishing a presence in Kaduna State and Zamfara State. Instances of cooperation between militants and bandits in the northwest and part of north central states, contributed to a deterioration of the region's volatile security situation. Additionally, the limited war over subnational predominance and resources between predominantly Christian farmers, Fulani pastoralists, and so-called bandits consisting of predominantly Fulani pastoralists, escalated to a war. In total, violent clashes and increasing bandit attacks accounted for at least 3,400 fatalities, almost five times the amount of the previous year. Approx. 96,000 people were displaced as a result of the conflict. The most affected states were Kaduna State, Niger State, Zamfara State and Katsina State [→ Nigeria (inter-communal rivalry)].

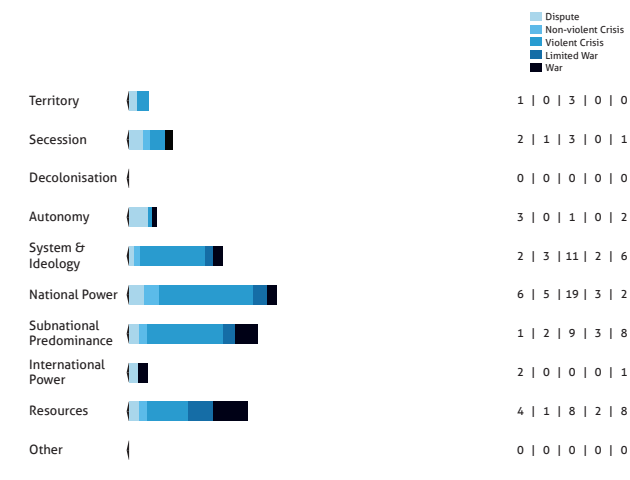
Furthermore, the ongoing violent secession crisis between pro-Biafra groups and the government spilled over to adjacent Cameroon on the Bakassi Peninsula where the Biafra Nations League clashed with Cameroonian military forces [→ Nigeria (pro-Biafra groups / Biafra)]. In the Federal Capital Abuja, protests by the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, demanding the release of its detained leader, continued to take place until his release in July [→ Nigeria (Islamic Movement)]. Moreover, while the so-called electoral violence between the supporters of the two major parties decreased for the third consecutive year since the presidential elections in 2019, the conflict remained a violent crisis [→ Nigeria (APC supporters - PDP supporters)]. Similarly, violence between the Boko Haram splinter group Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan, also known as Ansaru, and the government, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis [→ Nigeria (Ansaru)].

# SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

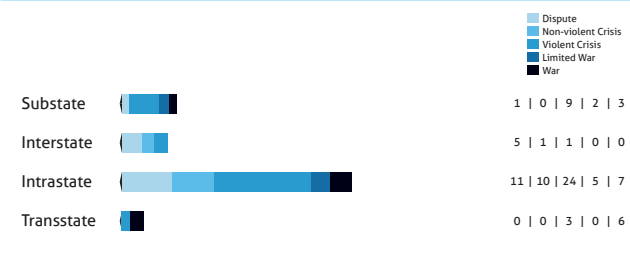
## CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2021 COMPARED TO 2020



## FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2021



## FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2021



## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

### Overview: Conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa in 2021

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
Angola (FLEC et al. / Cabinda)*	FLEC, MIC vs. government	secession	1975	•	3
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	↗	3
Burundi (opposition)*	ADC-Ikibiri, CNL, RED-Tabara, UPRONA vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2006	•	3
Burundi – Rwanda*	Burundi vs. Rwanda	international power	2015	↓	1
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	↗	5
Central African Republic (militant groups)	militant groups vs. government	national power, resources	2012	↗	5
Central African Republic, DR Congo (LRA)*	LRA vs. CAR, DR Congo	resources	1987	•	3
Chad (inter-communal rivalry)	pastoralists vs. farmers	subnational predominance	1947	•	3
Chad (militant groups)	CCSMR, CSD, UFR vs. government	national power	2005	↗	4
Chad (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	national power	1990	•	3
Côte d'Ivoire (militant groups)*	militant groups vs. government	national power	2012	↗	2
Côte d'Ivoire (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	national power	1999	↘	2
Djibouti (FRUD)*	FRUD, government	system/ideology, national power	1991	•	1
Djibouti (opposition)	ARD, opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	3
Djibouti – Eritrea*	Djibouti vs. Eritrea	territory	2008	•	1
DR Congo (Bantu – Batwa)	Bantu militias vs. Twa militias	subnational predominance	2013	↗	4
DR Congo (ex-M23)*	ex-M23 vs. government	national power	2004	•	2
DR Congo (Ituri militias)	CODECO, FPIC, FRPI, Zaire 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 vs. Mayi-Mayi groups vs. Nyatura groups vs. FPP/AP vs. Banyamulenge militias vs. Bafuiliro 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 (FDLR, CNRD)*	FDLR vs. CNRD vs. DR Congo, Rwanda	subnational predominance, resources	1994	•	3
DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)	ADF vs. DR Congo, Uganda	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1995	•	5
Egypt – Ethiopia, Sudan (GERD)*	Egypt vs. Ethiopia vs. Sudan	resources	2011	•	2
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. Konso vs. Ale vs. Issa vs. Afar vs. other ethnic groups	subnational predominance, resources	2017	•	5
Ethiopia (OLF / Oromiya)	OLF vs. government	subnational predominance	1992	↗	5
Ethiopia (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2005	•	4
Ethiopia – Sudan	Ethiopia vs. Sudan	territory, resources	1902	•	3
Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)	Eritrea, Ethiopia vs. TPLF	system/ideology	2020	•	5
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	↘	2
Guinea (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	national power	2006	•	3

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
Guinea-Bissau (opposition)*	MADEM-G15 vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1998	•	2
Kenya (inter-communal rivalry)	Borana vs. Degodia vs. Pokot vs. Turkana vs. Uasin Gishu vs. Siria vs. Masaai vs. Samburu vs. Kikuyu	subnational predominance, resources	1963	•	3
Kenya (MRC / Coast)*	MRC vs. government	secession	2008	•	1
Kenya (opposition)*	NASA vs. government	national power	1999	•	1
Kenya – Somalia*	Kenya vs. Somalia	territory, resources	2021	<b>NEW</b>	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, ISGS et al.)	Al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine, Ansaroul Islam, AQIM, ISGS, JNIM, Macina Liberation Front vs. Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Mali, Mauretania, 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	↘	2
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	↘	2
Nigeria (Ijaw groups / Niger Delta)	CNDA, Ijaw groups, NCNDE-A, NDA vs. government, International oil companies, SELF	autonomy, resources	1997	•	3
Nigeria (inter-communal rivalry)	farmers vs. pastoralists vs. bandits	subnational predominance, resources	1960	↗	5
Nigeria (Islamic Movement)	IMN vs. government	system/ideology	1991	•	3
Nigeria (ISWAP – JAS)	ISWAP vs. JAS	subnational predominance	2016	•	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	↓	1
Senegal (MFDC / Casamance)	MFDC vs. government	secession	1982	↗	3
Sierra Leone (opposition)	APC vs. government	national power	2007	•	3
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	↘	2
Somalia (Somaliland)*	regional government of Somaliland vs. government	secession	1991	•	1
Somalia (subclan rivalry)*	Darood subclans vs. Dir subclans vs. Hawiye subclans	subnational predominance	2012	•	3
Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)	al-Shabaab vs. Kenya, Somalia	system/ideology, national power	2006	•	5
South Africa (opposition)	civil rights groups, DA, EFF, IFP vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2015	↗	4
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 vs. Azande vs. Balanda	subnational predominance, resources	2011	•	5

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
South Sudan (opposition)	NAS, SPLM/A-IO-Kitwang vs. government, SPLM/A-IO-RM	system/ideology, national power	2011	↘	3
South Sudan – Sudan*	South Sudan vs. Sudan	territory, resources	2011	•	1
Sudan (Darfur)	SRF vs. government, RSF vs. 'Arab' militias	autonomy, subnational predominance, resources	2003	↗	5
Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)	Fulani et al., Fur, Masalit vs. Hawazma et al., Misseriya, Taisha	subnational predominance, resources	2007	•	3
Sudan (opposition)	FFC, resistance committees vs. government, RSF	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	3
Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)	SPLM/A-North vs. government	autonomy, resources	2011	•	1
Sudan, South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry / Abyei)	Ngok Dinka vs. Misseriya	subnational predominance, resources	2011	•	3
Tanzania (opposition)*	ACT-Wazalendo, CHADEMA, CUF vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1993	↓	1
Togo (opposition)*	MPDD, ANC vs. government	national power	1963	↘	2
Uganda (inter-communal rivalry / Rwenzururu)*	Bakonzo vs. Bamba et al.	subnational predominance, resources	2012	↓	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

<sup>1</sup> Conflicts marked with \* are without description

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

<sup>3</sup> 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

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

<sup>5</sup> HIIK considers statehood to be non-contested if the state is an official UN members state.

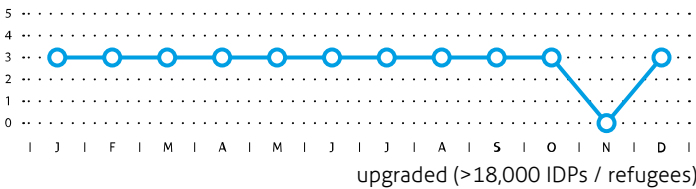
Disputed statehood is marked with a ° if a territory is recognized by at least one other official UN member state ("limited recognition")

**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 limited war 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 Defense of the Fatherland (VDP), on the one hand, the Fulani ethnic group, on the other, and Islamist groups as a third party, continued.

In recent years, the inability of the government to provide security had incentivized various communities to use self-defense militias. Thus, local groups known as Koglweogo - permitted and often encouraged by the government - have emerged. Following the rise of different self-defense militias, local ethnic conflicts erupted, specifically between Mossi, Gourmantché, and Fulani. The latter has been accused of association with Islamist groups by the Burkinabe government and various communities.

As a result of last year's peace efforts between certain communities, total fatalities and injuries declined this year. However, assumed Fulani supported Islamist killings and displacement. At least 30,000 IDPs were reported for this conflict this year, which remains high.

Between February and September, at least 16 Fulani civilians were killed or went missing in inter-communal fighting. For instance, on February 25, Koglweogo militants and the VDP reportedly attacked Fulani hamlets near the village of Sakoani, Est region, killing three Fulani civilians and leaving one missing. On March 3, Koglweogo militants killed five ethnic Fulani civilians including the village chief and his son in Kabaoua, Sahel region. On April 6, suspected VDP fighters killed two Gourmantché farmers on the road between the villages of Kindi-Kombou and Diapaga, Est. Koglweogo and VDP militants abducted a Fulani man in the town of Ouahigouya, Nord region, on May 17. Four days later, on May 21, at least four more members of the Fulani community from the same family in Ouahigouya were abducted by alleged VDP militants. On July 14, the Fulani community of the town of Nagare, Est, and the VDP signed a nonaggression pact in the town of Fada N’Gourma, Est.

In Nord, on September 26, a communal militia of Titao town burned houses and granaries, vandalized motorcycles, and seized livestock belonging to members of the Fulani community in the village of Hargo. On the same day, VDP fighters and Koglweogo militias abducted and interrogated two members of the Fulani community in Hargo.

While inter-communal fighting declined after September, several violent attacks on communal self-defense militias by Islamist groups were reported throughout the year, leaving at least 227 people dead. For instance, on May 3, Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin militants attacked the village of Kodyel, Est, killing at least 30 people, most of them VDP

fighters, and displacing over 4,400 villagers, after the entire village was set on fire. Similar incidents occurred on August 4 and 10 in two villages in the Sahel region, leaving at least 62 people dead. On December 23, militants from an unidentified Islamist group ambushed a communal VDP convoy traveling to the town of Titao, reportedly killing 41, including a VDP leader. brb

**BURKINA FASO (OPPOSITION)**

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

Conflict parties: CDP vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The non-violent crisis over national power between various opposition parties led by the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), on the one hand, and the government led by President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré and his People’s Movement for Progress Party (MPP), on the other, escalated to a violent crisis.

On January 10, following the general presidential elections held in November last year, Prime Minister Christophe Dabiré announced his new government in Kaboré’s second term. On February 11, the National Anti-Corruption Network presented its report on the legislative and presidential elections of 11/20/2020, during which the Network observed 439 cases of corruption. The MPP led the way with 46.9 percent of electoral corruption cases followed by various opposition parties, mainly the CDP. This led to the establishment of the National Guidance and Monitoring Council for National Reconciliation and Social Cohesion by the government on May 24.

On June 25, the leader of the CDP announced peaceful and silent marches on July 3 and 4 in view of the critical national insecurity situation, suspicions of corruption, and bad governance. In addition, the opposition announced that it suspended its participation in political dialogue and called for the resignation of Dabiré and defense minister Chériff Sy. On November 9, the opposition gave a one-month ultimatum to Kaboré and his government to find adequate solutions to the security situation [→ Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry); Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, ISGS et al.)] and threatened to otherwise mobilize for protests and demand that Kaboré and his government resign.

From November 16, opposition activists began protests in the Centre regions to call for the resignation of Kaboré. The situation escalated on November 21, when additional protest activities were held in the Centre regions, following the suspension of mobile internet services, which caused telecommunication disruptions. In the city of Kaya, Centre Nord region, protesters prevented a French military convoy bound for Niger from passing through the area. This resulted in clashes between French forces and protesters, leaving several people injured. On November 27, clashes between police and protesters were reported in the capital Ouagadougou and in the city of Bobo Dioulasso, Hauts Bassins region, in which the police dispersed protesters using tear gas, leaving several people injured. fl

**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/FPB), and a militant faction of the National Forces of Liberation (FNL), on the one hand, and the governments of Burundi and the DR Congo (DRC), on the other, continued.

Violent clashes primarily affected South Kivu Province, DRC, while RED-Tabara was also active in Burundi.

Throughout the year, the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) repeatedly clashed with FNL in South Kivu. FNL frequently stopped vehicles in Kiliba town and attempted to loot them. This occasionally resulted in clashes with the FARDC. For instance, on May 16, FARDC attacked 15 FNL members who had stopped a minibus, leaving no fatalities. Similarly, also in Kiliba, FARDC attacked FNL on July 29, resulting in the death of three FNL members and leaving two civilians injured. On September 8, FARDC attacked FNL who had stopped another vehicle in Kiliba, leaving one FARDC soldier dead.

Furthermore, on August 13, FNL and FARDC clashed in Fizi territory, resulting in the death of three FARDC and six FNL members. On January 4, FARDC clashed with a group of FNL and Mayi-Mayi Rusahaba in Rutemba town, resulting in one death [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)].

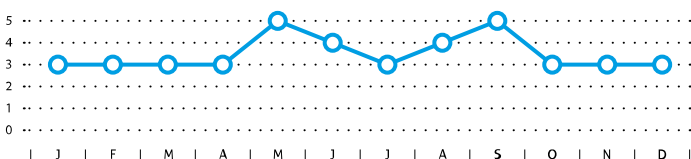
Government forces also repeatedly clashed with RED-Tabara. For example, on September 18 and 19, RED-Tabara fired mortar shells at the Bujumbura airport, eponymous province, the day before Burundian President Evariste Ndayishimiye planned to fly to the UN General Assembly in New York. No fatalities or injuries were reported. On September 24, RED-Tabara clashed with Burundian National Defense Forces in Mugamba region, Bururi Province, during which three soldiers were killed. On October 10, FARDC killed two RED-Tabara members and captured five in Ruzizi Province between the villages Mutarule and Luberizi. rvb

**CAMEROON (ENGLISH-SPEAKING-MINORITY)**

Intensity: **5** | 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, on the one hand, and the French-speaking Cameroonian government, on the other, escalated to a war.

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

Throughout the year, violent clashes between government forces and separatists resulted in more than 583 deaths, constituting a sharp increase from 2020. While May saw 88 deaths, which represents the highest number of fatalities, June saw the most attacks, with 24 attacks on both sides.

Most of the fighting occurred in the anglophone North West Region (NW) and South West Region (SW), although the conflict also spread to neighboring francophone regions and Nigeria. For example, on July 14, separatists shot dead two gendarmes and injured another in Babadjou town, Western Region. On October 20, the border town of Mfum, Cross River State, in Nigeria came under Ambazonian control and on November 17, separatists allegedly invaded the Takum locality, Taraba State, in Nigeria, killing eleven civilians.

As in previous years, the separatists mostly conducted ambush attacks against government forces in NW and SW, inflicting a heavy death toll on government forces. For instance, on June 14, separatists ambushed a military vehicle, killing eight soldiers and injuring four in the town of Eyumojok, SW. In contrast to previous years, separatists also made use of heavy weaponry such as RPGs. For example, in one of the most fatal attacks throughout the year, on September 16, the Bambalang Marine Forces and Jaguars of Bamessing used anti-tank rockets to kill 15 soldiers and 13 civilians during an ambush in Bamessing village, NW.

The Cameroon Armed Forces (CAF) further increased their pressure on separatist groups by conducting several military operations. For example, on August 19, the CAF claimed killing eleven separatist fighters. Between October 12 and 19, the CAF also carried out a week-long offensive against separatists, resulting in the death of eleven separatists.

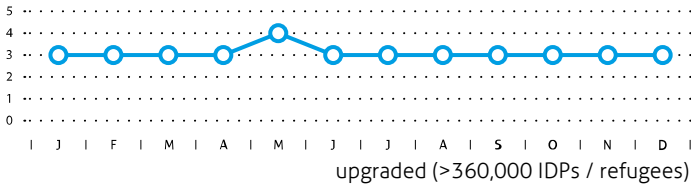
Both sides continued to injure and kill civilians. For example, on August 4, government forces killed seven civilians as a retaliation for an attack on Cameroonian soldiers earlier that day. On August 22, an aid worker of the ICRC was killed in an attack by unknown perpetrators in Bamenda city, NW. On November 14, government forces forcibly entered a Catholic hospital in the city of Kumbo, NW, while searching for injured separatist fighters, torturing hospital guards. The Catholic Church and several foreign embassies condemned the attack. Later that month, on November 24, separatists attacked a school in the town of Ekondo-Titi, SW, leaving four dead.

The increased violence on both sides was met with protest. For instance, mass protests broke out on July 4 after CAF soldiers killed a civilian at a control post in Below Foncha, a district of Bamenda, NW. On September 21, hundreds marched in francophone towns to call for a ceasefire between the government and separatists. On October 14, thousands protested against military abuse after soldiers opened fire on a private car at a checkpoint in Buea town, SW, killing one. On November 12, hundreds took to the streets in the capital of NW, Bamenda, after soldiers had again opened fire on a private car at a checkpoint, killing one. Government forces killed at least two civilians during the protests. kab

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2012**

Conflict parties: militant groups vs. government  
 Conflict items: national power, resources



The limited war over national power and resources between militant groups, such as the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) and anti-Balaka militias, on the one hand, and the government, supported by MINUSCA, Russian private military contractors (PMCs) from the Wagner Group, and Rwanda, on the other, escalated to a war.

The security situation remained volatile, especially in the west and centre of the country. Throughout the year, at least 400 people were killed and approx. 411,000 were newly displaced.

On 12/15/2020, numerous ex-Séléka militias comprising the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC), Patriotic Front for the Renaissance in the Central African Republic (FPRC), Central African Patriotic Movement (MPC), the Fulani militia Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R), and the Mokom and Ndomaté anti-Balaka wings formed the CPC led by former president Francois Bozizé. CPC aimed to disrupt the December 2020 presidential elections. The period around the presidential elections was marked by an increasing number of violent attacks. After failing to disrupt the elections, CPC militias continued their offensive against several towns and attacked Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (FACA) and MINUSCA forces throughout the country. By the end of January, over 200,000 civilians were newly internally displaced. Furthermore, at least 60,000 civilians, mainly from Kémo, Ouaka, Basse-Kotto, and Mbomou prefectures, fled to neighboring DR Congo.

At the beginning of January, CPC militants clashed with MINUSCA on several occasions. For instance, after CPC had partially seized Bangassou city, Mbomou, on January 3, they clashed with MINUSCA peacekeepers on January 14. Eight militants and three soldiers were killed. Two days later, MINUSCA regained control of the town. Furthermore, on January 13, CPC attacked the capital Bangui. MINUSCA repelled the attack, clashing with militants in the capital's outskirts, resulting in the death of one peacekeeper killed and leaving one peacekeeper and three FACA soldiers injured.

Throughout the year, CPC frequently clashed with FACA and Russian PMCs. Furthermore, FACA supported by Russian PMCs conducted a series of military offensives against CPC. For instance, on January 25, FACA, supported by Russian PMCs, and Rwandan troops killed 44 CPC militants in Boyali village, Ouham-Pendé prefecture, who were allegedly plotting an attack against Bangui. On February 17, CPC and FACA clashed in Bambari village, Ouaka, leaving at least 18 people dead and 40 injured as well as several houses destroyed by mortar fire. In April, the government alliance recaptured strategic towns, such as Batangafo, Kabo, and Markounda, Ouham prefecture, and Aba, Nana-Mambéré prefecture, that for several years had been under the control of MPC and

3R, respectively. Furthermore, on May 15 and 16, clashes between UPC militants and Russian PMCs left 20 people dead, mainly civilians, in Boyo village, Ouaka. Russian PMCs deployed heavy weaponry including helicopters, tanks, and heavy artillery. Boyo village was completely destroyed and almost all residents were displaced.

Operations by Russian PMCs continued throughout the second half of the year, while FACA mainly focused on securing the recaptured areas. UN reports suggested that FACA soldiers as well as Russian PMCs were involved in human rights violations, such as indiscriminate killings and abuses of members particularly from the Fulani community. For instance, on December 8, an operation by Russian PMCs, supported by FACA soldiers and former anti-Balaka militants, in Boyo, Ouaka, resulted in at least 15 deaths, including civilians. Anti-Balaka militants had reportedly been hired by Russian PMCs to attack civilians they accused of being affiliated to UPC militants. Subsequently, anti-Balaka targeted civilians for several days in the area, killing at least 15.

On October 15, President Faustin Archange Touadéra declared a unilateral ceasefire encouraging disarmament. Towards the end of the year, tensions partly declined with several militants laying down their arms, such as on December 21, when more than 100 UPC militants handed over their weapons in Alindao village, Basse-Kotto.

gaj, liw

## 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, on the one hand, and pastoralists, on the other, continued. Natural disasters, the drying up of Lake Chad, increased desertification, and soil degradation exacerbated inter-communal tensions over the control of dwindling resources such as grazing land and water.

In 2021, at least 73 people were killed and at least 30 people were injured. The Salamat Region, Mayo Kebbi Est Region, Logone Occidental Region, and Hadjer-Lamis Region were particularly affected by the fighting. In addition, Chadian pastoralists were also responsible for deaths in the neighboring Central African Republic. For instance, on June 10, a violent dispute between a local farmer and a Chadian pastoralist led to the death of the latter in Tiri, Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, Central African Republic. In retaliation, Chadian pastoralists killed at least 15 civilians, burning houses and granaries, prompting 3,000 to flee.

On January 1 and 2, a pastoralist's cattle destroyed an agricultural field in the Salamat Region. Subsequently, pastoralists attacked farmers, killing 17, injuring eight, and destroying fields and villages. Subsequently, the police arrested twelve people. On January 5, pastoralists and farmers clashed in the town of Kim, Mayo Kebbi Est Region, after pastoralists had laid waste to farmers' fields, leaving three people dead and two injured. On February 15, pastoralists killed one farmer and injured two over an illegal roadblock in the Mouraye prefecture, Salamat Region. A retaliatory attack by farmers prompted the intervention of the Chad National Army, resulting in the death of 35 people, including a soldier. On June 17, farmers and pastoralists clashed in the subprefecture of Laokassi, Logone Occidental Region. One person died after



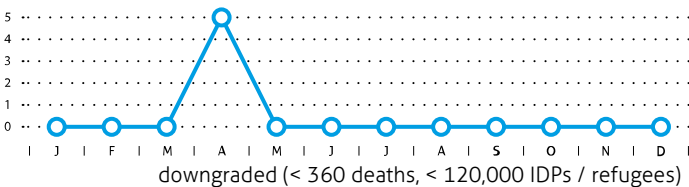
being shot with a poisoned arrow and several were injured. Throughout the second half of the year, fewer clashes were reported. On August 7, farmers and pastoralists clashed in Zohana village, Hadjer-Lamis, killing 22 and injuring 18. Subsequently, authorities deployed soldiers to the area to maintain order. On December 23, three persons were killed and eleven others wounded in the village of Touka, Chari-Baguirmi Region.

Peace efforts also continued. On October 15, traditional leaders in Koumra town, Mandoul Region, facilitated the signing of a peace agreement between pastoralists and farmers in the region. They agreed to pay reparations of USD 2,600 in case someone were to be killed and USD 1,700 in case of injury or accidental killing in a clash between the two parties. twe

### CHAD (MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2005**

Conflict parties: CCSMR, CSD, UFR vs. government  
 Conflict items: national power



The violent crisis over national power between various militant groups, primarily the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, escalated to a limited war. The government received support from the government of Niger.

On April 11, Libyan-based FACT militants initiated a military offensive on the same day that the Chadian presidential election was taking place. A convoy of approx. 500 FACT militants crossed the Southern Libyan border into Tibesti Region, Chad, aiming to reach the capital N'Djamena. On the next day, FACT militants seized control of the town Zouarké, Tibesti. Subsequently, the Chadian air force bombed the town with two MiG-21 fighter jets on April 12 and 13. Proceeding further south, FACT militants clashed with the Chadian army north of Mao town, Kanem Region, on April 17 and 18. While the government reported the death of at least five Chadian soldiers, it also claimed to have killed approx. 300 militants. Additionally, the government reported that 36 soldiers were injured and 150 militants captured. After the battle, FACT militants withdrew to Niger territory.

On April 20, government officials announced President Idriss Déby's death due to injuries obtained on the frontline. The same day, both the parliament and the government were dissolved and a transitional military council (CMT) was formed, headed by Déby's son Mahamat Idriss Déby. FACT militants rejected the military junta's authority and resumed their military offensive. On April 24, however, FACT offered the CMT a ceasefire conditioned upon an inclusive national dialog. On the following day, the CMT declined the ceasefire and asked Niger's government for military cooperation against the FACT, to which it agreed. On April 27 and 28, FACT militants clashed with the Chadian army close to Mao. In addition to ground forces, the Chadian army used fighter jets to attack the militants. On April 29, FACT militants seized control of the city of Nokou, Kanem Region, and claimed to have shot down an army helicopter, which the army denied.

On April 30, the Chadian army launched a counteroffensive against the FACT and recaptured Nokou. The four-day battle resulted in the death of at least six soldiers and an unknown number of militants. Furthermore, while at least 22 soldiers were injured, government forces captured 60 militants. On May 9, the Chadian army claimed military victory and on the following day, Mahamat Idriss Déby announced the end of the military operation against the FACT.

On August 10, Mahamat Idriss Déby called upon the militant groups to participate in a planned national dialog set to take place before the upcoming election, scheduled to take place between June and September 2022. On August 17, Mahamat Idriss Déby appointed a special committee, led by former president Goukouni Oueddei, with the objective to negotiate the participation of the militant groups in the national dialogue. Between October 18 and 29, the special committee held several consultations with high level representatives from the militant groups in Paris, Cairo, and other cities outside of Chad. Following the meetings, 18 militant groups, including FACT and the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic, declared their participation in the national dialog and corresponding pre-consultations under certain conditions. These conditions included a general amnesty and the release of prisoners. On December 24, the CMT approved a general amnesty affecting more than 200 persons, among them United Resistant Forces militants arrested in 2019. dke

### 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, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The opposition consisted of various political parties, civil society groups, and loosely organized protesters, mainly students. After President Idriss Déby's death on April 20 [→ Chad (militant groups)], both the parliament and the government were dissolved and a transitional military council (CMT) formed, headed by Idriss Déby's son Mahamat Idriss Déby.

On February 6, demonstrations erupted in the capital N'Djamena, when Idriss Déby announced his intention to run for a sixth term in the presidential elections on April 11. Police forces used tear gas to disperse the crowd and arrested 14 members of the party Les Transformateurs. After the demonstration, the chairman of the Transformateurs fled into the US embassy in N'Djamena. The embassy requested a guarantee of safety for him from the authorities. On February 12, he left the embassy without being arrested. The following day, police forces dispersed another demonstration against Idriss Déby's candidacy in N'Djamena using tear gas and leaving several protesters injured. On February 28, police forces attempted to arrest a presidential candidate in his house in N'Djamena. The raid escalated into a gunfight, leaving at least two persons dead and five injured. From March 6 until at least March 8, police surrounded the headquarters of the Transformateurs in N'Djamena, preventing members from entering. Police used tear gas to enforce the blockade, leaving several injured. On March 20, several demonstrations against Idriss Déby's candidacy erupted in N'Djamena. Police forces arrested 40 protesters and used tear gas to disperse

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the crowds, leaving ten protesters injured.

On April 8, police forces arrested five opposition leaders, accusing them of organizing a boycott as well as preparing attacks on polling stations in order to interrupt the presidential election. On April 21, one day after the formation of the CMT, 30 opposition parties condemned the move as a coup d'état. On April 27, demonstrations erupted in several cities, demanding the resignation of the CMT. Police forces used tear gas and live ammunition to control the demonstrations, resulting in the death of one person in Moundou city, Logone Occidental Region, and the death of six persons as well as dozens injured in N'Djamena. Police forces arrested a total of 711 protesters during the demonstrations in N'Djamena. On May 1, police forces dispersed demonstrations in Sarh city, Moyen-Chari Region, and Koumra city, Mandoul Region, using tear gas and live ammunition, leaving four injured. On May 8, protests were staged in N'Djamena and Moundou, leaving ten injured and 15 arrested in N'Djamena. On October 2, the opposition and civil society coalition Wakit Tama organized demonstrations against the CMT in N'Djamena. Police forces used tear gas and live ammunition to disperse the crowds, injuring 40 protesters as well as twelve police officers. On November 17, police forces clashed with protesters in Faya-Largeau city, Borkou Region, using tear gas and live ammunition against the crowd, which left one dead and at least one injured. Demonstrations continued the following days until the regional governor, whose decision had sparked the protests, was evacuated on November 23 and replaced on November 26. dke

### 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 various opposition groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Ahead of the presidential election on April 9, various opposition groups staged non-violent protests against the government and the upcoming election. For example, the unrecognized party Rassemblement pour l'action, la démocratie et le développement écologique (RADDE) organized weekly demonstrations in the capital Djibouti City to protest against a fifth presidential mandate for President Ismael Omar Guelleh. Between January and April, several protesters were arrested during the protests. For instance, on February 25, police forces detained at least two opposition activists and, on March 17, the police arrested seven RADDE members, both in Djibouti City.

Guelleh's re-election on April 9 was met with a widespread boycott by parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition groups. The same day, protesters gathered in Djibouti City to demonstrate against his fifth presidential term. The demonstration escalated when protesters barricaded several streets and subsequently set the barricades on fire in Balbala, a suburb of Djibouti City. Subsequently, protesters allegedly broke the window of a police vehicle and injured one police officer. In the following days, various opposition groups organized further protests denouncing the election results. For example, on April 12, the police dispersed a sit-in protest in the town of Dikhil, Dikhil Region, and arrested one protester,

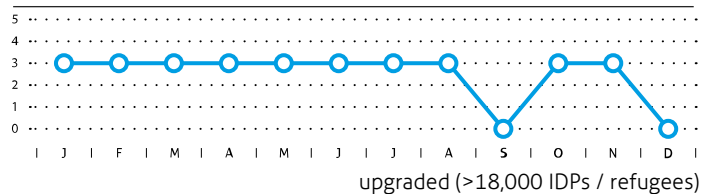
who was allegedly later tortured in a prison in Djibouti City. In the second half of the year, the protests de-escalated and no further violence was recorded. nch

### DR CONGO (BANTU – BATWA)

Intensity: **4** | Change: ↗ | Start: **2013**

Conflict parties: Bantu militias vs. Twa militias

Conflict items: subnational predominance



The violent crisis between the Bantu and Batwa people over subnational predominance in the Tanganyika province escalated to a limited war.

The outbreak of violence in 2013 was caused by longstanding tensions between the two groups and the systemic discrimination of the indigenous Batwa community, who demanded equal rights and access to land for hunting and gathering. This year, the conflict accounted for approx. 53,000 IDPs.

Nyunzu and Kalemie territories were affected by violent attacks. Throughout the year, Batwa militias such as the Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale attacked villages and abducted people. For instance, on March 7, the militia attacked the village of Mulolwa, abducting seven people. Subsequently, on March 12, the militia released the hostages. Furthermore, on October 26, Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale attacked a village near Kyoko, Nyunzu territory, injuring five people. They continued their attack in the village of Mutupeke, where 15 residents were taken hostage but released later that day.

The Batwa militia also conducted attacks along the Bendera-Kalemie road and Kalemie-Kabimba axis. For instance, on April 7, on the Bendera-Kalemie road, eight militants attacked and kidnapped 15 civilians. Local sources and civil society highlighted increasing attacks on fields, which affected villagers forcing them to avoid their fields. For instance, on November 9, one person was killed while working in a field near the village of Efanta.

Furthermore, Batwa militias attacked villages close to Kisengo village. On May 9, Batwa militants killed three civilians using arrows and continued their attack in the village of Kosos, killing twelve people. On August 17, the Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale attacked the village of Quatre at night and shot and killed three people. Further, they attacked Kisengo on August 18, where they looted houses and killed several people. Due to attacks surrounding Kisengo and increased Armed Forces of the DR Congo operations in mid-August, over 17,500 people were displaced to Kisengo.

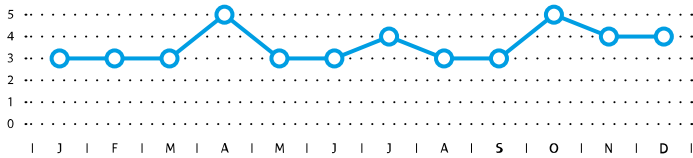
Despite the various incidents within the Nyunzu and Kalemie territories, Bantu and Batwa communities also attempted reconciliation. For instance, on February 5, approx. 70 Batwa and Bantu community members from villages within Nyunzu took part in a local peace-building workshop. Furthermore, the construction of a local primary school, which intends to facilitate cross-community interaction was finalized on August 1. ase

## DR CONGO (ITURI MILITIAS)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 1999

Conflict parties: CODECO, FPIC, FRPI, Zaire militia vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



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), Zaire militia, and Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FRPI), on the one hand, and the government, supported by MONUSCO, on the other, continued for the third consecutive year 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) surged and ebbed in Djugu and Mahagi territories of Ituri. In addition to inter-communal tensions, it can be assumed that other factors also contributed to the conflict in the resource-rich province with a history of cross-border conflict dynamics.

This year accounted for at least 1,100 conflict related deaths, including at least 487 civilians. Approx. 500 militants were killed in clashes with FARDC or during military operations against their strongholds. Throughout the year, houses, hospitals, schools, and IDP sites were destroyed and entire villages continued to be deserted. The volatile security situation in Djugu and Mahagi territories as well as the expansion of large-scale violent attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Irumu and Mambasa territories [→ DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)] displaced at least 500,000 people, according to OCHA, adding up to a total of 1.9 million IDPs in Ituri since 2017. Owing to this escalation, at the beginning of May the government declared the state of siege on North Kivu and Ituri provinces, thereby replacing civilian authorities with military administration and imposing martial law. Ongoing military operations and clashes along strategic road sections temporarily blocked the transportation of food and other goods numerous times throughout the year.

In previous years, militant groups had carried out large-scale and systematic attacks against civilians and FARDC positions across Djugu, Mahagi, and northern Irumu territories. This year, attacks were more localized. The modus operandi of CODECO and FPIC militias was comparable to other militias active in the eastern DR Congo, especially the ADF [→ DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)]. Groups of varying size armed with rifles and machetes attacked and abducted civilians, looted livestock, and burned down houses. During raids on FARDC positions in 2020, CODECO had appropriated heavy weaponry such as mortars as well as RPG and multiple rocket launchers.

CODECO was considered an umbrella association subsuming different factions of militants primarily from the Lendu community. While their strongholds were located in Walendu Pitsi and Walendu Djatsi chiefdoms, all factions operated

throughout Djugu and Mahagi territories. In 2020, parts of CODECO had agreed on a unilateral ceasefire as well as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). However, throughout this year, the financial and logistical support for the DDR process reportedly stalled on numerous occasions, with at least 1,000 CODECO militants awaiting its initiation. Between January and September, violent attacks against civilians and clashes with FARDC continued in Djugu territory, however, on a lower scale compared to the same period in 2020. After a relative lull in January, CODECO activity in February primarily focused on Banyali Kilo chiefdom. On January 28, reportedly heavily armed CODECO militants accompanied by hundreds of gold miners invaded parts of the Mongbwalu Gold Mining company's mining area in Mongbwalu town, occupying the site for several weeks. After militants had killed two civilians on February 17, FARDC clashed with CODECO in Mongbwalu, the following day, killing at least six militants and ten civilians. On a few occasions, militants also attacked miners such as on February 19, when they killed four using machetes at the Makala mine south of Mongbwalu.

In March, CODECO militants attacked several villages in Mambisa chiefdom. On March 15, they attacked Garua village, killing 16 civilians, injuring 40, and displacing residents of the area. Six days later, CODECO attacked several villages around Iga-Barriere and subsequently clashed with FARDC for two days resulting in five civilians, 27 militants, and one soldier killed. FARDC reportedly recaptured the hills of Dii and Boza villages which contain mining areas and had been occupied by the militants for several months. In Bahema Badjere chiefdom, CODECO militants killed 40 civilians in Kpasa and Lowa villages between April 11 and 18. Furthermore, on April 14 and 16, militants attacked Fataki town and its outskirts, killing ten, burning down at least 150 houses, and displacing 15,000.

After the state of siege had been imposed on May 6, CODECO attacks focused on Bahema Nord chiefdom resulting in 14 civilians killed. Furthermore, FARDC intensified their military operations against CODECO strongholds. Between May 6 and 8, FARDC clashed with CODECO in Walendu Pitsi chiefdom, killing 17. FARDC reportedly recovered at least 13 villages in the chiefdom.

Between June and September, 51 civilians were killed in Djugu's Banyari Kilo, Walendu Tatsi, and Bahema Nord chiefdoms and Panduru chiefdom, Mahagi. On two occasions, CODECO attacked civilians in mining sites. For instance, at the Exode mining site near Mongbwalu, on June 1, killing between nine and twelve. On the other hand, clashes with FARDC continued such as between June 12 and 16, when militants attacked Fataki at least five times, clashing with FARDC. As a result, at least 21 militants and three soldiers were killed, and 10,000 residents displaced. CODECO gained control over the town.

From the end of July to September, FARDC operations concentrated on the area around Mongbwalu. From July 29 to 31, FARDC attacked CODECO positions in Kobu village and its periphery, along the Kobu-Mongbwalu axis, with helicopters, killing three civilians, injuring at least 18 militants and five civilians, and destroying a school and a hospital. As a result, 30,000 civilians were displaced. Furthermore, FARDC clashed with CODECO in Itendeyi village, on August 17. FARDC again used helicopters, killing ten militants and one civilian, displacing approx. 10,000. Militants burned down houses and the only hospital in the area. Eventually, FARDC gained control over the village. Moreover, on September 6, CODECO again clashed with FARDC near Kobu leaving at

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least 34 militants and one soldier dead and 18 militants, 19 soldiers, and one civilian injured.

From October onwards, CODECO intensified its attacks against civilians in Djugu and Mahagi territories. For instance, on October 29, militants attacked the villages of Jina and Nizi, Mambisa chiefdom, killing 16 and displacing 20,000 civilians. At least 120 civilian deaths were attributed to CODECO attacks in November. Starting in mid-November, CODECO launched a series of attacks against IDP camps in Bahema Nord chiefdom, such as the Tche, Drodro/Rule, and Ivu site. For instance, on November 21, in Drodro/Rule, CODECO killed at least 44 IDPs and set the site on fire destroying over 1,200 shelters. As a result of these attacks, approx. 70,000 civilians were displaced. Attacks continued in December in Mambisa and Banyali Kilo accounting for 43 civilian deaths. For instance, between December 22 and 23, militants attacked miners in four mining sites, Banyali Kilo, killing 26 and looting minerals.

In parallel, clashes between FARDC and CODECO escalated. Starting October 2, FARDC launched military operations in Babelebe chiefdom, Irumu, and Waldendu Djatsi chiefdom, Djugu, using, inter alia, helicopters. As a result, 83 militants were killed and thousands of residents displaced. In Babelebe, CODECO reportedly formed a coalition with FPIC militants which attacked a FARDC position in Ngongo and Mwanga villages and subsequently clashed with FARDC, on October 6. Six civilians were killed by stray bullets. Consequently, FARDC deployed battle tanks to the area in an attempt to reinforce security of the nearby provincial capital Bunia. Moreover, between October 26 and 28, FARDC killed 27 militants in clashes in the Bahema Baguru chiefdom, Djugu. Four soldiers were also killed and 5,500 residents displaced. In November, FARDC-CODECO clashes focused on Bahema Nord, resulting in at least 58 deaths. For instance, on November 29, 27 militants and twelve soldiers were killed in Dhera and Libi villages. In December, clashes again focused on Mongbwalu area. After killing two soldiers in Mapendano village, on December 2, militants invaded Mongbwalu the following day. Subsequently, FARDC clashed with CODECO and bombarded the town using helicopters, resulting in the death of 36 militants and extensive displacement. The army regained control of the town on December 4. Additionally, FARDC killed 31 militants in the outskirts of Mongbwalu, between December 25 and 27, again using helicopters.

FPIC militia, mainly composed of Bira community members, continued to be active in the northern parts of Irumu territory, with strongholds in Andisoma chiefdom, and operated near the mining areas of Marabo and Nyakunde as well as the provincial capital Bunia. FPIC continued to attack civilians and clashed with FARDC on several occasions. In contrast to CODECO, FPIC attacks were more frequent in the first half of the year. Baboa Bokoe chiefdom was primarily affected by FPIC attacks, accounting for 21 civilian deaths until mid-July. For instance, on January 5, FPIC militants attacked the villages of Diango and Tokodo, killing three civilians and one FARDC, abducting three people, and burning down several houses. Furthermore, on April 20, FPIC reportedly in coalition with CODECO attacked civilians in Shari and Nyara villages, killing twelve. Subsequently, FPIC clashed with FARDC leaving eight militants dead. The second half of the year recorded fewer FPIC attacks. In mid-November attacks resumed shortly in Basili and Bahema d'Irumu chiefdoms, such as on November 15, when FPIC attacked the village of Chabusiku, killing 18 civilians, burning down at least 30 houses, and displacing the residents of two villages.

Throughout the year, FARDC clashed with FPIC in Andisoma

and Babelebe chiefdoms, killing approx. 100 militants. In Andisoma, for instance, FARDC launched a military operation in Djunde, Androzo, and Malo villages between January 15 and 19, killing 13. One month later, FARDC targeted FPIC, reportedly supported by CODECO and some FRPI militants, in the same area, killing nine and recapturing the villages. On May 2, FARDC with MONUSCO air support launched a military offensive against FPIC in Nyakunde, killing 13 militants and regaining control over four villages. In Babelebe, FARDC launched an operation against the FPIC controlled villages of Kunda, Mwanga, Babunya, and Magalabo, between February 27 and 28, resulting in the death of 16 militants and three soldiers. FARDC recaptured the village.

Zaire militia, comprising, among others, members of Hema and Alur communities, had formed as a self-defense group in 2020, following persistent attacks against their communities. Its area of operation comprised parts of Djugu territory, with strongholds in Dala village, Mambisa chiefdom, and Mbidjo and Dhego villages, Bahema Badjere chiefdom, as well as Sota and Shari villages in Irumu territory. On rare occasions, Zaire militia attacked civilians and primarily clashed with CODECO factions or FARDC. For instance, on April 20, FARDC clashed with Zaire militants in Lodha village, Djugu, leaving 13 people dead. Furthermore, on November 21, CODECO clashed with Zaire militants in Mba and Jaibu villages, Djugu, killing six.

By the end of the year, the government resumed attempts to negotiate a peace agreement with the militant groups. Initially, representatives of both parties met in November, in Linga village, Walendu Pitsi chiefdom, reportedly to discuss the militias' demands such as ending the state of siege and commencing DDR. In December, the government dispatched a delegation, comprising representatives from several Ituri communities, including Thomas Lubanga, convicted by the ICC, to Djugu to continue negotiations. liw

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### DR CONGO (KATA KATANGA)

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

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Conflict parties: Kata Katanga vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance and secession between the Kata Katanga militia and the government continued.

After staging various attacks on Lubumbashi, the capital of Haut Katanga province, and freeing its leader and war criminal Gédéon Kyungu Mutanga "Gédéon" in 2020, the Kata Katanga reiterated demands for the secession of Katanga from the DR Congo.

This year, the Kata Katanga militia staged one violent attack. On February 14, dozens of militants armed with guns attacked two arms depots of the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) in the metropolitan area of Lubumbashi. While they failed to capture any weapons, the subsequent clashes left three FARDC soldiers and six militants dead. Between April 18 and 22, FARDC troops arrested more than 80 militants of the Kata Katanga, who were allegedly planning another attack from the outskirts of Lubumbashi.

Gédéon was accused of having ties with ex-president and former rebel leader Joseph Kabila and a former general, another Kabila ally, dating back to the Congo wars. As Kabila's influence on the national stage was challenged [→ DR Congo

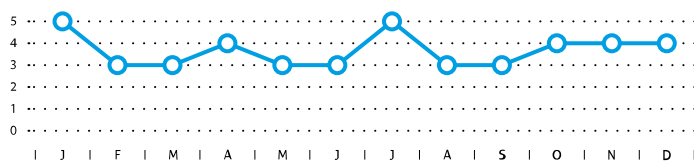
(opposition)], he withdrew to the Haut Katanga region. Speculations asserted that Kabila allegedly reached out to his old allies from the Congo wars to regroup a faction in Haut-Katanga region, allegedly in alliance with the Kata Katanga rbo

DR CONGO (MAYI-MAYI ET AL.)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2003

Conflict parties: NDC-R vs. APCLS vs. Mayi-Mayi groups vs. Nyatura groups vs. FPP/AP 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 DR Congo’s eastern provinces North Kivu (NK) and South Kivu (SK), Maniema, and Tanganyika, continued.

The conflict involved various local militant 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 militant groups. Since the end of the war, more local militias have formed and many existing groups fragmented further, increasing the number from around 70 in 2015 to at least 120 in 2020 in NK and SK alone.

The militias varied in size and strength, often comprising less than 100 fighters and recruiting among local communities. 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, at least 1,240 people were killed by militant groups operating in North and South Kivu. Furthermore, at least 100,000 were newly internally displaced. On December 20, the UNSC extended MONUSCO’s mandate until 12/20/22.

The most active groups in North Kivu were the Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated factions (NDC-R), the Patriotic Front for Peace-People’s Army (FPP/AP), and the Collective Movement for Change (CMC) comprising a number of Nyatura groups.

APCLS, predominantly recruiting among Hunde communities, remained active in Masisi, Walikale, and Kalehe territories, extending the territory under its control. APCLS continued to cooperate with Nyatura groups and Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) [→ DR Congo, Rwanda (CNRD, FDLR)]. Besides frequent clashes with FARDC and the Bwira wing of NDC-R, the group also targeted civilians. On January 15,, APCLS militants attacked FARDC and NDC-R/Bwira, in Kifunsi village, killing three FARDC soldiers. On February 1, clashes between FARDC and APCLS militants in Shango and Miano villages resulted in six deaths. During a raid in Buongo village on April 7, APCLS militants injured one civilian and abducted nine others. A few days later, on April 11, a

coalition of APCLS, Nyatura CMC, and FDLR attacked FARDC in Kihazi village, resulting in one civilian killed. Following the surrender of 110 APCLS militants on October 29, in Nyamitaba village, the group’s activities decreased.

NDC-R activities focused on Rutshuru, Masisi, Walikale, and southern Lubero territories. Clashes between NDC-R/Guidon and NDC-R/Bwira wings continued after the group split on 07/08/2020. For instance, NDC-R/Guidon attacked NDC-R/Bwira members in Mutongo village on February 13, leaving six people dead. On October 28, NCD-R Bwira militants attacked NDC-R/Guidon members in Kailenge village, killing six and injuring two. On November 17, NDC-R/Guidon militants destroyed the NDC-R/Bwira camp in Kalembe and Kalonge villages. A few days later, on November 23, NDC-R/Bwira militants attacked NDC-R/Guidon militants in Mutongo resulting in three deaths and five injured. FARDC frequently supported NDC-R/Bwira in its activities against NDC-R/Guidon and other armed groups, such as APCLS and Nyatura CMC. For instance, on February 2, FARDC and NDC-R/Bwira attacked a coalition of APCLS and Nyatura APRDC in Kihimba and Lukweti villages, resulting in the death of eleven. Additionally, NDC-R/Bwira killed two people in Lwibo village, accusing them of collaborating with APCLS, on March 14.

Furthermore, NDC-R/Bwira cooperated with FPP/AP, predominantly active in the territories of Walikale, Ruthsuru, and Lubero. FPP/AP also cooperated with Nyatura Delta. Throughout the year, FPP/AP militants mainly targeted NDC-R/Guidon and civilians in a series of attacks, abductions, and raids. For instance, FPP/AP militants attacked NDC-R/Guidon in Mukumbirwa village, on January 2, killing six NDC-R/Guidon militants and displacing approx. 10,000 households. On June 5, FPP/AP imposed illegal taxation on the residents of Kyanderema village and tortured at least one civilian. The group tortured other civilians and abducted 25 in Luhanga village, on June 24. Despite the promise of FPP/AP’s leader to lay down arms on June 28, attacks on NDC-R/Guidon and civilians continued in the second half of the year.

In South Kivu, the most active groups were 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.

The main militias associated with the Banyamulenge community included Twigwaneho, Ngumino, and Makanika. They frequently formed coalitions with National Forces of Liberation (FNL) [→ Burundi, DR Congo (FNL, RED-Tabara)] and Android, operating in the areas of Fizi, Mwenga, and Uvira territories. Among others, these groups targeted FARDC and civilians in attacks, abductions, and raids. On July 10, Twigwaneho and Makanika militants attacked FARDC in Kakenge village, killing 47 and injuring 21. A day later, a coalition of Twigwaneho, Makanika, Ngumino, Android, and FNL militants launched an attack against FARDC in Minembwe village. During the clashes, at least 20 people were killed and seven injured. The militants also burned houses and looted goods. Clashes between the militant coalition and FARDC continued in August. For instance, on August 12, FARDC attacked Twigwaneho, Makanika, Gumino, Android, and FNL militants in the villages of Mikalati, Kangwe, Ngoma, Kanagananga, and Mizinga and on August 16, in the villages of Chakira, Kamombo, and Maramara. FARDC dislodged militants from these localities, killing 21. The militants used civilians as human shields and set houses on fire as they fled. On December 27, Twigwaneho and Makanika militants attacked FARDC in the villages of Kamombo, Chakira, Nyamara, and Mikalati, displacing the local population.

The militant groups of the Banyamulenge community also

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

clashed with the groups affiliated with the Bafuliiro, Babembe, and Banyindi communities. The main Bafuliiro militia, Mayi-Mayi Biloze Bishambuke, and the main Babembe militant groups, Mayi-Mayi Réunion and Mayi-Mayi Ebu Ela, were supported by militant groups organized within the National Coalition of the People for the Sovereignty of Congo (CNPSC), such as the Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba, and continued their cooperation with RED-Tabara [→ Burundi, DR Congo (FNL, RED-Tabara)].

The clashes continued in Fizi, Mwenga, and Uvira territories, resulting in civilian fatalities and the destruction of property. For instance, during an ambush in Kwisumu village, on January 24, Biloze Bishambuke militants killed 19 Twigwaneho militants. On May 29, a coalition of Mayi-Mayi Ilunga, Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba, Mayi-Mayi Makanaki, Mayi-Mayi René, and RED Tabara militants attacked Twigwaneho in seven villages in Uvira territory. They abducted 19 civilians, set fire to houses, and stole 500 cows. On October 12, Biloze Bishambuke militants, suspected of collaborating with Mayi-Mayi Ebu Ela, set fire to the villages of Magunga 1, Magunga 2, and Kavumu, with the aim to drive out Banyamulenge people. Twigwaneho militants intervened and the clashes spread to Bibokoboko, Mugore 1 and 2, Bivumu, Magaja, and Kisombe villages in the following days. The attacks resulted in the displacement of at least 7,480 civilians, who had been targeted by Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba, Biloze Bishambuke, Toronto, and RED-Tabara militants, on October 15. The militias looted livestock and goods, burned down houses, and took at least 100 hostages.

In Kalehe, Shabunda, and Kabare territories, various RM factions continued to operate. The militias targeted civilians in form of abductions, extortion, and rape. For instance, RM Bipopa abducted the chief of the Kalonge group in Bagaru village, on May 17. During subsequent protests, RM Bipopa killed three civilians and injured seven. On July 21, five RM Mabala militants abducted 31 civilians from Nyalubemba village. Furthermore, RM factions continued to extend their control over mining sites in South Kivu and clashed with FARDC. For instance, on October 13, FARDC attacked the RM Donat faction, who had stolen money, livestock, and solar panels in Bimanda village, killing two, injuring seven, and capturing two militants. ttu

### 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 opposition parties and civil society groups, on the one hand, and the government led by President Félix Tshisekedi, on the other, continued.

After the breakdown of the ruling coalition between the Common Front for Congo (FCC) and Heading for Change (CACH) in 2020, Tshisekedi secured a new majority in January, by forming a “Sacred Union” with support from FCC dissidents and parts of the Lamuka coalition, namely the Movement for the Liberation of Congo and the Ensemble pour la République of Moïse Katumbi. Consequently, the FCC prime minister, loyal to former president Joseph Kabila, was removed from office on January 29 after he lost a vote of no confidence. Tshisekedi’s candidate was sworn in as prime minister on February 15. After long negotiations, Tshisekedi’s coalition

was formalized and took office on April 12. Katumbi’s decision to join the “Sacred Union” led to tensions with the Lamuka leadership, culminating in the dismissal of Katumbi as member of Lamuka in April, thereby weakening the opposition coalition.

On June 15, the prison sentence of Tshisekedi’s ex-chief of staff and former leader of the Union of the Congolese Nation (UNC) was reduced to 13 years after his appeal. Subsequently, protests by UNC members erupted in his hometown Bukavu, South Kivu province, over the following days. The protests, which involved roadblocks, burning tires, and barricades, were dispersed by the police.

On September 15, Lamuka held nationwide protests against the politicization of the country’s National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). Police dispersed similar protests by Lamuka supporters in Kalemie, Tanganyika province, on September 29, injuring several people and arresting four.

After months of negotiations over a common candidate were unsuccessful, the national assembly endorsed Tshisekedi’s candidate as new president of the CENI, on October 16. The election was highly disputed as the candidate was supposed to be chosen unanimously by the country’s main religious institutions. Reports of corruption and threats against smaller religious groups to back Tshisekedi’s candidate sparked major protests. After the announcement, clashes between Tshisekedi’s supporters and Lamuka supporters erupted in the capital Kinshasa. Police violently dispersed the protesters, leaving several people injured and arrests. One protester died of his injuries a few days later. Similarly, nationwide protests erupted on November 13, calling for a depoliticization of the CENI and the removal of its newly confirmed head. Tshisekedi’s decision regarding the CENI remained the dominating topic for the rest of the year. On December 13, Lamuka supporters organized a sit-in in front of the CENI headquarters followed by several arrests. Moreover, Tshisekedi’s current coalition partner and potential opponent in the 2023 presidential elections, Katumbi, demanded the list of candidates to be removed, causing tensions within the governing coalition.

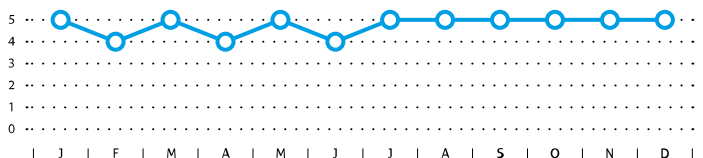
day

### DR CONGO, UGANDA (ADF)

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

Conflict parties: ADF vs. DR Congo, Uganda

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources



The war over the orientation of the political system, subnational predominance, and resources between the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), on the one hand, and the governments of DR Congo and Uganda, supported by MONUSCO, on the other, continued. The Islamist militant group ADF was known as National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) in the past, and more recently as Madina at Tawhid Wai Muwahedeen (ADF-MTM).

In recent years, ADF had been primarily based in Beni territory, in a triangular area north of Beni town comprising

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Eringeti, Oicha, Mbau localities, and the Semliki Valley, North Kivu (NK) province. As in 2020, it continued to extend its presence and attacks to Ituri province, where it was especially active in Irumu territory but also amplified attacks in Mambasa territory. In 2020, ADF split into several mobile groups that operated in different areas of Beni, Irumu, and Mambasa. ADF was led by Seka Musa Baluku, who was included in the UN sanctions list in 2020. Additionally, on March 11, the US State Department designated ADF a foreign terrorist organization and considered it a branch of the so-called Islamic State (IS). As a result, the US imposed sanctions against ADF members as well as on transactions or collaboration with the group. Although IS Central African Province (ISCAP) claimed a number of ADF attacks in DR Congo and Uganda, ADF's links with ISCAP continued to be disputed and unclear. According to the final report of UN experts, the panel was unable to establish that IS was directly supporting or exercising command or control over the ADF. The number of foreign ADF members increased since the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) claimed to have arrested several foreign militants this year. For instance, in Boga and Tchabi villages, Irumu, on July 19, two militants of alleged Rwandan descent were arrested. Other arrests included alleged militants of Tanzanian and Burundian nationality. This year the conflict accounted for at least 1,702 deaths. However, as ADF generally refrained from claiming responsibility, the attribution of attacks often remained uncertain. ADF's primary forms of attack were assaults on farmers, ambushes on traveling civilians or trucks, and most often, raids on villages. Mostly, ADF attacks and village raids occurred at night when there were no patrols and operations by MONUSCO. Throughout the year, at least 1,219 civilians were reportedly killed. Attacks on villages also entailed severe destruction of property and large numbers of kidnappings.

From January to March, ADF attacks concentrated on Beni's Ruwenzori sector, NK. For instance, on January 4, ADF militants attacked Mwenda village, killing 22 civilians. After a lull from mid-January, attacks resumed when ADF raided several villages between February 4 and 9. For instance in Mabule and Kabembeu villages each resulting in 14 civilians killed, while in Kithovirwa village, ten people were killed. ADF raids on villages continued during the first months of the year, distributed across Irumu and Beni territories. Significant fatalities arose from a series of ADF attacks on Beu-Manyama, Moliso, and Musangwa villages, Beni, resulting in at least 31 deaths, on March 30. April saw a total number of 90 civilian deaths attributed to ADF. This included attacks such as numerous raids on the villages of Mitembo, Mungwanda, and Kyamamba, Irumu, between April 13 and 16, leaving 23 people dead.

Furthermore, ADF frequently conducted ambushes on roads. For instance, on May 10, near the village of Kilya, Beni, ADF killed a FARDC soldier, a MONUSCO soldier, and two civilians following an intervention by FARDC and MONUSCO peacekeepers. Other significant ADF attacks included raids on villages in Ituri, such as in Ngaka, Mangundu, Mapasana, and Mapili villages, Mambasa territory, on May 12, in which ADF militants killed at least 31 people. Additionally, on May 30, ADF attacked the areas of Boga and Tchabi villages, Irumu territory, and a nearby IDP camp killing at least 50 people and injuring at least 45. By the end of June and early July, ADF had initiated several attacks on Beni town, NK. For instance, on July 1, ADF entered the Rwangoma neighborhood, killing ten civilians and abducting ten.

ADF activities and raids in Ituri and Beni continued through-

out the second half of the year. According to the Kivu Security tracker, in August, the ADF accounted for 105 civilian deaths, 67 in Beni and 38 in Irumu territory. In a raid on Makutano village, Irumu, ADF killed at least 30 people on September 3. An equal number of fatalities was recorded in ADF attacks on Maleki, Tandika, Ngadula, and Avey villages, Beni, between October 23 and 24. Towards the end of the year, assaults increasingly extended to Mamabasa territory. For instance, on October 17, ADF killed six civilians in Baiti, Makele, and Mbopi villages. Overall, in October and November, attacks concentrated around the adjacent areas of Bashu chiefdom, Beni territory, southern Irumu, and partly Mambasa territory. For instance, on November 11, ADF attacked Kisunga village, Beni territory, resulting in at least 38 deaths.

ADF systematically targeted the most important road links between the provinces of Ituri and NK, focusing on different parts of National Road N° 4 and road sections such as the Beni-Kasindi section, the Beni-Butembo section, and the Komanda-Luna axis. Road sections had to be closed temporarily and traffic was suspended several times. Due to the deteriorating security conditions on the road, the FARDC, in cooperation with MONUSCO, from August onwards, established a system of large-scale escorted convoys. However, this incentivized attacks, such as on September 1, when ADF ambushed a FARDC/MONUSCO escorted convoy near Ofaye village, Irumu, killing at least three civilians and leaving one soldier missing. In addition, ADF set at least 16 vehicles on fire and abducted at least 80 people. Consequently, FARDC and MONUSCO decided to reinforce the convoys with helicopters, armored vehicles, and aerial surveillance. During village raids, ADF militants regularly destroyed or looted civilian property. In addition, at least several hundred houses, vehicles, and business stores were burned down. In August, for instance, ADF burned down a total of at least 96 houses in Kasoko, Irumu, and Katanda and Kasanzi villages, Beni. ADF also repeatedly attacked and destroyed critical infrastructure such as local health posts and hospitals. For instance, in an assault on Kisunga village, Beni, on November 12, ADF militants burned down the only hospital in the Bashu chiefdom, leaving at least 8,000 people without access to medical care. Moreover, 13 other buildings were burned down, at least 38 people killed and at least 59 kidnapped. Other incidents within Beni territory included the burning of the Mangina health center and school, on May 4, the destruction of the Boga hospital resulting in ten deaths, on June 7, and the burning down of 20 houses, the local health post, and a church in Muziranduru and Kafeza villages, on March 27.

Throughout the year, ADF abducted several hundred people. Often, however, it remained unclear how many abductees remained with ADF, how many were released, and how many were killed. Significant incidents included the abduction of at least 50 people in raids in Beni territory, on March 30, and of at least 52 on May 12 in Ituri. On September 1, at least 80 people went missing after an attack in Ofaye. However, 60 of them were allegedly released shortly after. Hostages were often liberated by the FARDC or released when ADF were put under military pressure. For instance, the FARDC claimed to have liberated 150 hostages during an offensive launched between August 18 and 20 around Mapipa and Malibongo villages, Irumu.

FARDC missions and activities continued under the framework of the Sokola 1 military operation. Due to limited success, President Félix Tshisekedi declared a state of siege for NK and Ituri provinces that came into force on May 6. It replaced civilian authorities with military administration

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

and allowed for the application of martial law. In general, violent ADF attacks continued during the state of siege. Nonetheless, Sokola 1 operations supported by MONUSCO airstrikes and surveillance, had some success in constraining ADF activities. Following an operation initiated in December 2020 in Ruwenzori the FARDC dislodged ADF from Loselose village, Beni, on January 1, after a week of fighting. At least 16 people, including 14 militants, were killed. In the following days, at least 50 bodies were found in the surrounding area. In several operations, FARDC also destroyed ADF camps, such as on July 7, when FARDC conducted airstrikes destroyed several ADF camps in Ituri. On August 12, FARDC bombarded ADF positions and killed an estimated 45 militants in Mwalika valley, Beni, allegedly including several commanders. FARDC claimed to have killed 251 militants, captured 31, and arrested 210 collaborators in Beni area since the declaration of the state of siege.

The FARDC received support from several foreign armies. In August, Kenyan troops arrived in Beni that together with Tanzanian, Nepalese, and South African forces formed the Rapid Intervention Brigade of MONUSCO (FIB). Furthermore, USA special operations forces arrived in the DR Congo on August 13 to train a future Congolese counterterrorism unit. By the end of November, the Congolese government authorized the Ugandan Armed Forces (UPDF) to support combat with the ADF in NK and Ituri. Ugandan authorities accused ADF of being responsible for two attacks in the Ugandan capital Kampala, on November 16, leaving three attackers dead and several people injured. The UPDF launched its first air and artillery strikes on November 30, reportedly directed at ADF camps around the area of Watalinga village, Beni.

Over the course of the year, 121 FARDC soldiers were killed. In an attack against the FARDC in Nzenga I village, Beni, on May 1, ADF killed eleven FARDC soldiers and injured five. The next day, during a FARDC patrol in Kanunu-Palunza village, Beni, another three FARDC soldiers were killed and two injured. On August 7 and 8, ADF killed 18 FARDC soldiers in Matongo, Beni, and ten went missing afterwards. One day later, at Mapipa and Masini villages, Irumu, 17 FARDC soldiers were killed by ADF.

Civil society groups initially welcomed the declaration of the state of siege. However, they expressed their frustration with the government's and MONUSCO's alleged incapability to end violence and repeatedly staged protest marches throughout the year. Sometimes fear and frustration also caused forms of popular justice that included mob-lynching of persons accused of being militants or having ties to ADF. In reported cases, members of local ethnic minorities became victims of such lynching. For instance, on July 1, in Komanda village, Irumu, when at least nine people, all members of the Banyabwisha community, were lynched.

ssi

### ESWATINI (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1998**

Conflict parties: COSATU, PUDEMO, SUDF vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between various opposition groups, including political parties, trade unions, and other opposition movements, on the one hand, and the government of King

Mswati III, on the other, continued.

Starting in June, the country experienced an unprecedented wave of pro-democracy protests for the introduction of a democratic multi-party system. After a student had allegedly been shot dead by police in May, at least 15 separate protests in several rural municipalities were held to rally against police brutality on June 19. In Ekukhanyeni sub-district, Manzini District, police forces fired live bullets and stun grenades at the protesters. On June 29, protests staged across multiple towns were met with violence by police forces, most notably the use of gunfire to disperse the crowds. This left at least five people dead and ten injured in Matsapha town, Manzini District, and at least four people dead and 19 injured in Nhlangano town, Shiselweni District. In the following days, protests and street fighting continued, resulting in at least 15 further deaths and numerous injuries across different cities. Although protests were banned by the government in June, smaller protests by political movements and student groups continued in the weeks that followed. On October 1, the largest demonstration with at least 20,000 participants was staged in the capital Mbabane after protesters tried to deliver a petition to the US Embassy. Police and military forces intervened using live ammunition, rubber bullets, and tear gas resulting in at least 20 people injured. Later that month, on October 20, at least 10,000 joined protests in Mbabane and Manzini city, eponymous district. Security forces used rubber bullets, killing one person and injuring at least 80. Smaller demonstrations for democracy continued for the rest of the year.

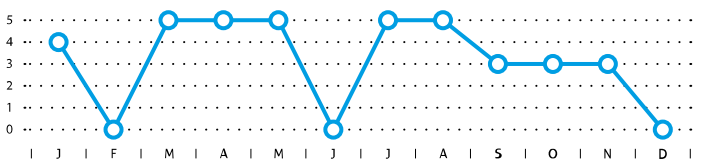
vho

### ETHIOPIA (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

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

Conflict parties: Oromo vs. Amhara vs. Konso vs. Ale vs. Issa vs. Afar vs. other ethnic groups

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The war between various ethnic groups over subnational predominance and agrarian land continued. Violence mostly erupted due to disputes over land claims and confrontations between ethnic groups.

From January 9 to January 11, unidentified militias attacked ethnic Konso and ethnic Ale in Toro, Buso, Afufo, and Mekersa towns of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). Nine people were killed and three injured. 180,000 people were displaced by the clashes which broke out due to land claims in the region.

A clash between various ethnic groups in Daletti town, Benishangul-Gumuz, on January 12, left 82 people dead and 22 injured.

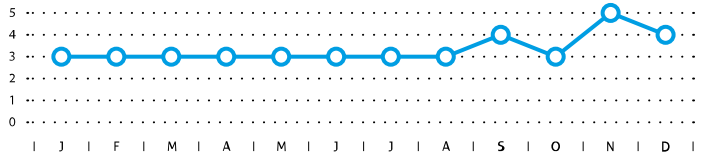
From March 6 to March 9, violent attacks by forces of the Oromo Liberation Army against ethnic Amhara civilians, left 42 people dead in Horo Guduru town, Oromia state. The attacks were allegedly motivated by ongoing ethnic tension between ethnic Oromo and ethnic Amhara in the region. 303 fatalities were reported following clashes between



ETHIOPIA (OLF / OROMIYA)

Intensity: 5 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1992

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



Amhara security forces and Oromo civilians on March 19 in the North Shoa zone, Amhara state. In addition, 369 people were injured, 1,500 houses burned down and 332,000 people displaced.

In Afar region, 100 people were killed in clashes between ethnic Afar and ethnic Somali-Issa paramilitaries between April 2 and April 6.

On April 12, an unidentified armed group attacked civilians in Amaro special woreda, SNNPR, killing twelve and injuring eight. 11,000 people fled from the region.

For several days from April 16 onwards, ethnic Oromo and ethnic Amhara clashed several times in Amhara state. For instance, after a local ethnic Oromo shopkeeper was killed by Amhara security forces in Ateya town, violence broke out between the ethnic groups throughout the state, leading to the death of 200 people and displacement of 320,000.

In Amaro special woreda of SNNPR, armed men from the Galana woreda attacked civilians, killing three and injuring two. 6,000 people were displaced as a consequence.

Suspected members of the Gumuz People's Liberation Movement carried out an attack on civilians in Yambelgara Oli town, in the border region between Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia on May 22. Six people were killed and one injured, while houses and livestock were destroyed.

In late May, clashes between different ethnic groups, security forces, and civilians erupted due to ongoing ethnic tensions in the woredas of Sheko, Guraferda, and South Bench, South West Ethiopia People's Region, leaving 151 people dead and 29 injured. Additionally, 732 houses were destroyed and 21,938 people left the region temporarily.

On July 15, Gumuz militia members killed eight civilians and displaced 4,000 residents in the Kamashi woreda, Benishangul-Gumuz.

On August 10, the Gumuz militia attacked a bus, killing eight civilians in the Chagni zone, Benishangul-Gumuz. Furthermore, on August 18 and 19, state security forces conducted a retaliation attack after members of the Gumuz militia had attacked civilians in East Welega zone, Benishangul-Gumuz. The attacks left 210 people dead.

On September 24, two violent attacks occurred. In Benishangul-Gumuz, local militia groups killed two civilians and kidnapped 145 in the Sedal woreda, because they allegedly did not support the goals and strategy of the militia group. Subsequently, 5,000 fled the region. On the same day, in KIRAMU woreda, Oromia, local militia groups killed 29 civilians and displaced 40,000 people.

On October 10 and 11, ethnic Oromo and ethnic Amhara clashed in KIRAMU town in Oromia, leaving 25 people dead and forcing 900 to flee the region.

In Benishangul-Gumuz, two further attacks on civilians by local militia groups were conducted. On October 19, two people were killed and two injured in Dibate woreda, while nine people and 100 livestock were killed as well as three people injured in Kiltu Kara woreda on October 31.

On November 19, ethnic Oromo and Amhara clashed in Nono town, Oromia. 20 people were reportedly killed in presumed retaliation for a previous attack.

noh

The limited war over subnational predominance between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) with its armed wing, the Oromia Liberation Army (OLA), and the federal government escalated to a war, following the escalation of the conflict in 2019 and 2020. OLA units were involved in violent encounters with the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF), Oromia regional security forces, including Oromia Special Forces, and Amhara militias.

In February, students across Oromia region held demonstrations demanding the release of all detained politicians, which included prominent Oromo figure Jawar Mohammed. In response, regional security agents dispersed the protesters and the regional authorities closed 20 OLF political offices. The crackdown on civil society and political actors prompted the political party Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) with the support of OLF, a member of the Coalition for Democratic Federalism for the upcoming election to withdraw from the general elections on March 3.

During March and April, government authorities outlawed other Oromo formations and closed a further 15 OLF offices as encounters between OLF-OLA and regional security forces continued. On May 1, Prime Minister Abiy labelled OLF and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) as terrorist organizations [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF/Tigray)], and on May 3, federal security forces raided the OLF's Chairman residence in Addis Ababa. Subsequently, tensions between OLA and government forces escalated. A total of 295 OLA soldiers were killed in Western Oromia between May and June, while OLA killed at least 59 Ethiopian federal military officers. In addition, both sides accused the other of killing civilians on several occasions.

On July 1, OLF and OFC announced the formation of the Oromia National Transitional Government. The OLA offensive on ENDF in the first half of July resulted in the capture of several towns, leaving 360 federal soldiers dead, over 200 injured, and 17 captured.

From August onwards, several Oromo Special Forces reportedly defected, and more Amhara militias became involved in the fighting with OLA. For example, in October, Amhara militias and OLA accused each other of killing dozens of civilians in several towns of East Wallaga, Oromia.

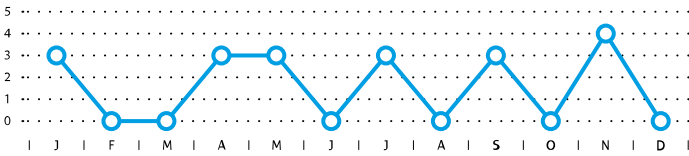
Between September 12 and 19, OLA claimed to have conducted military operations in Southern Oromia and Central Oromia, killing 104 ENDF soldiers, injuring 65, and capturing five.

On August 12, OLA leader Kumsa Diribaand announced a military cooperation agreement with TPLF to coordinate their efforts against the federal forces and Amhara militias. On November 5, the OLA formed a larger military alliance with eight other groups, including the TPLF. hiik

ETHIOPIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **4** | Change: • | Start: **2005**

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



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

the conflict was closely intertwined with the war over Tigray [→ Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF/Tigray)], which concentrated multiple opposition movements into the conflict in the northern Ethiopian region.

On January 23, violent clashes between the ethnic groups of Afar and Issa broke out due to ongoing land and border disputes. Afar security forces and members of the Issa militia clashed in Adaytu town of Mille woreda, Afar region, leaving 30 people dead and 40 injured.

On January 27, members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) party went on a hunger strike after being detained by the federal police, who accused them of supporting terrorist activities. Demonstrations broke out in the following weeks on account of their deteriorating health.

Clashes in Chilga woreda, Amhara region, between regional security forces of the Amhara state and local militias and members of the Kimant Democratic Party broke out on April 14, leaving 32 people dead and 38 injured. The attacks also led to the destruction of 25 houses as well as the killing of livestock.

On May 18, unidentified armed groups attacked federal state security forces in Sheko woreda, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region. The attack left nine people dead and three injured.

On June 21, general elections took place, resulting in electoral victory for the governing Prosperity Party, which won 410 of the 436 contested seats in the federal parliament. The Oromo Federalist Congress and OLF boycotted the election, citing the arrest and detentions of its members and supporters as the reason for this measure.

On July 28, regional state defense forces launched an attack on local militias and rebels connected to the Gumuz People’s Democratic Movement (GDPM) in Sherkole woreda, Benishangul-Gumuz region, killing 100 people. In previous months, attacks by local militias had led to the escalation of violence in the region.

On September 8, ethnic Gumuz attacked state security forces and Chinese road construction workers leaving six people killed in Metekel Zone, Benishangul-Gumuz.

Federal and regional state security forces clashed with members of the Benishangul People’s Liberation Movement in Gemed Kebele, Benishangul-Gumuz, on November 11, killing 200 militiamen while rescuing 19 hostages. noh

ETHIOPIA – SUDAN

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1902**

Conflict parties: Ethiopia vs. Sudan  
 Conflict items: territory, resources

The violent crisis over resources and territory in the al-Fashqa triangle between Ethiopia and Sudan continued.

Sudan had been assigned the area in a 1902 treaty and henceforth considered it as their territory. Ethiopia had farmed on the land for decades and intended to keep control of the triangle. Violence continued and the border between the counties was closed several times throughout the year.

On January 13, an Ethiopian military aircraft entered the airspace above the al-Fashqa region and on January 14, the Sudanese Civil Aviation Authority set up a no-fly zone over the area. On February 4 and 5, an Ethiopian military unit attacked a unit of the Sudanese army in the al-Fashqa area. The Sudanese unit killed dozens of Ethiopian soldiers, while the Ethiopian unit killed one Sudanese soldier and injured three.

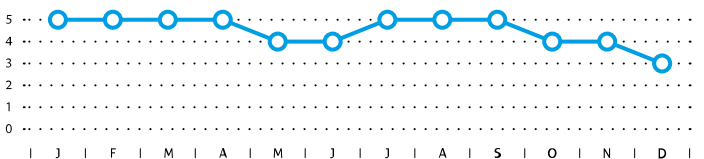
On April 2, Sudan temporarily closed the border after alleged attacks from Ethiopian gunmen on Sudanese security forces.

On July 24, Sudan closed the border again, after a Sudanese commander disappeared in the border area. On August 13, the Sudanese Armed Forces shot down an allegedly Ethiopian spy drone in the al-Fashqa area. On September 25, Sudan claimed that Ethiopia had attempted an incursion into the border area but Ethiopia denied this claim. jde

ETHIOPIA, ERITREA (TPLF / TIGRAY)

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

Conflict parties: Eritrea, Ethiopia vs. TPLF  
 Conflict items: system/ideology



The war over the orientation of the political system in Ethiopia between the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), including its armed forces the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF), on the one hand, and the Ethiopian as well as the Eritrean government, supported by Amhara militias and Afar regional forces, on the other, continued.

The TPLF-led Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) dominated the Ethiopian government coalition from 1991 to 2018 but, 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 and in 2019, Abiy merged all former EPRDF member parties into the Prosperity Party except for TPLF, which refused to participate. In 2020, despite multiple warnings by the federal government, the regional government of Tigray held elections with TPLF winning overwhelmingly. Later that year, Tigray recalled all delegates from the federal parliament. One day later, the federal government announced the cutting of all ties with regional Tigray leaders and stopped their funding. The conflict

# Ethiopia, Eritrea (TPLF / Tigray)



January



February



March



April



May



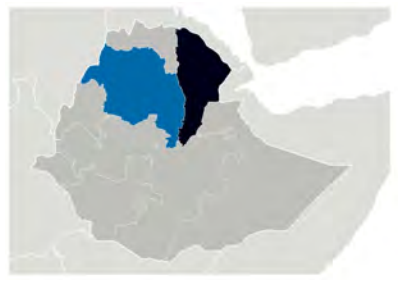
June



July



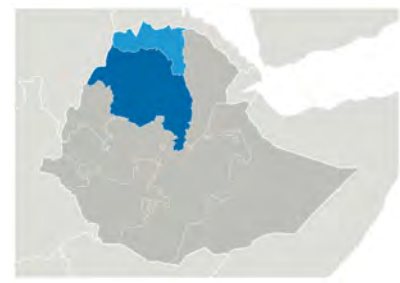
August



September



October



November



December

turned violent shortly after, with Eritrea joining the war on the side of the federal government in mid-November 2020. The federal government declared victory on 11/28/2020, but fighting did not subside.

On January 5 and 6, a battle between the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) as well as Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) and TDF as well as civilians left at least 600 people dead in the town of Debre Abay, Tigray region. On January 10, 150 civilians were killed by ENDF in Bora town.

On January 11, ENDF claimed to have killed 15 TPLF officials in Tigray, including former regional president Abay Weldu and the former deputy police commissioner of Tigray.

TPLF conducted an offensive against ENDF and EDF in the area of Kola-Temben, Tigray, from February 11 to 18, killing 502 people and injuring 150. Heavy weapons such as tanks and rockets were used in the fighting.

On the same day, ENDF-aligned forces killed 200 civilians in Cheli town, Tigray. Subsequently, EDF attacked local civilians and killed 80 people in Mayweini town, Tigray.

On April 12, Eritrean troops attacked civilians in Adwa town, Tigray, killing nine people and injuring 19 before allied ENDF forces stopped them.

On June 28, TDF forces brought the Tigrayan capital of Mekelle and most parts of Tigray back under TPLF control. On the same day, the Ethiopian federal government announced a unilateral ceasefire, which the TPLF rejected the following day as an airstrike by ENDF forces on June 22 had killed 64 people and injured 44 in the town of Togoga, Tigray.

The next day, TDF seized the towns of Korem and Alamata, Tigray. Following the TDF-invasion of Afar regional state, TDF and Afar regional forces clashed between July 17 and 19, leading to the death of at least 20 people. 54,000 people reportedly left the region due to the conflict.

From July 23 to July 25, the regional governments of Amhara and Afar called their citizens to arms to defend the regions against the advancing TDF forces. Similarly, the federal Ethiopian government called for the mobilization of all military capable citizens in Ethiopia on August 10, after the TDF continued its advance in the beginning of August, seizing strategically important towns across Amhara and Afar.

On August 5, TDF forces killed at least 200 people in an attack on refugee shelters in the town of Galicoma, Afar, and forced 76,000 to leave the region. On August 11, TDF formed a military alliance with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) agreeing to share intelligence [→ Ethiopia (OLF/Oromia)] to overthrow the federal government.

On September 1 and 2, TDF forces killed 120 civilians in Chenna town, Amhara. Also, from September 1 to September 15, over 40 battles were reported with at least 400 deaths on both sides along the front line in Amhara and Afar. The TDF claimed to have killed 3,073 Ethiopian soldiers and injured 4,473 in battles in Afar and Amhara between September 1 and September 6. In the same time period, the ENDF claimed to have killed 5,600 TDF and injured 2,300 in multiple battles.

On October 7 and 8, ENDF-airstrikes on TDF positions in Wergessa and Wegel Tena towns, Amhara, were reported. From October 11 onwards, the ENDF started a counter-offensive with heavy weaponry against the TDF in Amhara. From October 13 to 18, shelling by TDF forces on Zarima, North Gondar Zone, and Ambassel town, North Wello Zone, both located in Afar, left at least seven people dead and 15 injured. Following this incident, from October 18 to 22, ENDF airstrikes on TDF positions killed nine and injured 50. Another airstrike on October 28 killed ten and injured 24 in Mekelle. An electrical substation in the capital was destroyed.

In November, ENDF forces regained control over strategically important territory after TDF forces marched towards the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa at the beginning of the month, leading to a declaration of emergency by the Federal Government. After ENDF forces regained control over multiple towns in December, the TDF announced to withdraw their troops out of Amhara and Afar to allow humanitarian assistance to access while calling for a ceasefire on December 20. However, airstrikes by ENDF on Mekelle were conducted from December 19 to 24, killing 28 and injuring 80.

Important political events included the acknowledgement of previous war atrocities in Tigray by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on March 23, and the classification of TPLF as a terrorist organization in May. [noh](#)

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## GAMBIA (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2016**

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Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: national power

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The violent crisis over national power between various opposition groups and the government of President Adama Barrow continued.

In 2020, Barrow had refused to step down as initially pledged in 2016, which was heavily criticized by various political parties, among them the Three Years Jotna movement. This year, the government and opposition parties rather focused on the run-up to the presidential elections at the end of the year. On September 2, Barrow's National People's Party (NPP) and the party of former president Yahya Jammeh, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), announced their coalition. In reaction to this, parts of the APRC objecting to the coalition broke away and formed the "No Alliance Movement".

During the year, supporters of the government and opposition parties as well as opposition members and government security forces repeatedly clashed. For example, on July 3, residents threw stones at a delegation of five United Democratic Party (UDP) officials who attempted to enter the village of Kanilai, Western region. One party official was injured in this incident. In addition, several members of the oppositional No Alliance Movement clashed with security forces at an allegedly unauthorized assembly in the capital of Banjul on October 25. Security forces used tear gas and allegedly injured one person. Furthermore, they arrested a prominent leader of the No Alliance Movement.

Presidential elections were held on December 4, resulting in the re-election of Barrow. Various opposition parties, especially the UDP, contested the results. Immediately after the elections, thousands of supporters of the UDP and the Gambia Democratic Congress party took to the streets in Banjul and clashed with police forces, who used tear gas, leaving several protesters injured. On December 14, the UDP filed a petition at the Supreme Court to annul the presidential election due to alleged corrupt practices by Barrow and his NPP. [hil](#)

GUINEA (OPPOSITION)

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

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

The violent crisis over national power between various opposition groups and the government of President Alpha Condé and his Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) party continued. This year, the conflict was marked by a military coup d'état. After the re-election of Condé on 10/18/2020, the National Front for Constitutional Defense (FNDC) called for demonstrations in early 2021. On January 14, opposition supporters blocked roads in several cities and threw stones at security forces. The police used tear gas and live ammunition to disperse the crowds, killing one person in the capital Conakry and another in the city of Labé, Fouta Djallon region. Further clashes between protesting gold miners and security forces occurred in the Kankan region, in the city of Kouroussa, on April 17, reportedly leaving two people dead. A Covid-19 related ban on collective Ramadan prayers sparked violent protests between May 3 and 6 in the cities of Siguiri, Kankan, and Kérouané, Kankan region, with opposition supporters burning tires and storming administrative buildings. Security forces reportedly killed one protester in Kérouané overnight between May 5 and 6.

While the intensity of the clashes between the opposition and security forces decreased in the first half of the year, Condé and his government continued to arrest opposition figures. In January, four imprisoned FNDC supporters died in custody. Amnesty International among others called for an investigation into the deaths of the opposition members, the alleged bad conditions in prisons, and the supposed political repression in Guinea.

On September 5, special forces captured Condé in Conakry's government district, after clashes that reportedly left at least ten dead. In the following hours, hundreds of opposition supporters gathered in Conakry's suburbs and in the city of Labé to celebrate Condé's ouster, particularly in strongholds of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea opposition party. Coup leader Mamady Doumbouya on the same day declared the government's dissolution and the suspension of the constitution, announcing the military junta National Rally and Development Committee (CNRD) to be in charge of the government.

The coup drew widespread international condemnation. Notably, on September 8, ECOWAS suspended Guinea's membership and demanded a return to the constitutional order and the immediate release of Condé. The AU followed this decision and suspended Guinea on September 10. On September 16, ECOWAS imposed sanctions on CNRD members and called for presidential and legislative elections within six months. Condé supporters staged several violent protests, beginning in September. For instance, on December 11, security forces used tear gas and arrested dozens of RPG supporters in Conakry. pad

KENYA (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

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

Conflict parties: Borana vs. Degodia vs. Pokot vs. Turkana vs. Uasin Gishu vs. Siria vs. Masaai vs. Samburu vs. Kikuyu  
 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. Over the course of the year, at least 36 people were killed in the conflict.

A gunfight over a border dispute between Borana and Degodia on January 1, left six people dead. In December, violence rekindled, resulting in a clash that lasted for at least two weeks at the border between Wajir and Marsabit Counties, killing at least eleven and leaving at least 300 families displaced. Hundreds of livestock were stolen during the incident.

On January 15, ten people were killed in a clash between Pokot and Turkana groups in Kapedo town, Baringo County. At least 1,500 families were displaced. Community water points were also vandalized during the clash. Subsequently, the government introduced a curfew to limit the movement of people.

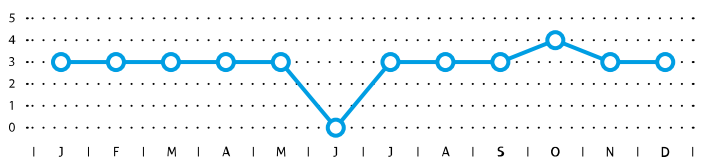
On July 27, violence erupted between youths of the Maasai sub-groups Uasin Gishu and Siria, as members of one group attempted to prevent members of the other group from planting sugar cane in an area that borders the two sub-groups in Enoretet town, Narok County. One person died after being shot by an arrow.

In September, at least eight people were killed and six injured in clashes in Laikipia County between the pastoralist communities of Masaai, Pokot and Samburu, Kikuyu, and Tugen groups. lav

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 and Donso self-defense militias, on the one hand, the Fulani ethnic community, on the other hand, and Islamist groups continued.

## 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 (MAA), the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA), and the Islamist groups Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM), in Northern Mali 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 the High Council for Unity of Azawad (HCUA) initially cooperated with various Islamist groups in their fight against the 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 other government-loyal armed groups founded the MAA.

Violence between different signatory groups of the 2015 Bamako Agreement decreased significantly following last year's January peace agreement between the CMA and MAA, and remained low throughout this year. While several violent encounters between the groups were still reported this year, links to the conflict remain unclear. However, on April 13, unknown militants shot dead a high ranking CMA leader outside his residence in the capital Bamako. Different regional and international sources connected the killing to the inter-militant conflict between the signatory groups of the Bamako agreement and described it as a setback for current peace processes. Furthermore, between December 5 and 6, seven HCUA members were killed by unknown perpetrators in the village of Intahaka, Gao region.

Peace efforts between the Bamako Agreement signatories continued. For instance, between July 3 and 5, rivaling CMA and MAA coalition groups met in the town of Kidal, eponymous region, and agreed to accelerate the agreement's implementation to unify efforts to protect the northern regions' populations.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths in clashes between Islamist groups, mainly ISGS, ISWAP and JNIM, and other militant groups, such as GATIA, MSA, and CMA, increased this year. For instance, on March 4, ISWAP militants ambushed a MSA convoy in the village of Inkalafane, Ménaka region, killing at least 19 MSA militants and wounding others. MSA claimed to have killed several dozen ISWAP fighters in the clash. On June 3, ISWAP militants ambushed a GATIA patrol, killing at least eleven people, and seizing rifles and motorcycles.

pad

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

After three internationally acclaimed peace agreements between the Fulani and Dogon communities that were signed on January 12, 22, and 24 for the Koro commune, Mopti region, and with the mediative help of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, fighting between the two communities largely stopped. However, over the course of this year, inter-communal fighting between Bambara, Fulani, and allegedly supporting Islamist groups was still responsible for at least 341 confirmed deaths in at least 32 confirmed violent confrontations mainly in the Mopti and Ségou regions. Furthermore, approx. 70,000 persons were internally displaced. Ethnic Bambara Donso self-defense militias and Fulani continued to clash in Ségou. For instance, on May 27, Donso militias attacked Fulani hamlets near the village of Bale and killed at least eleven people while injuring several. On August 9, Donso militias abducted and killed two Fulani youths and pillaged homes in Wuro Diamheri village.

Throughout the year, several extrajudicial killings, often carried out by Malian Armed Forces (MAFa) with the support of Dozo, Donso, and Dan Na Ambassagou militias, occurred against Fulani. For example, on January 8 and 12, MAFa killed eight Fulani in two villages of the Douentza commune, Mopti. On October 5, MAFa reportedly arrested dozens of Fulani at the weekly market in the town of Sofara, Mopti, and killed at least three. In a similar incident, on October 25, MAFa killed eight Fulani in the village of Ndola, Ségou. The MAFa denied both extrajudicial killings, however, conceded large arrests and described the incidents as operations against terrorists. On December 31, MAFa allegedly killed between 18 and 31 Fulani in the village of Boudjiguire, Koulikoro region.

Attacks by Islamist groups also continued, targeting mainly Bambara and Dogon villages, often in alleged collaboration with Fulani militants, although a temporary ceasefire agreement had been reached between Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM) militants and Donso self-defense militias on March 15 in Ségou. Throughout the year, JNIM reportedly blocked several communes in Mopti in attempts to negotiate ceasefires with the condition of disarmament of several self-defense militias. On August 8, Islamic State of the Greater Sahara (ISGS) militants raided several villages in the Ansongo commune, Gao region, killing at least 51 people, mostly Bambara and Dogon. On October 6, Donso militias clashed with JNIM militants in the Niono commune, Ségou, leaving at least 28 dead. Several hundred JNIM militants clashed with Donso militias in Mopti's Djénne commune on October 20, leaving at least 50 Donso militia members dead and 80 wounded. On December 3, JNIM militants allegedly ambushed a communal Bambara and Dogon bus near the village of Songho, Mopti, reportedly killing 32 people. 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. In 2020, a transitional government under then-interim President Bah N'daw and then-Prime Minister Moctar Ouane had been formed, following a coup d'état on 08/18/2020.

Disagreements between the June 5 Movement - Rally of the Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP) and the government of Ouane as well as social-economic tensions were visible at the beginning of this year. On January 21, hundreds of members of the Collective for the Defense of the Republic civil society group and M5-RFP demonstrated in the capital Bamako, demanding the release of detained activists. On April 12, hundreds of youths protested in the town of Tombouctou, eponymous region, against irregularities in the selection process of the military, police, and gendarmerie. In addition, hundreds of residents of several municipalities in Mopti, Ségou, Tombouctou, Koulikoro, and Kayes regions took to the streets between April 29 and May 23 to protest against the administrative reorganization of parts of Mali, a process which was part of the Algiers Accords. On May 3, demonstrations in the town of Markala, Ségou region, turned violent when a large number of demonstrators clashed with security forces, who used tear gas and blank cartridges to disperse the crowd. Two demonstrators and one police officer were injured.

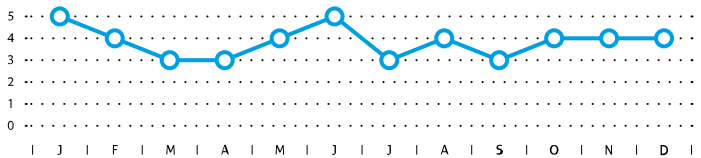
After a meeting between leaders of M5-RFP and N'daw on May 7, N'daw dissolved the government of Ouane and instructed him to form a new government on May 14. The new government was announced on May 24. On the same day, the Malian Armed Forces (MAFa) staged a coup d'état. Shortly after, the MAFa arrested N'daw and Ouane; both announced their resignation on May 25 and were subsequently released by the MAFa. The MAFa announced on May 28 that Assimi Goïta, who had been the leader of the 09/07/2020 coup d'état, would be the new interim president. On May 25, residents took to the street in Bamako, denouncing the coup d'état. In reaction, on May 28 and June 4, multiple demonstrations were staged in support of the new leaders and in celebration of the one-year anniversary of the M5-RFP. On June 11, the new government was announced, while various non-violent demonstrations continued to take place calling for a prolongation of the transition led by President Goïta in the regions of Bamako and Gao, and in support of the junta-led transition in the Koulikoro region.

The new government under Goïta and Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maïga was supported by the M5-RFP and various political parties, whereas a new alliance between the political parties Alliance for Democracy in Mali - African Party for Solidarity and Justice (ADEMA-PASJ) and Party for National Rebirth (PARENA) reminded the government to pursue a consensual and peaceful transition. hi

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

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

Conflict parties: Al-Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine, Ansaroul Islam, AQIM, ISGS, JNIM, Macina Liberation Front vs. Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, USA  
 Conflict items: international power



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 Liberation Front, and its regional affiliate Ansaroul Islam, and various other Islamist militant groups, especially the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), on the one hand, and Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger (G5 Sahel), and France, as well as other countries and governments, on the other hand, continued.

International, regional, and national efforts to combat Islamist militants in the Sahel zone continued. Among international efforts to intervene in the region were MINUSMA, French forces under Operation Barkhane, and European as well as US military contingents. The G5 Sahel Force, pooling military, financial, and logistical resources of their members to combat jihadist militant groups were accompanied by national and cross-border interventions. In addition, communal defense groups organized by affected communities and often supported by respective governments in the fight against Islamist militants continued to grow in size and strength this year [→ Burkina Faso (inter-communal rivalry); Mali (inter-communal rivalry / central Mali)].

Since January, several governments continued to engage in debates over whether to negotiate with jihadists to curb violence in the region. At the same time, after France had already announced reductions of the size of its deployed forces last year, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the end of Operation Barkhane on June 10 and the closing of several military bases in Mali for 2022. Macron urged the AU and ECOWAS to take more regional responsibility and announced last year's initiated Task Force Takuba. Supported by eleven EU member states, Task Force Takuba deploys several hundred special forces in the region to take charge of the European fight against Islamist influence in the region. This came after a second coup d'état in Mali within two years and repeated civilian protests against international military interventions, especially in Mali [→ Mali (opposition)].

Throughout the affected countries, JNIM and ISGS continued to be the Islamist groups involved in most violent attacks. While many ISGS factions joined forces with the Islamic State's West Africa Province last year [→ Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP)], ISGS reportedly operated independently this year. This year, jihadist fighting continued to target large amounts of civilians, ethnic self-defense militias, and government security forces especially in Mali's Mopti region and Burkina Faso's Sahel region. While violence drastically increased

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

in Niger's Tillabéri Department. Incidents remained low in Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Tunisia, and Libya. Several reports described a growing south-trend of jihadist attacks in the conflict region, now also affecting Benin, Togo, and Senegal. Over the course of the year, at least 2,500 deaths and over 100,000 IDPs were reported for the conflict.

### Mali

French Operation Barkhane-led airstrikes continued in Mali. Most notably, on September 16, Macron announced the death of ISGS leader Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui, who was reportedly killed in mid-August in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. While more than 100 jihadist militants were killed by French-led drone strikes throughout the year, Operation Barkhane forces were accused of extrajudicial civilian killings on several occasions. For example, MINUSMA investigations concluded that the Operation killed 19 civilians near the village of Bounti, Mopti region, on March 30. Several more incidents sparked protests against French military presence in the capital Bamako.

After the May 24 coup d'état and France's announcement to end Operation Barkhane in 2022, civil society actors immediately expressed concern, citing risk of jihadist takeover of key towns in the Mopti region, which caused the UNSC to increase MINUSMA's authorized troop strength by 2,069 on July 15. In September, Malian authorities reportedly started negotiating a deal with the Russian private military company Wagner Group to hire at least 1,000 private military contractors in the fight against jihadist violence. Although thousands marched in support of the deal in Bamako on September 22, 14 EU member states and Canada jointly condemned the potential partnership, citing human rights abuses and a direct connection to the Russian Ministry of Defense. JNIM and ISGS attacks remained high this year, the most fatal reported on August 8 when ISGS militants simultaneously raided several villages in the Ansongo district, Gao region, killing at least 51 civilians.

### Burkina Faso

Jihadist presence also continued in Burkina Faso this year. Although, several Operation Barkhane and G5 Sahel counterinsurgency missions were reported as successful, security forces, ethnic communities, and especially the Volunteers of the Defense of the Homeland (VDP) were the target of Islamist killings. Most notably, between June 4 and 5 in the village of Solhan, Sahel region, Islamist militants killed over 160 people and displaced over 7,000.

Although the national intelligence agency was accused of negotiating with JNIM militants in March, the government announced on June 1 that it would not be open for discussion with ISGS and JNIM.

Amid rising public discontent over government failure to stem Islamist violence, hundreds took to streets in the capital Ouagadougou on November 16, calling for President Kaboré to resign [→ Burkina Faso (opposition)].

### Niger

Especially in the first half of the year, several Islamist attacks were recorded that resulted in Niger reporting the highest death toll related to Islamist killings for many years. In the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions, ISGS gained new influence throughout the year. For example, on January 2, when ISGS militants stormed the villages Tchoma Bangou and Zerma

Dare, Tillabéri, killing over 100 villagers and wounding at least 26 more. On March 21, suspected ISGS militants killed at least 141 civilians in the villages of Bakorat and Wistane, Tahoua. According to UNOCHA, this year's increased level of violence led to tens of thousand IDPs and 600,000 being food insecure in Tillabéri until October alone.

Between August 31 and September 1, the G5 Sahel member states met in the capital Niamey, and pledged to develop more multilateral and bilateral operations in the tri-border area. This led to a second phase of the Taanli operation in December, in which joint forces of Niger and Burkina Faso already claimed to have killed around 100 jihadists in Tillabéri in June.

### Tunisia

The Tunisian military continued its campaign against Islamist groups throughout this year. On April 2, units of the National Guard and the military killed a leading figure of Jund al-Khalifa, affiliated with the so-called Islamic State (IS), near Mount Mghila, Governorate of Kasserine. On May 17, a military detachment killed five suspected jihadists of Katibat Okba Ibn Nafaa, an Islamist organisation affiliated with AQIM, during an air and ground operation near Mount Chaambi, Kasserine Governorate. On February 3, Islamist militants carried out two attacks near Mount Mghila, as they detonated three separate explosives, killing three soldiers, and beheaded an alleged spy. IS claimed the attack.

### Côte d'Ivoire

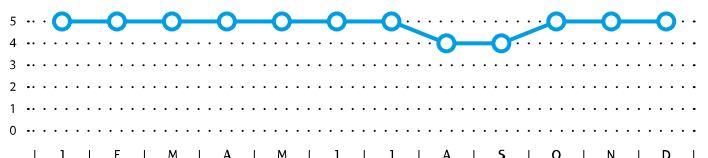
Côte d'Ivoire also saw an increase in Islamist activity, after the French foreign intelligence agency had warned the government on February 1 about Sahel-based jihadist groups attempting to spread to and target the country. As a response, on February 3 the army announced the country's security forces would be put on high alert and continued to increase military presence in the northern areas throughout the year. However, several violent clashes were reported this year, especially between different suspected jihadist groups and security forces. For example, between March 28 and 29, suspected jihadists attacked an army post near the town of Kafolo, Savanes region, and killed at least three members of the military. After similar attacks throughout the year, the government highlighted the crisis' "foreign character" on December 6, claiming the Islamists as Fulanis from neighboring Burkina Faso. pad

## 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 sixth 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 2015 after pledging allegiance to the so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Iraq, Syria et al. (IS)]. The group was mainly active in the Lake Chad Basin. The second group, formerly known as the so-called Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), became an IS affiliate in 2016 and was assigned to ISWAP by an official IS media outlet in 2019. The group was mainly active in the tri-border region of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. While both factions operated under the name ISWAP, they had independent command structures and did not conduct attacks together.

ISWAP was opposed to secular and democratic political systems as well as nation-states created by former colonial powers, seeking 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, had expanded the mandate of the existing Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2012 in order to fight Boko Haram and ISWAP, respectively. The G5 Sahel countries Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger launched the G5 Sahel Joint Force in 2017 to fight jihadist groups in the central Sahel.

Throughout the year, the MNJTF, 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, the UN had established the Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission, MINUSMA, to decrease violence in the region.

Following the coup d'état in Mali [→ Mali (opposition)] on May 24, French President Emmanuel Macron declared on June 10 that France planned to end Operation Barkhane and to withdraw most of the 4,800 deployed soldiers. However, France planned to remain part of Task Force Tabuka, a deployment of approx. 900 special forces comprising soldiers from ten EU countries, established in 2020.

#### Lake Chad Basin

In 2016, ISWAP split into two factions due to internal disagreements. Subsequently, Musab al-Barnawi, son of Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf, was proclaimed the new leader of ISWAP by IS. Following the split, the group led by al-Barnawi was acknowledged by IS. In 2020, sporadic clashes between ISWAP and JAS had increased [→ Nigeria (ISWAP JAS)]. In May, hundreds of ISWAP militants invaded the JAS stronghold in the Sambisa Forest, leading to the death of JAS leader Abubakar Shekau. IS media outlets stated that the assassination of Shekau was ordered by IS leadership. Reportedly, between 100 to 300 IS militants from Libya were sent to Nigeria to support this operation. In May, just days before the attack in Sambisa Forest, al-Barnawi was reinstated as ISWAP leader, following two changes in the leadership of ISWAP in 2020. In October, the Nigerian army confirmed the death of al-Barnawi. He was reportedly killed in a clash between JAS and ISWAP in August.

On October 21, the Nigerian government claimed to have killed Malam Bako, who had succeeded al-Barnawi. No new leader had been proclaimed by the end of the year. Bako's

death was assessed not to have had a significant impact on the group, given its highly formalized command structure.

This year, the conflict accounted for at least 2,500 deaths in the Lake Chad Basin. As a consequence of the ongoing violence in the region, approx. two million people have been displaced since the beginning of the conflict.

Throughout the year, ISWAP regularly conducted attacks in Borno State, Yobe State, and to a lesser extent in Adamawa State, Nigeria. Regions adjacent to Lake Chad, namely Cameroon's Far North Region, Niger's Diffa Department, and Chad's Lac Region, were also targeted by ISWAP. However, attacks in Niger and Cameroon increased compared to last year.

This year, approx. 19 percent of Borno State was totally or mainly inaccessible to state and humanitarian actors since ISWAP had consolidated its territorial control following the strategic withdrawal of the Nigerian military in 2019.

Since 2019, ISWAP has established strongholds in northern Borno State, bordering Niger and Chad, as well as on islands of Lake Chad, imposing taxation on the local population and controlling cross-border trade, thus generating financial income. To further enhance its recruitment capabilities, ISWAP held religious lectures, provided basic healthcare, and launched an online radio channel broadcasting in local languages. Throughout the year, ISWAP frequently attacked military bases and humanitarian facilities. Following Shekau's death, JAS activities decreased. Subsequently, ISWAP consolidated its power in regions formerly controlled by JAS, namely the Sambisa Forest and the border region of Borno State and Cameroon's Far North Region. This year, ISWAP continued to move members to states in the northwest of Nigeria, namely Zamfara State, Kaduna State and Niger State in order to establish strongholds in the region and create a land connection to ISWAP-GS fighters in the Sahel. In the northwest, ISWAP sought to establish alliances with bandit groups which were active in the region [→ Nigeria (inter-communal rivalry)]. While reports stated a presence of the group in the region, no attacks have been claimed by the group in the northwest.

As in previous years, ISWAP often erected roadblocks, looted civilian transport, and abducted aid workers, state employees, and Christian civilians. This also allowed ISWAP to cut off parts of Borno State, threatening supplies to the state's capital Maiduguri. The Damaturu-Maiduguri highway, crossing an area with a strong ISWAP presence, was frequently attacked. Furthermore, ISWAP aimed to prevent the expansion of infrastructure in this area by destroying construction machinery, power lines, and cell phone towers during attacks. For instance, on September 17, ISWAP destroyed four high tension towers near Maiduguri, cutting off the city's power.

This year, ISWAP continued to target aid workers. For instance, on April 13, large numbers of heavily armed ISWAP militants attacked Damasak city, Borno State. After dislodging the security forces, militants conducted house-to-house searches for aid workers and systematically destroyed medical facilities and NGO offices. Subsequently, the UN announced a temporary suspension operations in the affected regions, stating that this would leave over 80,000 people without humanitarian assistance. Médecins Sans Frontières permanently ended its presence in Pulka and Gwoza, Borno State, in August.

Strategically destroying infrastructure, disrupting transport, and driving out humanitarian organizations worsened the humanitarian situation in large parts of Borno State and made the population reliant on support provided by ISWAP, thereby suppressing defiance from the population.

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

While attacks on humanitarian actors and civilian installations were frequent, the main target of ISWAP attacks remained military bases and personnel. Ambushes on military convoys and attacks on military bases ranged from attacks with groups of ten militants armed with assault rifles and RPGs to attacks with over 100 militants, supported by multiple pick-up 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. During raids on military installations, ISWAP often seized large amounts of military hardware, ranging from ammunition to armored vehicles. Captured weapons were reportedly ISWAP's biggest source of weaponry used during subsequent attacks. For instance, on November 19, ISWAP attacked the military base in Damboa, Borno State, using ten gun trucks and an armored personnel carrier. Captured military hardware, like mortars and rockets, was also used to attack military bases and towns. In December, Maiduguri was targeted with Grad rockets twice. For instance, on December 23, multiple rockets impacted close to Maiduguri Airport, during a visit of Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari.

This year, ISWAP used up-armored SVBIEDs in at least three instances while attacking military bases and convoys. On March 9, ISWAP attacked a military convoy near Wulgo village, Borno State, during the attack two SVBIEDs engaged the convoy, detonating their explosives and killing up to 30 soldiers. SVBIED designs used by ISWAP were similar to those used by IS in Syria and Iraq, indicating knowledge transfer between IS affiliates.

Between April and June, ISWAP increased its attacks in the border region of Yobe State and Niger targeting military bases. On April 23, ISWAP invaded Geidam LGA, Yobe State, with over 20 trucks fitted with heavy machine guns and dispersed the security forces, subsequently controlling the city for five days. Approx. 130,000 were displaced.

JAS militants based in Borno's border region to Cameroon joined ISWAP following Shekau's death. Since ISWAP mostly refrained from indiscriminately killing civilians, this contributed to a reduction in attacks against civilians in this area. Simultaneously, ISWAP attacks against military targets increased in the respective region. For instance, on July 24, at least 100 militants with six gun trucks attacked the MNJTF base in Sagmé town, Far North Region, Cameroon, resulting in eight soldiers and at least 20 militants killed.

To combat ISWAP camps and strongholds, the Nigerian military and its allies deployed ground forces. On January 3, the military launched Operation Tura Takai Bango directed at preventing ISWAP from controlling the Damaturu-Maiduguri highway. The operation continued for several months with a large contingent of troops deployed to the region of Alagarno Forest, the border region between Yobe State and Borno State.

Throughout the operation, ISWAP militants frequently attacked troops resulting in approx. 200 fatalities. As in previous years, military activities by ground forces subsided, following the decreased accessibility of terrain for military vehicles amid the rainy season from May to October. In addition, the military heavily relied on airstrikes to attack ISWAP camps and repel attacks.

### SAHEL

In 2015, ISGS had emerged from a split of the Jihadist group al-Mourabitoun. Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui and militants loyal to him pledged allegiance to IS. In September 2016, ISGS conducted its first attacks in Burkina Faso and

Niger. Following the attacks, ISGS featured in a video by an IS media outlet and was officially recognized by IS. In March 2019, an IS media outlet in a report referred to ISGS as ISWAP, thus incorporating them into ISWAP. On August 17, al-Sahraoui was killed in a drone strike by French forces. His successor has not yet been appointed.

This year, the conflict between ISWAP-GS and the governments of Chad, Mali, Niger, and France as well as their international supporters accounted for approx. 1,300 deaths. Throughout the year, ISWAP-GS conducted attacks in the tri-border region of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. 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 in order to support its operations. ISWAP-GS attacks against the local population allegedly served the purpose of stoking tensions between various local communities. Persistent insecurity in the region triggered the formation of local self-defense militias by members of affected communities. ISWAP-GS financed itself through the extortion of taxes in Niger, the control of artisanal gold mines in Burkina Faso as well as through illicit trade, abduction, and the control of smuggling routes.

In March 2019, ISWAP-GS and the al-Qaeda affiliate Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM) had stopped their previous cooperation and started clashing. In the following years, fighting between the groups as well as military operations forced ISWAP-GS out of regions in Mali and Burkina Faso towards Niger. This year, the group's main area of operations was Niger's Tillaberi and Tilla Departments, Sahel region of Burkina Faso, and Mali's border regions with Niger and Burkina Faso, namely Menaka, Gao, and Mopti.

In contrast to ISWAP located in the Lake Chad basin, ISWAP-GS frequently conducted violent attacks against civilians, raiding villages and killing civilians. Throughout the year, approx. 900 civilians were killed in ISWAP-GS' operating area, with Niger accounting for approx. 550 fatalities, compared to approx. 200 in Burkina Faso and 150 in Mali.

As in previous years, ISWAP-GS attacks on villages were often carried out by large numbers of militants arriving on motorcycles armed with assault rifles and RPGs, torching houses, looting shops, and killing civilians.

On many occasions, the attacks were reprisals against communities that refused to pay extortion money or which established self-defense groups to resist demands by ISWAP-GS. For instance, on January 2, hundreds of ISWAP-GS fighters invaded the villages Tchouma Bangou and Zaroumadareye, Tillaberi Department, killing 105 civilians and displacing approx. 10,000.

On March 21, ISWAP-GS, allegedly supported by Fulani militias, attacked Bakorat, Tilla Departments, and neighboring villages, mainly populated by members of the Tuareg community, killing at least 137 people.

Throughout the year, ISWAP-GS continued to attack security forces and self-defense militias. In its area of operation, ISWAP-GS conducted approx. 50 attacks on security forces, resulting in at least 400 fatalities. In Burkina Faso, the group mostly targeted self-defense militias whereas in Niger the group focused on security forces.

Ambushes, in which up to 100 militants on motorcycles, armed with assault rifles and RPGs attacked security forces, accounted for the highest number of fatalities. For instance, on November 2, ISWAP-GS conducted an ambush on security forces near Adab-Dab, Tillaberi Department, killing 69 members of a self-defense militia in the subsequent clash.

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Compared to last year, attacks on ISWAP-GS decreased following the shift of the French-led coalition's focus on combating JNIM in late 2020. 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 movement.

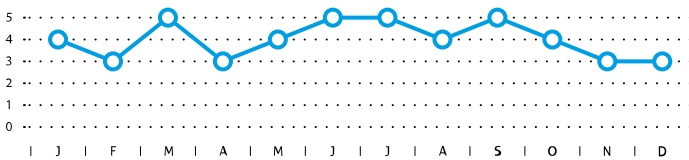
As in previous years, the governments combating ISWAP-GS conducted regular airstrikes against ISWAP-GS' camps and movements, deploying drones, fighter jets, and attack helicopters. For instance, on August 17, France conducted a drone strike in the Dangarous forest, Gao, killing al-Sahraoui, the leader of ISWAP-GS. nre

### MOZAMBIQUE (ASWJ)

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

Conflict parties: ASWJ vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology



The 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 continued.

Most of the recorded incidents occurred in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. However, ASWJ occasionally attacked civilians in the adjacent region of Mtwara, Tanzania. In addition, toward the end of the year, ASWJ attacked civilians in Niassa province, which marked its first attacks in Mozambique outside Cabo Delgado. Throughout the year, the war resulted in at least 701 fatalities and at least 67,648 people were internally displaced.

The government was increasingly supported by various actors. Rwanda, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the EU supported the government with military and training missions. For example, on November 3, the EU launched a multinational military training mission in the country. Moreover, the contract of the South African private military company Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), that has assisted the government since 2020, expired in April. In February, South Africa-based Paramount Group and Dubai-based Burnham Global were contracted by the government to provide consulting, equipment, and training.

Throughout the year, ASWJ attacked civilians in various districts across Cabo Delgado. For example, on January 7, in Olumboa village, Macomia district, ASWJ abducted 13 civilians and beheaded at least seven of them. On August 24, ASWJ beheaded ten civilians and injured another three in sub-district Mucojo, Macomia. In addition, various local militias, backed by the government, were formed by local communities to combat ASWJ. For example, between January 25 and 29, a local militia clashed with ASWJ in Panjele, Mocimboa da Praia district, during which 27 members of ASWJ and three members of the militia were killed. On June 19, ASWJ attacked the villages of Naunde and Novo Cabo Delgado, Macomia, killing at least seven civilians. While leaving the villages, a local militia attacked ASWJ, killing five and injuring three.

Between March 24 and April 5, ASWJ, on the one hand, and

the Mozambique Armed Defence Armed Forces (FADM) and DAG, on the other, clashed over the city of Palma, eponymous district. On March 24, at least 100 ASWJ militants entered the city from various sides and attacked civilians, food warehouses, police stations, and the local bank. At least 180 people sought refuge in a nearby hotel. While trying to prevent people from entering the hotel, ASWJ killed at least five. On March 25, ASWJ began shelling the hotel with mortars and attacking it with machine guns. Subsequently, DAG deployed six and FADM three helicopters, provided by Paramount Group, to protect people at the hotel. However, all helicopters had to withdraw due to fuel shortages. On March 26, DAG helicopters returned to evacuate people from the hotel. In addition, 180 people attempted to escape in 17 vehicles on the same day. Seven vehicles managed to escape, while ten were ambushed by the ASWJ, leaving at least 40 people dead. On April 5, FADM and DAG announced they had retaken the city. At least 40 civilians, 21 members of FADM and 41 members of ASWJ were killed. By July, at least 67,648 people were reported to have fled the city during the attack.

On July 9, at the request of the government, a contingent of 1,000 Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) was deployed to the country to combat ASWJ. Additionally, on August 9, SADC deployed the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) to support the government. SAMIM comprises 738 soldiers and 19 civilian experts from various East African countries. Both RDF and SAMIM clashed with ASWJ on several occasions. For example, on July 20, RDF clashed with ASWJ in Quionga village, Palma District, resulting in at least 30 ASWJ members dead. Three days later, on July 23, RDF attacked ASWJ, killing at least 26 members of ASWJ in an attack on Mandela village, Muidumbe district. Between August 1 and 8, FADM and RDF clashed with ASWJ over the city of Mocimboa da Praia, which had been taken by ASWJ in 2020 and was known informally as the capital of ASWJ. According to the government, at least 33 ASWJ members were killed. Between October 27 and 29, in a joint operation of RDF and SAMIM in Mocimboa da Praia district, at least 20 ASWJ members were killed.

Following advances by the government and its supporters, ASWJ crossed into neighboring Niassa province for the first time. For example, on November 25, ASWJ killed at least one police officer in Gomba village. Similarly, in Lichengue village, ASWJ burned down several houses and killed at least one civilian. 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 main opposition party Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), especially its splinter group the so-called RENAMO Military Junta, on the one hand, and the government under the ruling party Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), on the other, continued.

The government continued its program of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former RENAMO members throughout the year. In addition, members of the RENAMO Military Junta joined the DDR process. For example, Paulo Filipe Nguirande, chief of staff of the RENAMO Mili-

tary Junta, demobilized on February 12, in Goronga district, Sofala Province. Similarly, 43 members of the RENAMO Military Junta joined the DDR process in Manica Province. The DDR process for the entire Manica Province was completed on March 13, after another 817 former RENAMO members joined the process. Moreover, on July 2, a group of 36 former RENAMO members participated in training to join the Mozambique Armed Defense Forces (FADM). By November, more than half of the total 5,262 former RENAMO members participated in the DDR process.

Nevertheless, mainly due to the RENAMO Military Junta, violent clashes that mainly targeted civilians continued. For example, the RENAMO Military Junta attacked a convoy of vehicles on January 9, in Zove area, Sofala, killing one civilian. Similarly, on September 9, members of the RENAMO Military Junta killed one civilian in Chinapanimba village, Muanza district, Sofala. One month later, on October 11, FADM killed the leader of the RENAMO Military Junta, Mariano Nhongo, in the Gorongosa forest, Sofala. No activities of the RENAMO Military Junta were reported after Nhongo's death. Both RENAMO and FRELIMO urged RENAMO Military Junta members to join the DDR process. *vsc*

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## NIGER (OPPOSITION)

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

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Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: national power

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The violent crisis over national power between opposition parties on the one hand, and the government of Niger and the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS), on the other hand, continued.

After the general elections on 12/27/2020, a run-off was held in February. Mohamed Bazoum of the governing PNDS was elected and announced President on February 23. On the same day, opposition protests alleging fraud erupted in the capital Niamey and lasted almost three days. Two people were killed in the protests. Protesters vandalized and destroyed public and private property. In the aftermath of the protests, more than 470 persons, including opposition politicians and their supporters, were arrested.

On March 31, a few days before the scheduled inauguration of Bazoum a coup attempt by members of the Democratic and Republican Renewal (RDR) party was quickly deterred without affecting the planned transfer of power.

On November 27, further violent protests against the government to denounce the presence of foreign forces, mainly French, on Niger's territory erupted in the town of Téra, Tillabéri Department. Protesters blocked, attacked, and vandalized a convoy of the French army and seized equipment. The Nigerien security forces supported by the French army responded by using tear gas and firing bullets, which left two protesters dead and 18 injured. *frl*

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## NIGERIA (IJAW GROUPS / NIGER DELTA)

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

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Conflict parties: CNDA, Ijaw groups, NCNDE-A, NDA vs. government, International oil companies, SELF

Conflict items: autonomy, resources

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The violent crisis over resources and the autonomy of the Niger Delta between several Ijaw groups and militias, such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the Supreme Egbesu Liberation Fighters (SELF) and the National Coalition of Niger Delta Ex-Agitators (NCNDE-A), on the one hand, and the government and multinational oil companies, on the other, continued.

In total, at least 13 people were killed and three people injured over the course of the year.

On February 24, SELF released a video threatening to destroy the public infrastructure of the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja and Lagos State, claiming the Niger Delta region had been neglected and that the government's Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) had failed to deliver. The PAP had been introduced in 2009 and offered militants an unconditional pardon as well as cash payments. Additionally, the militants criticized the lack of basic infrastructure.

Similarly, on November 13, NCNDE-A protested a lack of transparency regarding the PAP and demanded a meeting with the interim coordinator of the Presidential Amnesty Office as well as the payment of alleged arrears, in Abuja.

On June 26, NDA expressed its disagreement over the share of oil wealth for local communities in a video, threatening to resume its attacks on oil facilities, which had previously been carried out in 2016.

On May 25, the president of the Ijaw Youth Council was abducted by unidentified armed people in Opokuma LGA, Bayelsa State. The assailants unsuccessfully demanded the president call off protests by Ijaw youths against the federal government in Bayelsa and Delta State. The protests followed the expiration of a 30-day ultimatum to constitute a substantive board of the Niger Delta Development commission (NDDC), issued by the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC).

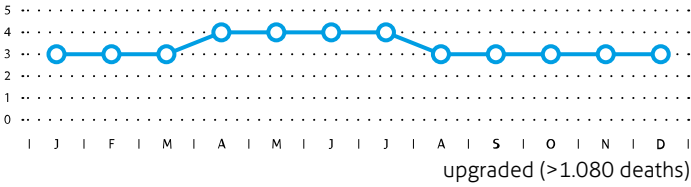
Throughout the year, isolated incidents of violence occurred. For instance, on August 26, the military attacked a commercial local transport boat near Bonny Island, Rivers State, using a helicopter, reportedly killing at least two. Following the attack, on August 28, the Ijaw People's Development Initiative released a statement demanding President Muhammadu Buhari to investigate the killing. Similarly, in an alleged attack on a passenger boat in Igbomoturu community, Bayelsa State, on October 29, security operatives working for a multinational oil company killed one person and left three injured. Two people reportedly remained missing.

As a result of a deadly attack on a military base by unidentified men on July 2, military troops imposed a blockade on Egbema Kingdom of Warri in North LGA, Delta State. Reportedly, at least 45,000 civilians were affected by this operation, leading to a suspension of food supplies. *chp*

**NIGERIA (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)**

Intensity: **5** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1960**

Conflict parties: farmers vs. pastoralists vs. bandits  
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The limited war over subnational predominance and re-sources between farmers, pastoralists, and so-called bandits, escalated to a war. The emergence of criminal gangs, consisting of predominantly Fulani pastoralists, referred to as bandits, played an increasingly important role in conflict dynamics. Their activities included raids on villages, cattle rustling, and kidnapping for ransom.

While the control over arable land and cattle were the original points of contention, political, environmental, ethnic, and religious issues between the predominantly Christian farmers of the Berom and Tiv peoples, on the one hand, and the mainly Muslim Fulani pastoralists, on the other, continued to overlay the conflict dynamics.

In total, more than 3,400 fatalities were reported. The most affected states were Kaduna State, Niger State, Zamfara State, and Katsina State.

In January, the death toll came to more than 233 and more than 3,000 people were internally displaced. For instance, on January 2, at least 150 bandits killed 19 people, injured at least nine, and destroyed several houses, shops, and motorcycles, in Kaya municipality, Kaduna State.

Violence continued on February 1, when bandits attacked four villages in Shiroro LGA, Niger State. Invading the villages on motorcycles, 300 bandits killed at least 27 people and injured 20. On February 20, 50 bandits stormed Gurmana village, Niger State, killing 15 residents and abducting several others. Three days later, bandits killed another 15 residents in an attack on Manta village, Niger State.

On March 11, bandits attacked six communities in Maradun and Tsafe LGA, Zamfara State, and killed 30 residents. On March 24, bandits clashed with Nigerian security forces and vigilantes, killing one soldier and 20 vigilantes, in Kotongoro village, Niger State. Furthermore, on March 29, Fulani pastoralists attacked four communities in Ishielu LGA, Ebonyi State, killing 20 residents and destroying several houses and cars.

On April 19, bandits attacked four villages in Maradun and Bakura LGA, Zamfara State, killing ten people. In the course of the attack, police forces engaged in a gunfight, leaving 30 bandits dead. Two days later, bandits attacked Magami village, Zamfara State, and killed 60 residents. On April 24, suspected Fulani pastoralists attacked Ajimaka village, Nasarawa

State, resulting in at least nine farmers killed as well as several injured.

On May 22, Fulani pastoralists attacked four villages in Katsina-Ala LGA, Benue State, and killed at least 100 people, burned down houses, and destroyed farms. Subsequently, hundreds of people were internally displaced. In another attack on Shikaan Mbagena Kpaleve community, Benue State,

on May 27, Fulani pastoralists killed at least 36 residents and injured several others. Fulani pastoralists killed another 52 people in attacks on three villages in Ebonyi LGA, Ebonyi State, on May 30. Several people were injured.

In June, bandits attacked villages on two occasions. On June 4, they attacked eight villages in Danko Wasagu LGA, Kebbi State, resulting in 88 fatalities. Bandits killed another 93 residents in an attack on Kadawa village, Kano State, on June 6.

In the first half of the year, at least 2,153 people were killed and at least 86,000 internally displaced.

From July to December, violent attacks led to at least 1,330 fatalities and at least 30,000 IDPs. For instance, on July 8, approx. 100 bandits attacked five communities in Maradun LGA, Zamfara State, killing 49 residents, injuring several people, and burning houses and food stores. In a similar incident, Fulani pastoralists attacked Magamiya community village, Kaduna State, on July 12. They killed at least 33 people, injured seven, and burned at least 338 houses, several cars and vehicles, and seven churches. On August 2, bandits invaded the communities of Ungwan Magaji, Kigam, Kisicho, and Kikoba, Kaduna State, killing 25 residents, injuring three, and destroying 68 farms as well as 63 huts. On August 24, suspected Fulani pastoralists stormed Yelwa Zangam community, Plateau State, killing at least 36 residents and destroying several buildings.

On September 26, a bandit attack in Madamai village, Kaduna State, resulted in the death of 37 residents. The bandits injured eight more and burned down at least 20 houses. Two days later, on September 28, bandits killed 30 people and injured several more in another attack in Sarkin Pawa community, Niger State.

The most fatal incident in October occurred in Goronyo village, Sokoto State, when approx. 150 bandits attacked the Goronyo market on October 16, killing at least 49 residents and leaving 16 injured. A few weeks later, on November 14, bandits again attacked Goronyo LGA as well as several villages in Illela LGA, Sokoto State, with the death toll amounting to 43.

On December 1, Fulani pastoralists clashed with farmers in Kirikasamma LGA, Jigawa State, left three people dead and several injured.

In an attack from December 17 to 19, unknown gunmen suspected to be Fulani pastoralists, killed 45 Christian farmers in Lafia, Obi, and Awe LGA, Nasarawa State. 27 residents were injured and at least 5,000 were displaced. Reportedly, the attack was a reprisal, following the alleged killing of one Fulani pastoralist by Christian farmers in Obi, on December 17. cba

**NIGERIA (ISLAMIC MOVEMENT)**

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

Conflict parties: IMN vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) and the government continued. Aiming to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria, the IMN, mainly based in northern Nigeria, refute the authority of the Nigerian government.

In 2019, the IMN was outlawed by the government and classified as a terrorist organization.

Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, IMN's founder and leader, was arrested

in 2015 following a series of violent protests. El-Zakzaky's detention sparked ongoing protests demanding his immediate release. This year, protests were held in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja and Lagos city, eponymous state. According to a police statement, IMN protesters, on January 25, allegedly destroyed public property and further attacked bystanders with stones in Abuja. Police forces wounded one protester and arrested six.

The following day, protests re-erupted in Abuja. The protest turned violent when police forces used tear gas and fired gunshots to disperse the protesters, killing one, while another protester was injured and allegedly tortured to death after being taken into custody. On March 29, IMN members attacked public property with stones. Police shot dead one protester during the riot. On May 7, IMN protesters purportedly stabbed one police officer to death. IMN rejected the allegation. According to IMN, one member of the group was abducted by police forces in Abuja and remained missing. On June 12, IMN affiliates joined peaceful protests against the current Nigerian government in the cities of Abuja and Lagos. Protesters criticized police brutality and the worsening security situation. IMN again demanded El-Zakzaky's unconditional release. Police used tear gas to disperse the demonstration.

On July 28, El-Zakzaky and his wife were acquitted of the charges pressed by the government and released from detention after six years. Later in the year, El-Zakzaky and his wife pressed charges against the government. Legal charges included the violation of their right to freedom of movement and right to a fair trial. Further, they claimed that the seizure of their passports by authorities was illegal and unconstitutional. The hearing was scheduled for early 2022. In August and September, IMN-affiliated religious gatherings were interrupted twice by police. On August 19, at least two IMN members were shot dead by police forces and 15 were injured in Sokoto, eponymous state. Police rejected the claims. On September 28, security forces allegedly opened fire and killed eight IMN members in Abuja. Police denied the accusations and claimed to have intervened to ensure law and order. Police forces seized petrol bombs and bags of stones among the protesters. Reportedly, 57 were arrested.

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## NIGERIA (ISWAP – JAS)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **2016**

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Conflict parties: ISWAP vs. JAS  
 Conflict items: subnational predominance

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance between the two Islamist militant groups Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS), also known as Boko Haram, continued.

Both groups originate from the same group JAS [→ Nigeria, Chad et al. (JAS-Boko Haram)], which emerged in the early 2000s in Maiduguri town, Borno State. After rising tensions over ideological differences with local authorities, security forces cracked down on JAS members in Maiduguri in 2009. Subsequent clashes resulted in the deaths of approx. 700 JAS militants. After JAS leader Mohammed Yusuf, was killed in police custody, Abubakar Shekau became his successor. In May 2015, Shekau officially pledged allegiance to the so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. In 2016, JAS became a province of IS and was renamed

Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Internal disagreements over Shekau's leadership style led to a split of the group into two factions. Following the split, IS designated Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Yusuf's son, as the new leader of ISWAP [→ Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)] and recognized it as an official affiliate. Nevertheless, Shekau renewed his pledge of allegiance to IS, however, rejecting al-Barnawi's leadership. Shekau reverted to calling his faction JAS, without maintaining any links to IS. Following the split, JAS and ISWAP clashed sporadically until fighting re-erupted in 2020.

ISWAP operated mostly on the shores of Lake Chad and near the border to Niger and Chad while JAS kept its main area of operation around the Sambisa Forest, Borno State, as well as the border region to Cameroon. Clashes throughout the year accounted for at least 265 deaths.

Following a lull at the beginning of the year, clashes between JAS and ISWAP escalated by mid-May, resulting in the deaths of both leaders Shekau and al-Barnawi. On the one hand, hundreds of ISWAP militants invaded Sambisa Forest on May 19, killing several JAS militants. ISWAP claimed that Shekau subsequently killed himself using a suicide vest during the gunfight. IS media outlets stated that IS leadership ordered the assassination of Shekau. Reportedly, between 100 to 300 IS militants from Libya were sent to Nigeria to support the operation. On the other hand, in October, the Nigerian army confirmed the death of al-Barnawi; reports stated that he was killed in a clash between JAS and ISWAP in August.

Following the defeat of JAS in the Sambisa Forest, Bakura Modu was appointed as new JAS leader in June. In late June, ISWAP published a video showing former JAS militants based in Borno State pledging allegiance to IS. Various reports suggested that former JAS militants from their bases in Sambisa Forest and Mandara Mountains joined ISWAP.

In the month following Shekau's death, many JAS militants surrendered to Nigerian security forces, mostly in the south-east of Borno State. ISWAP threatened to kill JAS militants if they surrendered to state institutions instead of aligning with their forces. For instance, on August 22, ISWAP militants ambushed JAS militants in Dumbawa village, Borno State, as they attempted to surrender to the Multinational Joint Task Force, killing 27.

From September onwards, clashes intensified. Following an ISWAP ambush against a JAS camp in Sambisa Forest, killing one of its commanders, JAS militants carried out a reprisal attack on September 27. JAS militants gathered at the Nigerian side of Lake Chad before seizing ISWAP's stronghold Kirta Wurgo island, Borno State, alongside arms and ammunition. Reportedly, at least 100 were killed. In another reprisal attack in Gwoza Town, Borno State, on October 2, JAS militants killed 24 ISWAP militants and captured several. Five days later, ISWAP retaliated by invading the camp of JAS leader Bakura at Lake Chad, leaving at least 87 dead.

cge, nre

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## NIGERIA (PRO-BIAFRA GROUPS / BIAFRA)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1967**

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Conflict parties: pro-Biafra groups vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession

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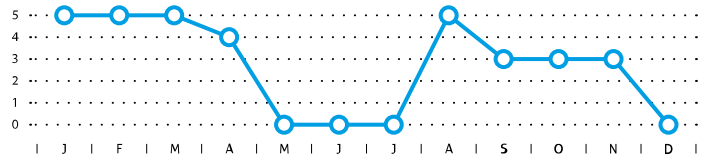
The violent crisis over the secession of southeastern parts of the country between pro-Biafra groups, such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Biafra Nations League (BNL),

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 eleventh consecutive year.

The group was 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 split into two factions in 2016. After the extrajudicial killing of Boko Haram's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, by Nigerian security forces in 2009, Abubakar Shekau became the leader of the group. In May 2015, Shekau officially pledged allegiance to the so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. In August 2016, IS proclaimed Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Yusuf's son, the new leader of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) [→ Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS)]. Internal disagreements led to a split of Boko Haram into two factions in 2016, one led by Shekau, the other by al-Barnawi. In 2020, sporadic clashes between ISWAP and JAS increased. In May, ISWAP militants invaded JAS' stronghold in Sambisa Forest, leading to Shekau's death on May 19. In June, Bakura Modu was declared the new leader of JAS [→ Nigeria et al. (ISWAP/ISWAP-GS – JAS/Boko Haram)].

This year, the conflict accounted for approx. 200 deaths. As a consequence of the ongoing violence, approx. two million people were displaced in the northeast of Nigeria and the adjacent states of Lake Chad.

Before Shekau's death, JAS operated mainly in the southeast of Borno State, in the area of the Sambisa Forest, in the northern parts of Adamawa State as well as 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. The faction led by Bakura was based on the islands of Lake Chad and mostly conducted attacks in Diffa Department, Niger, and Lac Region, 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). To fight Boko Haram locally, in 2013 the Nigerian government had authorized a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) to counter Boko Haram, comprising 26,000 local vigilantes.

Under Operation Lafia Doyle, the Nigerian Air Force frequently conducted airstrikes on JAS hideouts in the Sambisa Forest. Drones and reconnaissance platforms were regularly

and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), on 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. Following the founding of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) as the military arm of IPOB in December 2020, violent attacks increased.

Throughout the year, at least 229 people were killed in clashes between pro-Biafra groups and Nigerian security forces. Secessionist groups and security forces increasingly used heavy weapons. For instance, on April 5, alleged IPOB and ESN members attacked the police headquarters and the Nigerian correctional facility in Owerri city, Imo State, using RPGs and IEDs. As a result, more than 1,800 prisoners were freed and one police officer was killed. Starting on February 18, hundreds of security forces conducted raids and airstrikes on IPOB/ESN camps in Orlu and Orsu LGA, Imo State, using helicopters, and arresting 20. Reportedly, the days-long operation followed the killing of four soldiers by alleged IPOB members in Orlu, on January 25.

During another raid on an ESN camp, on March 23, security forces killed 16 separatists in Aba city, Abia State. Additionally, on April 24, security forces swept the ESN headquarters in Awo-Omamma village, Imo State. The ensuing clash left seven IBOP/ESN members, including the vice president, and three police officers dead. IPOB/ESN members attacked a police station in Orlu town, Imo State, on May 6, resulting in eleven separatists dead. On July 13, suspected ESN members killed at least two soldiers during an attack on a military checkpoint in Adani community, Enugu State. Furthermore, on September 19, separatists attacked security personnel in Onitsha, Anambra State, killing three police officers.

On several occasions, militants of the Biafra Nations League (BNL) crossed the border to adjacent Cameroon on the Bakassi Peninsula, South West region, and clashed with military forces of the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR). For instance, on May 8, BNL militants clashed with BIR in Isangele, South West, leaving at least two BIR soldiers dead. Moreover, from November 8 to 10, the BNL attempted to seize control of the border between Bakassi Peninsula and Akpabuyo LGA, Cross River State, Nigeria, blocking the entrance to the Peninsula.

IPOB ordered civilians to stay at home several times. During the enforcement, militants clashed with security forces. For example, in a clash on Biafra Remembrance Day, on May 31, in Nnodo community, Ebonyi State, three IPOB militants and one police officer were killed. Following the extradition of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu to Nigeria, on June 29, IPOB militants reiterated the weekly order, demanding the unconditional release of Kanu. The enforcement repeatedly turned violent. For instance, on August 9, six civilians were killed in Nkwogu city, Abia State, and Nnewi city, Anambra State. The same day, three people were killed by suspected IPOB members at the border between Onicha and Ohoazara LGA of Ebonyi State. On August 30, security forces killed three militants in Awo-Omamma. The trial was adjourned and set to continue in early 2022.

yme

deployed to scout for JAS camps and other facilities in order to attack them with various types of fighter aircraft, such as Alpha Jets and helicopter gunships.

The military also conducted ground operations targeting JAS. In February, the Nigerian military and MNJTF conducted clearance operations in the Sambisa Forest. According to military sources, 80 JAS militants were killed during the operations, while one soldier was killed by an IED.

Up until May, JAS attacked security forces in Borno State in small scale hit and run attacks or ambushes. In addition, JAS frequently raided villages and abducted civilians for ransom. During raids, both civilians and security forces were regularly killed. This year, these attacks decreased in frequency compared to the previous year. For instance, on February 23, JAS militants entered the outskirts of Maiduguri town, Borno State, firing assault rifles and RPGs indiscriminately at civilians, leaving 15 people dead. After Shekau's death, JAS attacks in Borno State subsided.

Up until May, JAS continued to conduct small-scale raids on villages in the Mayo-Sava and Mayo-Tsanga departments, Far North Region, Cameroon, to pillage supplies. However, following Shekau's death, attacks on civilians in Far North Region decreased significantly.

In late June, ISWAP published a video showing former JAS militants based in Borno State pledging allegiance to IS. Various reports suggested that former JAS militants from their bases in Sambisa Forest and Mandara Mountains joined ISWAP. The decline of attacks on civilians in the border region of Borno State and Far North Region was attributed to JAS militants joining ISWAP, aligning with the group's strategy of decreased violence towards civilians. In contrast, allegedly thousands of former JAS members surrendered to security forces in Nigeria and Cameroon in the following months. However, unverified reports suggested that some Borno-based JAS militants neither joined ISWAP nor surrendered to security forces. Fleeing ISWAP, numerous JAS fighters relocated into the northwest, namely Zamfara State, Kaduna State, and Niger State. According to military sources, a Bakura-loyal faction comprising approx. 250 fighters regrouped in Rijana forest, Kaduna State in resistance to ISWAP's power consolidation. Similarly, several JAS members joined a group of its fighters in Shiroro LGA, Niger State, that reportedly had established its presence in late 2019 and 2020. Subsequently, JAS militants engaged in tactical cooperations with local bandits that are reaching a great presence in the northwest [→ Nigeria (inter-communal rivalry)]. For instance, reports indicated that bandits in Kaduna State received training from JAS militants to use anti-aircraft guns, explosives, and other weapons.

While JAS activities in Nigeria's Borno State subsided, Bakura-led JAS militants based on the islands of Lake Chad continued to attack security forces and civilians in Lac Region, Chad, and Diffa Department, Niger. For instance, on August 4, JAS militants attacked a Chadian military patrol in Tchoukoutalia area, Lac Region, killing at least 24 soldiers. The same month, on August 24, hundreds of JAS militants attacked a military base near N'Guigmi, Diffa Department. Subsequent clashes left 16 soldiers and up to 50 militants dead.

nre, cge

## RWANDA – UGANDA

Intensity: **1** | Change: **↓** | Start: **2018**

Conflict parties: Rwanda vs. Uganda

Conflict items: international power

The violent crisis over international power between Rwanda and Uganda de-escalated to a dispute.

While government officials and the presidents of both countries made mutual accusations of espionage, closing borders, or mistreatment of its citizens in the other's country, both countries engaged in security cooperation and the release and repatriation of prisoners.

For example, on July 23, Uganda accused Rwanda of using Pegasus software to spy on Ugandan government officials. On September 5, Rwandan President Paul Kagame accused Uganda of the mistreatment of Rwandan citizens.

At the same time, Kagame emphasized his willingness to improve relations with Uganda. Nevertheless, no direct talks between Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Kagame were held throughout the year.

Both countries discussed the regional security situation during a meeting of the East African Community in the Rwandan capital Kigali on September 20 and 21.

Over the course of the year, Uganda released and repatriated at least 129 Rwandan prisoners while Rwanda released one arrested Ugandan soldier who had allegedly crossed into Rwandan territory unknowingly.

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## SENEGAL (MFDC / CASAMANCE)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1982**

Conflict parties: MFDC vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over secession between the government and the Movement of Democratic Forces in Casamance (MFDC) escalated to a violent crisis. The conflict began in 1982 as a separatist movement led by the MFDC, allegedly representing the religiously and ethnically distinct Casamance region in the fight for independence. Since an agreement was reached between the government and the MFDC in 2004, violent clashes had mostly subsided, however, tensions between the parties prevailed.

This year, the conflict was mainly marked by two military operations of government forces against alleged MFDC camps in Ziguinchor region bordering Guinea-Bissau. The first operation started on January 26 to fight alleged MFDC members in the region, as well as the illegal wood and marijuana trade, suspected to be in connection with MFDC activities. As part of the operation, on February 3, the military bombarded MFDC camps in the woods in Ziguinchor, leaving at least one person injured.

The second military operation lasted from May 30 until June 14, during which the military captured several MFDC camps in Ziguinchor. Alleged MFDC militants injured at least two soldiers in clashes during this operation.

On April 8 and 9, representatives of the Senegalese government and of MFDC held peace talks in Praia, the capital of



## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Cape Verde. These were the first peace talks between the parties since 2017, however, no public announcement was made regarding their results.

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### SIERRA LEONE (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: APC vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between the primary opposition All People's Congress (APC) and the government continued.

Throughout the year, several opposition protests in the Western Area and Northern Province turned violent. For example, on April 12, police fired tear gas and smoke bombs into a group of student protesters at the University of Sierra Leone in the capital Freetown, injuring at least one student. Later that month, on April 28, an opposition politician was arrested without warrant in Freetown after he publicly criticized President Julius Maada Bio.

A report released on October 29 by the Head of the EU Election Follow-Up Mission noted concerns about the fairness of the upcoming elections in 2023. The government rejected the report. On November 4, police fired tear gas and live bullets to control a group of APC supporters in Freetown, resulting in at least three people injured.

A nationwide census, originally planned for 2020 and delayed due to Covid-19, led to further opposition protests. Despite losing funding from the World Bank, the government began the census on December 10. Subsequently, the APC denounced the high costs of the census and staged violent protests in Freetown, and in Makeni city, Northern Province. These resulted in the arrest of two APC leaders. eha

### 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 the orientation of the political system between the so-called Islamic State in Somalia (ISS), al-Shabaab, and the Federal Government of Somalia, supported by security forces of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, the Puntland Security Force (PSF), continued.

During a series of operations on April 4 and 5, PSF clashed with ISS in the villages of Maday-madow, Dhabancaddo, and Baraagaha, Bari region, killing at least 24 militants.

On May 28, PSF killed at least 20 ISS militants, including leading foreign fighter Khalid Jama, and injured several others in a military operation in the Il-Amayra valley of the Miskat mountains, Bari. On June 29, ISS targeted a PSF convoy in Balidhidin town, Bari, via a remote-controlled IED, injuring three soldiers.

In another operation, on July 9, PSF attacked ISS bases in Dhabancado and Hulcaanood, Bari, killing four ISS militants. Two PSF officers were also injured. On August 18, ISS captured the strategically important village of Balidhidin, Bari,

marking the first capture in several years. During this capture, ISS attacked civilians and killed the district commissioner. On August 23, a high-ranking ISS member was sentenced by a military court to 15 years in prison for his role as chief of finance of ISS.

After clashes erupted between the PSF and government troops in December, the PSF withdrew to its headquarters in Bosaso, Bari, thus ceasing its operations against ISS in Puntland. It can be assumed that the PSF's withdrawal may represent the opportunity for an expansion of ISS and al-Shabaab activity in Puntland. lob

### SOMALIA (SOMALILAND – PUNTLAND)

Intensity: **2** | 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, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. 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 ethnic groups inhabiting the region.

In January, efforts by Somaliland to register voters in SSC were disrupted by patrolling Puntland forces.

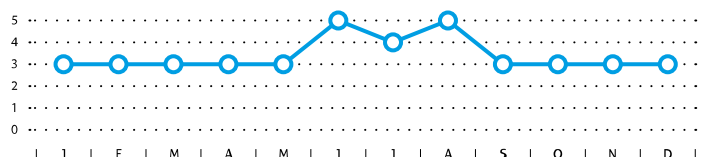
On October 31, Puntland lawmakers suggested declaring Somaliland as a terrorist state, due to their alleged support of al-Shabaab and the displacement of Somali people. mmp

### SOMALIA, KENYA (AL-SHABAAB)

Intensity: **5** | Change: • | Start: **2006**

Conflict parties: al-Shabaab vs. Kenya, Somalia

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power



For the 16th consecutive year, the war over national power and the orientation of the political system between the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) continued. The FGS was supported by local security forces of the Federal Member States, the international African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces, US Africom, and the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF). Over the course of the year, support for the FGS under President Farmajo by regional forces deteriorated due to political tensions over the delayed elections, but regional forces continued to be targeted by and involved in the conflict with al-Shabaab. Throughout the year, between 1,360 and 3,136 people were killed.

Al-Shabaab was estimated to comprise between 5,000 and 10,000 active members in Somalia and Kenya, an increase

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

compared to last year.

More than 400 incarcerated militants escaped during an al-Shabaab attack on the central prison in Bosaso town, Bari region, on March 5, that also led to the death of seven people. Most of these prisoners were reabsorbed into the militant group.

On January 17, USA completed their withdrawal of the remaining 700 troops in Somalia, but still continued to conduct airstrikes throughout the year. In January, US Africom conducted several airstrikes targeting radio stations affiliated with al-Shabaab in the southern regions of Bakool, Middle Juba, Lower Juba and Bay. After six months of no airstrikes, US Africom resumed their activities on July 20 killing around 20 militants in Mudug region, followed by several airstrikes in July and August.

Throughout the year, al-Shabaab attacked civilian targets, as well as convoys and posts of police and security forces. Al-Shabaab conducted the majority of the attacks in the southern regions and the capital region of Banadir, as well as the border regions of Lamu and Mandera in Kenya.

The situation in the capital Mogadishu remained tense throughout the year. Al-Shabaab conducted at least 16 IED-attacks targeting civilians as well as security personnel. As a result, 71 to 90 people were killed. On average, al-Shabaab executed three to four attacks per month in Mogadishu.

On January 31, al-Shabaab used a VBIED and stormed a hotel in Mogadishu, killing several civilians, including a former military general. On March 5, al-Shabaab targeted civilians at a restaurant in Mogadishu with a VBIED. As a consequence, more than 20 people were killed and another 30 injured in the attack. Additionally, al-Shabaab killed at least 66 people in nine suicide bombings in Mogadishu, among them mostly civilians.

Over 38 attacks with vehicle-borne or remote-controlled IEDs were carried out by al-Shabaab outside of Mogadishu, resulting in at least 84 soldiers allied to FGS and KDF and at least twelve civilians killed.

Militants frequently attacked posts of national and regional security forces, firing mortar shells and using hand grenades on several occasions, for instance in Mogadishu, on March 25, targeting Halane base, and on April 21, attacking the presidential palace. Most of these attacks did not result in fatalities, but some sparked battles between militants and security forces.

Militants also targeted civilians in their attacks, killing more than 37, with civilian casualties reaching as high as 104. Al-Shabaab also abducted several civilians, repeatedly targeting individuals that previously left the group and engaging in abductions for ransom.

On March 1, al-Shabaab members executed five people in Middle Juba region, accusing them of spying for UK and US intelligence services. Between June 27 and 30, al-Shabaab executed a total of 18 civilians in Middle Juba and Bay region for allegedly spying for foreign governments.

Local officials and prominent elders remained an important target for al-Shabaab attacks in Mogadishu and other regions. Separate attacks on April 16 and 20, as well as May 25, killed three district commissioners in Mogadishu. On August 17, al-Shabaab killed another district commissioner of Mogadishu, whose predecessor had been killed in the attack in May, with a RCIED.

Al-Shabaab was increasingly active in the Kenyan regions of Lamu and Mandera, with a higher rate of attacks conducted in these areas. Encounters with al-Shabaab left at least 15 police officers dead, mainly in Mandera. By the end of the year, al-Shabaab controlled more than 50 percent of Man-

dera, including locations of strategic importance for control of the area.

Al-Shabaab continued to control large territories within the southern regions of Somalia and efforts to capture additional towns moved increasingly closer to Mogadishu. Overall, the group was not able to expand their control in Somalia substantially, but it took control of the strategically important location of Balcad town, Middle Shabelle region, on December 30. Further, the group briefly captured several villages and cities in central Somalia over the course of December.

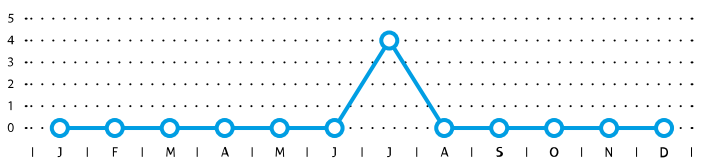
Somali security forces conducted a number of counter operations against members of al-Shabaab, claiming to have killed more than 100 militants and regained several towns from the group. For example, government soldiers killed up to 50 militants in Hiraan region between June 10 and 13. krp, mib

## SOUTH AFRICA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **4** | 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 African National Congress (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 ANC, on the other, escalated to a limited war.

Disputes between the ANC and opposing parties were reported throughout the year. For example, on April 6, EFF students blocked an entrance of the Mangosuthu University of Technology in Umlazi district, Durban city, KwaZulu-Natal Province, with burning tires and other debris, demanding improved higher education access and funding. Similarly, on August 5, at least 1,000 supporters of the EFF demonstrated in Phoenix town, Durban, against the killings of 36 people in the same town during unrest in July, following the imprisonment of former president Jacob Zuma.

Moreover, the government's pandemic containment strategy also continued to spark diffuse resistance among societal and political actors. On June 25, thousands of opposition activists, including EFF members, rallied in the capital of Pretoria, demanding a faster rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine and marched to the offices of the South African Health Services Authority. Similarly, on September 27, in Durban, a group of at least 200 people including members of the Umkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association, People's Revolutionary Movement, Unemployed Graduate Movement, and Land Party, marched to voice their opposition to the government's Covid-19 prevention measures.

On July 7, Zuma, who had been accused of corruption during his presidency, was remanded in custody after being convicted of contempt of court a week earlier by South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal. Following the arrest, violent protests by Zuma supporters were staged and quickly spread

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

across KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng Provinces. On July 10, the protesters expressed their discontent with the Ramaphosa government by torching trucks and blocking the N3 highway, one of the country's most important economic routes, between Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, and Durban. In the following days major roads were closed to traffic, Durban's public transport system was not operating, and shops were looted. Meanwhile also on July 10, clashes erupted between protesters and police in several major South African cities, with shopping malls being looted or set on fire. At the end of July, the government estimated that at least 337 people had died during the protests. In addition, the estimated economic damage amounted to at least USD 3 billion, according to the South African Property Owners' Association.

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### SOUTH AFRICA (SOCIOECONOMIC PROTESTS)

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

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Conflict parties: residents of informal settlements vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

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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 disrupt traffic and increase visibility of their demands. For example, on February 24, following a water outage that lasted for at least seven days, residents of Makhanda town, Eastern Cape Province, closed Albany Road with burning tires. On March 23, protesters set municipal buildings and a vehicle on fire and blocked the N2 road between the towns of Hibberdene and Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal Province, in response to insufficient service delivery. The police arrested three of the protesters for the destruction of property. Similarly, between March 24 and March 31, protesters damaged construction equipment, set a bus alight, burned tires, and threw stones at vehicles in Kraaifontein town, and Khayelitsha and Mfuleni townships, Western Cape Province. During the protests on March 25, one protester died after getting hit by a truck, and four police officers were injured. Furthermore, on June 30, protesters barricaded the Ohrtmann Road bridge, Pietermaritzburg city, KwaZulu-Natal Province, with burning tires complaining of inadequate service delivery. On May 17 and 18, inhabitants of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, Free-State Province, protested poor service delivery, causing a general shutdown of the municipality. During the protest on May 17, security forces shot and killed one person. In response, at least 13 shops were looted and subsequently 19 protesters were arrested for public violence. On July 7, the N2 road and R102, at Hibberdene, were closed due to protests with burning tires and stones. On September 15, at least 100 residents of an informal settlement in Dunoon, Cape Town, Western Cape Province, staged a protest because water trucks did not arrive on time. On October 1, residents of Malmesbury town, Western Cape Province, complained of poor service delivery and excavated the N7 highway, thereby disrupting

local traffic with burning tires. On October 26, inhabitants in Cofimvaba village, Eastern Cape Province, threatened not to vote in the municipal elections if their road was not fixed and closed R61 with burning tires and rocks.

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### SOUTH AFRICA (XENOPHOBES)

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

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Conflict parties: immigrants vs. xenophobes

Conflict items: system/ideology

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The violent crisis over labor market shares, cultural hegemony, and access to the social security system between xenophobic South African nationals and groups of immigrants continued.

Throughout the year, xenophobic South African nationals continued to accuse immigrants of taking jobs away from locals and being involved in criminal activities. The city of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province, was particularly affected by anti-foreign protests. For instance, on February 1, the uMkhonto weSizwe Military Veterans (MKMVA) organized a march to express their grievances about undocumented migrants employed in South Africa's economy. During the march, a group of at least 40 people looted two migrant-owned shops. Furthermore, on March 8, members of the MKMVA looted and petrol-bombed several shops owned by foreign nationals in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province. According to the Central Durban Police, the MKMVA also attacked and injured two foreign nationals. However, the MKMVA officially distanced itself from these violent attacks and denied that the marches were fueled by xenophobia. Following these violent clashes, hundreds of foreigners participated in protests against xenophobia outside the Diaconia Center in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal Province, on March 9.

As in previous years, the employment of foreign nationals by the trucking industry remained a contentious issue. On October 25, South African truck drivers parked their trucks on the N10 highway and disrupted traffic near Middelburg, Eastern Cape Province, to protest the employment of foreign truck drivers. The next day, on October 26, the nationwide shutdown continued near Montrose city, Free State Province, during which 30 national truck drivers obstructed the N3 highway, one of the country's most important highways, calling on freight companies to remove foreign nationals. The All Truck Drivers Foundation supported the protest action, stressing that local drivers are being exploited. No acts of violence or injuries were reported. In a similar incident, on December 3, at least 50 trucks were blockading the N3 highway at Van Reenen's Pass and Tugela river, KwaZulu-Natal Province, to protest foreign undocumented truck drivers.

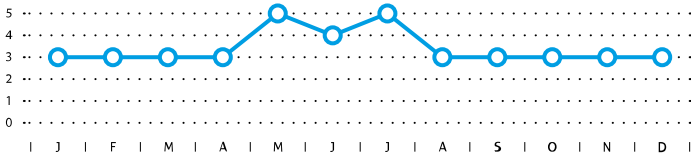
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SOUTH SUDAN (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: Murle vs. Dinka vs. Nuer vs. Azande vs. Balanda

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The war between various local communities over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and land, continued.

Overall, violent confrontations between and within local communities such as Dinka, Nuer, and Murle communities, as well as their various sections decreased in number. In total, at least 1,467 people were reportedly killed compared to 1,847 reported deaths in 2020, and more than 40,283 people were displaced.

While the states of Lakes, Jonglei, and Warrap remained most affected by the conflict, violence increased significantly in the state of Western Equatoria.

The actual figures are presumed to have been substantially higher, but the region’s fragile security situation and the rurality of the conflict disable profound media and reporting coverage.

According to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the high level of violence was also 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 the widespread proliferation of small arms in the region. On March 12, the UNSC extended the mandate of UNMISS including priority measures such as providing security to re-designated protection-of-civilian sites.

Inter-communal clashes over cattle, which plays a crucial socio-economic role in terms of both livelihood sustaining and as a prerequisite for marriage, as well as continuous reprisal attacks, creating a cycle of violence, have a long history in South Sudan and remained the most contentious issue. At least 47 raid attacks on local communities or cattle camps were conducted. More than 77,000 heads of cattle were stolen, which was often combined with the abduction of women and children, destruction of houses, and raids on local infrastructure, such as warehouses or hospitals.

Jonglei state had the highest fatality record, mainly resulting from violent tensions between Murle communities, on the one hand, and Gawaar Nuer and Lou Nuer communities as well as various Dinka sections, on the other. Over the course of the year, at least 318 people were killed, 269 people abducted, and more than 9,000 displaced. Violence escalated in May, when members of the Gawaar Nuer and Dinka from Ayod, Urur, and Duk areas entered the greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) to retrieve cattle earlier raided by Murle on May 7. The following ten-day lasting fighting resulted in more than 150 deaths, 51 injured people, and 196 abducted women and children. 9,000 people were displaced. Numerous houses and food storages were

destroyed in Gumuruk town, and 45,000 head of cattle were allegedly stolen. Subsequently, President Kiir replaced the chief administrator of the disputed GPAA and put the de facto autonomous Eagle Battalion, mainly recruiting from Murle communities, under the direct command of the South Sudan People’s Defence Forces (SSPDF) Chief of Staff. On June 29 and July 9, 23 people were killed in intra-Murle fighting between the Kurenen and Lango sections in the GPAA.

In Lakes state, tensions between local communities, mainly between various Dinka sections, continued. In total, 281 people were killed, with the counties of Cueibet and Rumbek East being most affected by violence. For instance, on March 8, Agar Dinkas from the Pakam section clashed with the Macar section of Gok Dinka at a cattle camp in the Ngap area of Cueibet county. At least 17 people were killed and six injured. On June 21, members of the Pakam section attacked members of the Gok Dinka section at a cattle camp near Abiriu payam in Cueibet county. At least 24 people were killed from both sides and 25 injured. Over 1,000 heads of cattle were reportedly stolen. Furthermore, members of the Gony and Thuyic subsections of the Athoi section of Agar Dinka clashed repeatedly. For instance, on April 18, fighting over grazing land left 23 people killed and 20 injured in Rumbek East county.

In Warrap state, at least 285 people were killed in inter-communal clashes and more than 301 injured. In reaction to the violence, local state officials allegedly carried out an anti-crimes campaign with extrajudicial killings. UNMISS condemned the execution of at least 29 people in 14 incidents. On February 9, Rek Dinka members conducted an attack on another Rek Dinka village in Tonj North. 22 people were killed, the majority of whom were reported to be unarmed villagers. A retaliation attack followed on February 13, leaving twelve people dead. In April and May, tensions between Bul Nuer and Apuk Rek Dinka members intensified. For instance, on April 4, Apuk Rek Dinka members allied with Lou Paher Dinka militants from Gogrial East county and attacked Bul Nuer members at cattle camps in Mayom county, Unity state, in an area assumed to be close to the borders with Gogrial East and Tonj North. At least 18 people were killed, 27 injured, and hundreds of heads of cattle were allegedly stolen. The Mayom County Commissioner attempted to retrieve the stolen cattle but was ambushed by armed youth on May 3 and nine of his bodyguards were killed. Subsequently, Bul Nuer members conducted revenge attacks on April 7, Mai 7, and May 27 in Gogrial East. The violence resulted in 42 fatalities and 55 injured people. In the counties of Tonj East and Tonj North, violence between Rek and Luach-Jang Dinka sections escalated in July and resulted in periodical heavy fighting during the following months. Between July and October, at least 99 people were killed and 138 injured due to these tensions. Following renewed fighting in October, 6,000 people were displaced.

In Western Equatoria state, violence increased significantly compared to last year. At least 191 people were reportedly killed and more than 80,000 displaced in Tambura county alone. Fighting between Azande and Balanda on July 18 and 19 in Tambura resulted in at least 150 deaths. Tensions between these groups escalated again between August 20 and 24 in Tambura county. At least eleven people were reportedly killed and thousands displaced. Public infrastructure, farms, and houses were destroyed. According to the Chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, the SSPDF and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/In Opposition (SPL/A-IO) [→ South Sudan (opposition)] are responsible for arming the Azande and Balanda communities. fli. oye

## SOUTH SUDAN (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: **NAS, SPLM/A-IO-Kitwang vs. government, SPLM/A-IO-RM**

Conflict items: **system/ideology, national power**

The limited war 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 first vice president Rieck Machar, leader of the former opposition group Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis.

Most SSOA groups joined The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) between SPLM and SPLM/A-IO in 2018. However, the opposition groups South Sudan United Front, People's Democratic Movement, and the National Salvation Front (NAS) had refused to sign. The implementation of the R-ARCSS has been delayed. This especially holds true for the planned unification of forces.

Due to the fragile security situation, the UN extended their arms embargo on South Sudan as well as the mandate of UNMISS for another year.

The year was marked by the consequences of the so-called Kitwang Declaration, issued on August 3, which effectively split the SPLM/A-IO up into two factions. While the majority remained loyal to Machar (SPLM/A-IO-RM), and therefore loyal to the government, the new splinter group SPLM/A-IO-Kitwang renounced Machar and declared General Simon Gatwich Dual as new leader. The two groups and affiliated armed local groups clashed several times this year.

Especially affected were Tambura county in West Equatoria and the Magenis area in Upper Nile state. Between June and October, a wave of violence in Tambura County killed at least 200 people and forced 80,000 to flee their homes. The clashes erupted between local but organized armed groups affiliated with either the government's South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) or the SPLM/A-IO-Kitwang [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. On October 26, they agreed to a ceasefire. On August 7, direct fighting between the SPLM/A-IO factions erupted in Magenis area, Upper Nile. At least 30 people were killed and more than 1,000 displaced. The factions continued to clash regularly in Magenis until the end of the year, such as on December 26 and 27, killing at least 45 people. SPLM/A-IO-Kitwang and SPLM/A-IO-RM also directly clashed on September 30 in Pieri area, Uror county, Jonglei state. No fatalities were reported.

Apart from SPLM/A-IO-Kitwang, NAS was the only non-signatory group that continued to fight the government, especially in Central Equatoria. Both NAS and SSPDF blamed each other for attacks throughout the year, some with civilian fatalities. For example, NAS claimed that SSPDF had attacked its positions in Loka, Central Equatoria, among others, on March 14 and 15, killing three people. SSPDF reported an NAS attack on its positions in Gumberi, Central Equatoria, on June 1, while denying allegations that it was responsible for the killing of four unarmed civilians in Lainya County, Central Equatoria. Instead, SSPDF held NAS accountable. Moreover, SSPDF accused NAS of attacking Nyori Refugee Camp in Yei

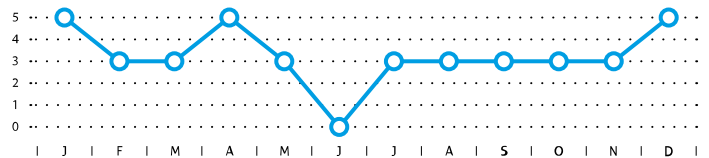
River County, Central Equatoria, on August 22, and of abducting refugees, looting drugs, and torching an ambulance and a health facility. This was denied by NAS. [fyk](#)

## SUDAN (DARFUR)

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

Conflict parties: **SRF vs. government, RSF vs. 'Arab' militias**

Conflict items: **autonomy, subnational predominance, resources**



The limited war over autonomy of the Darfur region between the opposition alliance Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), especially its member group Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur (SLM-AW), on the one hand, and the government, deploying both the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), on the other hand, escalated to a war. The conflict dynamics shifted towards a fight over subnational predominance and resources due to the increased appearance of well organized and heavily armed 'Arab' militias, regularly described as affiliated to the RSF and loyal to the former regime of Omar al-Bashir, engaging in and exacerbating communal violence between 'Arab' and 'non-Arab' communities. This caused both high numbers of fatalities and an eightfold increase in IDPs compared to the previous year.

The United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) succeeded the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), which ended in 2020. Unlike its predecessor, UNITAMS' mandate was focused on all of Sudan.

The armed groups of the SRF were predominantly recruited among the Fur, Zaghawa, and Massalit communities, who identify as African. The SRF has accused the government of oppressing the African Darfur population and of cooperating with armed groups that identify as Arab. 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, the Justice and Equality Movement, and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement-North [→ Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)]. The paramilitary force RSF has close ties to the Janjaweed militia and has recruited among different groups of nomadic militants identifying as Arab who have been involved in the Darfur conflict since 2003. Although the RSF was officially integrated into the SAF, it largely acted autonomously and had been accused of numerous human rights abuses.

As in previous years, clashes between government forces, including RSF, and the SLM-AW as well as clashes within the SLM-AW were mainly focused on Jebel Marra, a mountain range in the three states of Central, North, and South Darfur. For example, between January 24 and 26, suspected government-backed armed men attacked the villages of Falouja and Kebe, South Darfur, and Marra, Debbat Nayra, and Rogola, North Darfur, killing eleven people, injuring dozens, and displacing more than 3,000. On January 31,

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the SLM-AW reportedly repelled an attack by government-affiliated groups in Touha Shalal village, Tawila locality in North Darfur, leaving 17 fighters dead and 23 injured. In Fanga Suk village, Jebel Marra, Central Darfur, RSF and SLM-AW reportedly clashed over land access on May 18, displacing 1,248 people. Between July 11 and 18 in Sortony area, Kebkabiya locality, North Darfur, approx. 17 IDPs were killed, nine injured, about 65 houses were burned, and 300 shops damaged in a clash that reportedly erupted between SAF and SLM-AW. Reportedly, SLM-AW took control over a SAF unit afterwards.

Attacks by allegedly government-backed paramilitary groups on civilians continued this year, including gender-based violence. Moreover, sources state an increased appearance of well organized, heavily armed "Arab" militias who engage in and exacerbate inter-communal violence. While not wearing official uniforms, they are in some cases described as affiliated with or accompanied by RSF fighters and as being loyal to the former regime.

For example, from January 15 to 19, heavy fighting erupted in El Geneina city and two surrounding IDP camps in West Darfur between the Masalit community and "Arab" communities, backed by associated armed militias. 163 people were killed and about 300 people injured. The Internal Displacement Centre estimated that more than 123,000 people were forced to flee. From January 24 to 26, an unknown militia group riding camels and horses attacked and raided the villages Falouja, Kebe in Jebel Marra, South Darfur, as well as the villages of Marra, Debbat Nayra, and Rogala in Jebel Marra, North Darfur. Eleven civilians were killed, dozens injured, livestock stolen, and more than 3,000 people displaced. Between January 22 and February 2, gunmen driving vehicles and riding motorcycles, horses, and camels attacked and raided several villages in Tawila locality in North Darfur, killing eight people and injuring 14, while burning eleven villages. On February 29, five gunmen gang-raped a displaced woman in Saraf Omra locality, North Darfur.

From April 3 to 6, clashes erupted again in El Geneina, West Darfur, between armed groups from the Masalit and the "Arab" Rizeigat community, with sources claiming that the latter were supported by militias affiliated with the former regime. The wave of violence, in which heavy weapons were reportedly used, left approx. 147 people dead, 285 injured and homes, property, and civilian infrastructure destroyed, for example when a RPG hit a hospital building and a UN compound.

On July 30 and 31, militiamen attacked and plundered the villages of Kolgi, Gallab, Kadarek, Um Siyala, Adara, Um Arda, and East Um Ghubeysha in Tawila locality, North Darfur, leaving one person injured, five children missing, and hundreds of people displaced. Violence continued from August 1 to 3, when militias attacked IDPs intending to return to their home villages in Gallab area in Tawila locality, North Darfur and attacks spread to neighboring Dar El Salam locality in North Darfur, leaving three residents killed and dozens injured. In August and September, attacks by armed groups occurred repeatedly on villages in Tawila locality, North Darfur, causing an unknown number of deaths and injuries, as well as the displacement of another 26,000 people.

As of November, violence continued to rise, also caused by the unstable political situation in the aftermath of the military coup on October 25 [→ Sudan (opposition)]. Between November 19 and December 8, large groups of heavily armed militiamen, reportedly with the involvement of the RSF, attacked and torched the villages Seleia, Kulbus, Barak, and several others in Jebel Moon and in Kereinik, West Darfur,

killing approx. 140 people, injuring more than 100, and burning villages. Around 60,000 residents were forced to flee to other parts of the state or to neighboring Chad.

As in previous years, the dynamics of the conflict were highly affected by the ongoing political transition phase in the Sudan [→ Sudan (opposition)] and the halting implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, signed in October 2020. The SLM-AW did not sign the agreement and was the only armed opposition group involved in violence throughout the year. On September 15, the newly appointed governor of the Darfur region and SLM-MM leader Minni Minawi launched a joint force, comprising both regular SAF soldiers as well as former opposition fighters, to protect civilians in Darfur. However, the advancements in Sudan's political transition, including the appointment of the state governors and the deployment of this new joint force, were undone by the military coup on October 25. svb

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### SUDAN (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

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

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Conflict parties: Fulani et al., Fur, Masalit vs. Hawazma et al., Misseriya, Taisha  
Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance and scarce resources such as cattle and pastureland between various communities continued. The conflict line was for the most part set between either farming or herding communities as well as between communities that identify as either Arab or African. However, several incidents of inter-communal clashes between "Arab" communities were reported.

Apart from in Darfur, where inter-communal violence was reportedly incited and exacerbated by well organized "Arab" militias [→ Sudan (Darfur)], inter-communal clashes mostly occurred in the states of South Kordofan and West Kordofan. On March 1 and 2, members of rivaling communities clashed in Sarafa Omra, North Darfur, leaving 32 people killed and ten injured. In Furo Baraga, West Darfur, eight people were killed and dozens injured on May 29 in clashes between members of the Fur and "Arab" communities. On June 5, members of the Taisha and Fulani communities clashed in Um Dafuq, South Darfur, which killed 36 people and injured dozens. Following an attack on a nomadic community, tensions escalated between said community and IDPs of Zamzam Camp in El Fasher city, North Darfur, on December 6. To protect the IDPs from revenge attacks, security forces were deployed to the area.

Between June 9 and 15, a series of clashes between members of the Kawahla and the Dar Ali communities resulted in at least 16 deaths and three injured people near Kologi, South Kordofan. Two people were killed and three injured after members of Hawazma communities attacked Kenana settlers in Elafan, South Kordofan, on July 26. Clashes between both groups continued on December 1 near the town of Abu Jubeiha, South Kordofan, resulting in dozens of fatalities. One person was killed and four injured in El Hujerat on August 19, triggering protests against the worsening security situation in South Kordofan. On November 10, seven people were killed in inter-communal clashes in the Nuba mountains near the city of Abu Kershola, South Kordofan.

Violence also occurred in the state of West Kordofan, where at least 17 people were killed and 35 injured during inter-

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

communal clashes between members of the Misseriya Humur and Misseriya Zurug communities near El Mahfora between July 26 and 31. On December 4, clashes between members of rivaling communities in El Nahud, West Kordofan, resulted in 30 people killed and dozens injured and forced at least 1,000 people to flee their homes.

Inter-communal violence also occurred in other parts of Sudan, such as near the town of Geisan in Blue Nile state on May 13, when two people were killed and several injured during inter-communal clashes between members of Hausa and Funj communities, following theft of livestock. mge

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### SUDAN (OPPOSITION)

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

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Conflict parties: FFC, resistance committees vs. government, RSF

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis between the transitional civilian-military government led by Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok and different opposition groups, for the most part organized in the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), continued. On October 25, Abdel Fattah Burhan took over executive power in a military coup, detaining civilian members of the government including Hamdok. Hamdok was released on November 21, when he signed a power-sharing agreement with Burhan. However, this was rejected by the FFC and grassroots resistance committees and sparked new pro-democratization protests that were dispersed by military and paramilitary forces, killing 52 people and injuring at least 1,000.

Before the coup, the year was marked by Sudan's transition to democracy, led by the transitional government.

On September 21, a group of soldiers tried to seize control of a media building in Omdurman city, Khartoum State, in a coup attempt. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) claimed to have prevented the coup and security forces arrested 21 soldiers. The military and the civilian part of the government blamed each other for the following crisis. Subsequently, on September 27, troops that were to guard the headquarter of the Empowerment Removal Committee which is in charge of the deconstruction of the former regime and its assets, left their posts.

The following days, thousands of people joined protests in the capital Khartoum, among other cities, in support of the democratic transition in the country. Police dispersed a protest in Khartoum with tear gas, injuring one protester. Between October 16 and 24, supporters of the transitional government and of the military staged new protests in cities such as Khartoum and Omdurman as well as in Port Sudan, Red Sea State, and in Atbara, Blue Nile State. Security forces dispersed these protests, such as on October 21, when police used live bullets and tear gas in Omdurman, injuring 37 people.

On October 25, the military took power in a coup d'état, detaining Hamdok, arresting senior government officials and leaders of the FFC, and blocking main roads and the access to communication services. In reaction to the military coup, resistance committees and activist networks called for marches of millions in different cities in Sudan, demanding the restoration of the civilian-led transitional government. For instance, on November 17, security forces used live ammunition in nationwide protests, killing 16 people and injuring at least 100 throughout Sudan.

On November 21, Hamdok signed a power-sharing agreement with Burhan to reinstate himself as prime minister and to end the ongoing violence. The anti-military protests however continued and were again dispersed by security forces, who were joined by paramilitary forces such as the Rapid Support Forces. For instance, on December 30, security forces killed five people in Omdurman and used stun grenades and batons to suppress the protests.

Throughout the year, several incidents of gender-based violence against women, conducted by security forces, were reported. The UN for instance reported that security forces allegedly gang raped 13 women and girls participating in the anti-military protests in Khartoum on December 19. ims

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### SUDAN (SPLM/A-NORTH / SOUTH KORDOFAN, BLUE NILE)

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Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **2011**

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Conflict parties: SPLM/A-North vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy, resources

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The dispute over autonomy of Blue Nile and South Kordofan between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-North), which has been split into two sections led by Malik Agar (SPLM/A-North-Agar) and by Abdelaziz al-Hilu (SPLM/A-North al-Hilu), and the government continued. Following the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement (JPA), former opposition leaders who had signed the agreement were sworn in as members of the transitional government, such as the SPLM/A-North-Agar leader.

On May 26, the transitional government and the second, non-signatory faction SPLM/A-North al-Hilu started official peace negotiations without a final agreement, which were not resumed later.

On June 13, UN humanitarian agencies were able to access conflict-affected communities in areas controlled by the SPLM/A-North al-Hilu for the first time in five years, where the security and humanitarian situation remained fragile due to inter-communal tensions [→ Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. Following the coup attempt on September 21, tensions arose between the military and the opposition group Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), to which the SPLM/A-North belonged [→ Sudan (opposition)]. When the military seized back power on October 25, they arrested, among others, the SPLM/A-North-Agar deputy chairperson. Both SPLM/A-North factions expressed their opposition to the coup and called for peaceful civilian actions. On November 11, the military announced plans to reform the government with Agar as a member. fwe

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### SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY / ABYEI)

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

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Conflict parties: Ngok Dinka vs. Misseriya

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources in the disputed border region Abyei between the Ngok Dinka community and the pastoralist Misseriya commu-

nity continued.

Due to significant oil reserves, the region has also been of strategic interest to the governments of Sudan and South Sudan, both of which claim Abyei as their territory [→ Sudan – South Sudan]. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) continued to administer the area.

Although fewer violent incidents were reported this year, the general safety situation remained unstable. On May 16, the year’s most fatal attack occurred in the Ngok Dinka village DOUNGOP, when an armed group killed at least eleven people and left eight injured. The incident was allegedly connected to a prior raiding of Misseriya cattle and increased tensions between the two communities.

The leaders of the two communities failed to reach an agreement at a peace conference held in Aweil in February. The central topics of dispute were the different terminology used by the communities to describe the Misseriya community and the unresolved assassination case of a Ngok Dinka chief in 2013. Aiming at building a foundation for the next peace conference, UNISFA hosted separate peace meetings with communal leaders in October.

UNISFA together with the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism further implemented measures to support the security situation, for instance aerial and ground patrols. In June, local chiefs and youth of Aweil North County started protests to demand autonomy and the removal of UNISFA troops from Sector 1, Gok Machar. Under the pressure of ongoing demonstrations, the denial of security clearances for patrols, and the rejection of landing permits for resupplies, UNISFA gradually withdrew from Sector 1 until the end of October. On December 15, the UNSC decided to extend the missions’ mandate until 05/15/2022 with a slightly reduced troop ceiling of 3,250 to further demilitarize the Abyei area and to demarcate the borders.

From August 19 to 21, then-Prime Minister of Sudan, Abdalla Hamdok, and the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, met in Juba and agreed to reopen border crossing corridors and to establish free trade zones. Since the military coup in Sudan on October 25, diplomatic interactions between the governments have not resulted in any further progress regarding the final status of Abyei. mta

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## UGANDA (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: DP, FDC, Jeema, NUP, UPC vs. government

Conflict items: national power

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The violent crisis over national power between various opposition parties and the government continued. In 2017, incumbent President Yoweri Museveni, who had been in power since 1986, introduced a bill to abolish presidential term limits. Subsequently, the different opposition parties, such as the National Unity Platform (NUP), the Forum for Democratic Change, the Democratic Party, the Uganda People’s Congress, and the Justice Forum Party, decided to collaborate to disempower Museveni. The government consisted of Museveni and his political party, the National Resistance Movement. In the highly contested presidential elections on January 14, Museveni was re-elected with 58 percent of the votes. His main opponent Robert Kyagulanyi, alias Bobi Wine, from the NUP received 35 percent of the votes. On January 15, Wine accused the government of election fraud and was put under

house arrest for eleven days. On February 1, Wine filed a lawsuit to the Supreme Court declaring the elections were rigged, but withdrew it on February 22 citing a bias of said court. According to a press release by the Council of the EU on January 20, an internet shutdown two days prior to the elections disrupted freedom of expression and information in the elections. Further, they expressed concern about the harassment of opposition leaders and parts of civil society in the pre-election period.

After violent protests on 11/18/20 left at least 37 people dead and 65 injured, the Ugandan opposition and Human Rights Watch accused the government of abducting opposition supporters and detaining them without trial. While the Internal Affairs Ministry, on March 4, presented a list of 177 people in military detention, the NUP claimed that 423 members and supporters had been abducted by government forces and were still missing, while another 41 had been released. On September 7, two NUP MPs were arrested on charges of a series of murders in Masaka district, Buganda Region. On November 23, the High Court in Masaka decided they would be tried for murder, attempted murder, terrorism, and aiding a terror group. Subsequently, the opposition accused the government of political persecution.

On August 26, protests were staged in Nakaseke district, Central Uganda, and on November 14 in Lira district, Northern Region. On both occasions, security forces dispersed NUP supporters with tear gas and live bullets, injuring at least one person. sag

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## ZIMBABWE (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2000**

Conflict parties: MDC vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between the Movement of Democratic Change Alliance (MDC-A) and the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) continued. Throughout the year, police arrested several members of MDC-A and their youth organization. ZANU-PF continuously threatened violence to maintain its power.

Violence between members of ZANU-PF and MDC-A was particularly frequent in October. For example, on October 11, ZANU-PF members and supporters attacked the convoy of MDC-A leader Nelson Chamisa on his nationwide tour in Masvingo Province. Members and supporters of ZANU-PF blocked a road with burned logs and began throwing stones and beating members of the convoy. At least five people were injured in the attack. Three days later, on October 14, also in Masvingo, ZANU-PF supporters kidnapped and injured six MDC-A members when they left a meeting with Chamisa. On October 24, suspected ZANU-PF members assaulted MDC-A members in Goromonzi district, Mashonaland East Province, injuring four people. On October 30, clashes broke out between ZANU-PF supporters and MDC-A members in Zvimba district, Mashonaland West Province, to prevent Chamisa from speaking to villagers, injuring at least 20 people.

In addition, the police arrested several MDC-A members. For example, on January 11, the police arrested the MDC-A party spokesperson as well as Job Sikhala, Deputy National Chairperson of the MDC-A. The party spokesperson was charged with inciting public disorder and public violence. Furthermore, on February 20, authorities arrested twelve MDC-A



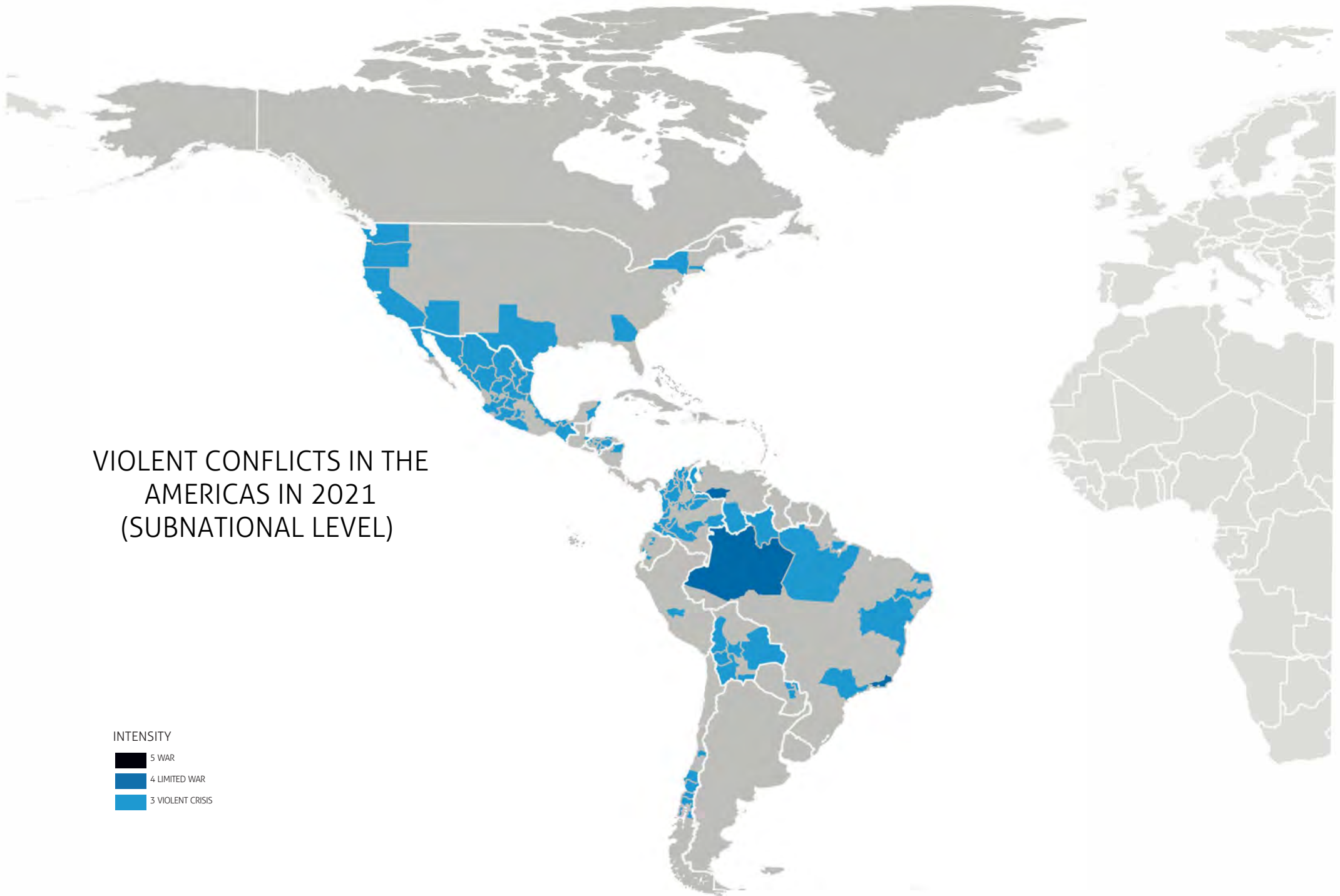
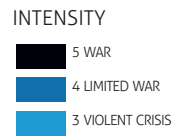
## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

members for supposedly violating Covid-19 restrictions. With the votes of the MDC-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) faction the Senate voted on April 5 to amend the constitution to allow President Emmerson Mnangagwa to select his own deputies

and judges. The opposition had repeatedly warned that the amendment was unconstitutional and would consolidate Mnangagwa's power. On July 13, MDC-A expelled the MDC-T faction. vsc

THE AMERICAS

# VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN THE AMERICAS IN 2021 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)



## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Numbering 59, the active conflicts observed by HIIK in the Americas region increased by one in comparison to last year. This year, 40 conflicts were fought violently, which marks an increase of three compared to 2020. One war and one limited war de-escalated by one intensity level respectively, while one violent crisis escalated to a limited war. Overall, five limited wars were observed.

The level of violence remained high throughout the region. In Colombia, several armed groups, drug cartels, splinter groups of the demobilized FARC, and other guerrilla groups continued to fight for control over subnational predominance and resources [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. Clashes between these different armed groups, particularly Los Caparros, ELN, the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC), and several FARC dissident groups, as well as clashes with security forces continued throughout the year, particularly in the departments of Antioquia, Caquetá, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Córdoba, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca. While violence remained high between ELN and the government, the conflict de-escalated to a violent crisis, since the number of casualties decreased compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, armed conflicts across Colombia continued to have a far-reaching impact on the lives of the civilian population. Armed organizations continued to impose restrictions on movement, strict lockdowns, and Covid-19 checkpoints for the civilian population. In addition, the shutdown of schools due to the pandemic resulted in armed groups increasingly recruiting minors, as well as generating new sources of income by trading illegally acquired Covid-19 vaccines on the black market. This year, several armed groups, including the ELN and FARC dissident groups, expanded their activities to Venezuelan states [→ Venezuela (FARC dissidents)], where the political crisis provided armed groups with opportunities for additional sources of income, including contraband and human-trafficking. Furthermore, violence against political activists and community leaders remained a contentious issue for the country. According to the Institute for Peace and Development (INDEPAZ), 168 social leaders and political activists were killed throughout the year, a decrease compared to the previous year.

Violence by non-state armed actors continued to be a major conflict driver throughout the region. In Brazil, violence between drug trafficking organizations, militias, and the government was particularly prevalent in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas and in Manaus. In Central America, specifically El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico were affected. In El Salvador, the violent crisis between the country's main gangs, Barrio 18 and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), continued [→ El Salvador (inter-gang rivalry)], as did the violent crisis between the former and the government [→ El Salvador (Maras)]. There was a spike in violence between November 9 and November 11, leaving at least 46 people dead. However, the recorded homicide rate continued to fall in comparison to previous years. The violent crises between drug trafficking organizations and the government in Honduras, as well as in Jamaica, continued with consistently high homicide rates. In Mexico, the limited 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 resulted in the country's homicide rate remaining unchanged compared to last year's high level [→ Mexico (drug cartels)]. Heavy fighting over local predominance between drug cartels led to over 33,000 killings, the majority of which could be related to inter-cartel rivalry [→ Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry)]. More than 8,000 people disappeared over the course of the year. The threat of violence applied equally to civilians and journalists. According to Reporters Without Borders, seven journalists were killed this year, making Mexico the most dangerous country in the world for journalists.

The region was also marked by continued social unrest. Following social unrest in 2019, protests reignited in April this year in Colombia, as a result of an initial tax reform proposal by the government, which came to encompass a large array of social and economic rights. Protests continued throughout the year, and turned violent on several occasions, after dialog efforts between the Comité Nacional de Paro (CNP) and the government failed [→ Colombia (social protests)]. In Chile, social unrest in 2019 and the referendum in 2020 resulted in the government's agreement to rewrite the constitution. This took place over the course of the year and involved the creation of the Constitutional Convention (CC), a publicly elected body responsible for rewriting the constitution [→ Chile (social protests)]. In Bolivia, socioeconomic protests involving the health sector and coca farmers' association Adepoca were staged against the government [→ Bolivia (socioeconomic protests)]. In Mexico, the violent crisis over the handling of public security between trainee teachers, so-called normalistas, and the government de-escalated to a non-violent crisis [→ Mexico (public security)]. Vandalism of public buildings during protests as well as the occupation of road toll booths took place, as in previous years. In contrast to 2020, no violence was reported during these incidents. In parallel to womens'/feminist protests in other countries, feminist groups demonstrated on a significant scale against gender violence on several occasions [→ Mexico (womens protests)].

Opposition conflicts also remained active across the region. For instance, the violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between Bolivian opposition and the government, this year mainly involving controversies around former interim president Jeanine Añez' detainment in March [→ Bolivia (opposition)]. In Ecuador, the violent crisis between various opposition groups and the government involved several issues, including rising fuel prices and discrimination of indigenous and environmental activists [→ Ecuador (opposition)]. In Guatemala, the violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between opposition groups, including those consisting of university students, feminist organizations, labor unions, and indigenous peoples, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Issues included widespread corruption, gender-based violence and indigenous land rights [→ Guatemala (opposition)]. In Honduras, the previously non-violent crisis between opposition and government escalated to a violent crisis in the wake of this year's general elections. Over the course of the year, more than 60 assassinations of politicians and political candidates were registered. In Peru, the violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and resources between opposition movements and the government de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. This year was marked by presidential elections and the success of left-leaning Pedro Castillo of Peru Libre. In Haiti, opposition protests continued as the socioeconomic situation deteriorated and the country fell into a grave political crisis after President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in February. Several conflicts involving indigenous groups and environmental activists continued on a violent level. In Colombia, several

## THE AMERICAS

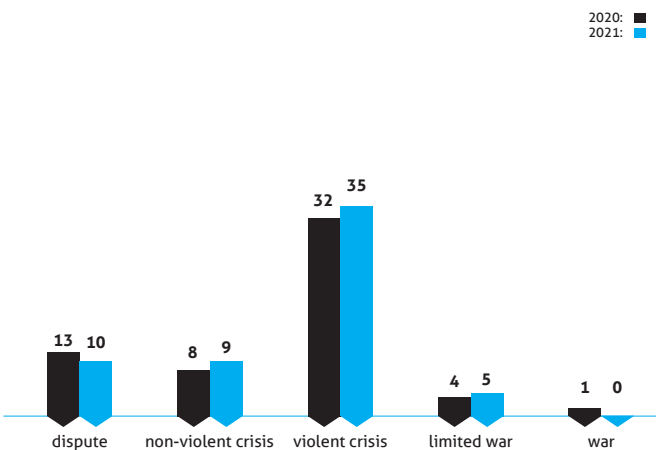
indigenous groups joined the national protests [→ Colombia (social protests)] in support of improved rights for indigenous people. In Brazil, tensions over land rights and deforestation between indigenous people and the national government remained high. In Chile, the conflict between Mapuche indigenous people and the government, as well as forestry companies, continued, as Mapuche activists carried out several arson attacks targeting forest and corporate farming companies. However, for the first time in Chilean history, indigenous people were involved in writing the constitution, as 17 of 155 seats in the Constitutional Convention now represent indigenous groups, including the President of the CC. In Paraguay, the violent crisis over resources and the orientation of the political system between the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP), including its splinter groups, and the government continued. In Nicaragua, the violent crisis over resources and autonomy between indigenous groups, primarily consisting of Miskitos, Mayangnas, and Ramas, as well as the indigenous party Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Aslatakanka (YATAMA), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued, mainly involving the killings of indigenous people by settlers.

In Peru, 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, and reached a climax when 16 people were killed on May 23, allegedly by SL members.

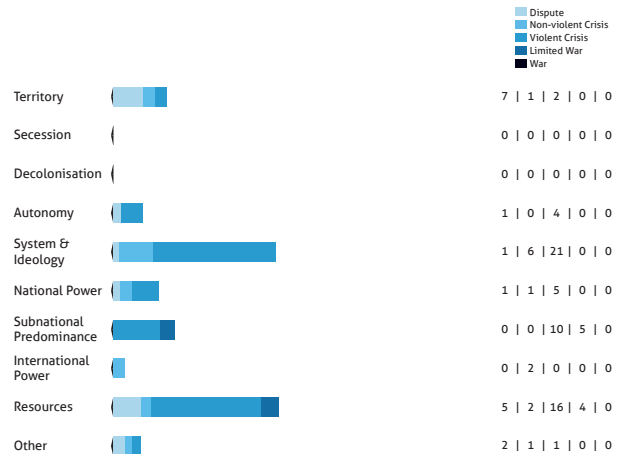
In the USA, the violent crisis over racial discrimination in the law enforcement and justice system as well as in society between anti-discrimination protesters, right-wing groups, and the government continued [→ USA (racial tensions)]. The majority of protests remained peaceful and activities remained below last year's nationwide protests. The violent crisis over ideology and the orientation of the political system between various right-wing extremist groups and the government also continued [→ USA (right-wing extremists)]. On January 6, approx. 80,000 people protested in front of the Capitol Building in the capital Washington D.C. against the certification of election results, with then-President Donald Trump renewing his claims of election fraud in a podium speech. Subsequently, the situation escalated when a mob of approx. 2,000 - 2,500 people, including right-wing militia members, stormed the Capitol. Protesters vandalized and occupied the building for several hours, while the certification process was halted and lawmakers and their staff were evacuated.

Notably, the non-violent dispute over territory and resources between Nicaragua and Colombia also continued, as both countries continue to claim a disputed sea area rich in oil reserves and minerals. Their case was presented to the International Court of Justice [→ Colombia - Nicaragua (sea border)].

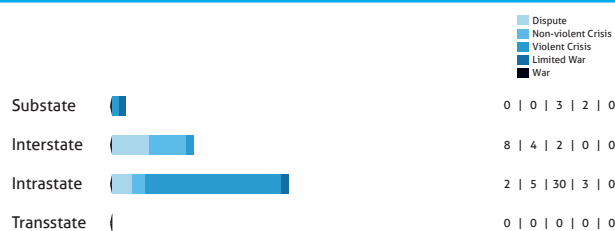
### CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN THE AMERICAS IN 2021 COMPARED TO 2020



### FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN THE AMERICAS IN 2021



### FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN THE AMERICAS IN 2021



## THE AMERICAS

### Overview: Conflicts in the Americas in 2021

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
Argentina – United Kingdom (Falkland Islands / Islas Malvinas)*	Argentina vs. United Kingdom	territory, resources	1833	•	1
Belize – Guatemala*	Belize vs. Guatemala	territory	1981	↗	3
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	↘	4
Brazil (indigenous groups)	indigenous groups vs. government	autonomy, resources	1985	•	3
Brazil (MST, MTST)	MST, MTST vs. government	resources	1996	↘	2
Brazil (social protests)*	BLM et. al. vs. government	system/ideology	2014	•	3
Chile (anarchist groups)*	anarchist groups vs. government	system/ideology	2014	↘	2
Chile (Mapuche / Araucania)	CAM, Mapuche, WAM vs. government	territory, autonomy	2008	•	3
Chile (social protests)	social movements vs. government	system/ideology	2006	•	3
Chile – United Kingdom (Antarctica)*	Chile vs. United Kingdom	territory	2007	•	1
Colombia (ASCAMCAT / Catatumbo)*	ASCAMAT vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources	2013	•	3
Colombia (ELN)	ELN vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1964	↘	3
Colombia (FARC dissidents)	FARC dissidents vs. 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 (social protests)	Comité Nacional de Paro, Primera Línea vs. government	system/ideology	2019	•	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 (social protests)*	civil society groups, pro-democracy groups, social protesters vs. government	system/ideology	2021	<b>NEW</b>	3
Cuba – USA (Guantanamo)*	Cuba vs. United States	territory	1959	•	1
Cuba – USA (system)*	Cuba vs. United States	system/ideology, international power	1960	•	2
Dominican Republic – Haiti*	Dominican Republic vs. Haiti	other	2009	↓	1
Ecuador (inter-gang rivalry)*	Choneros et al. vs. Lobos et al.	subnational predominance, resources	2021	<b>NEW</b>	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	↗	3
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
Honduras (Bajo Aguán)*	farmers of Bajo Aguán, farmers' cooperatives vs. government	resources	2012	↗	3

## THE AMERICAS

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
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	↗	3
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	•	1
Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)	CJNG et al. vs. CU et al. vs. CSRL et al. vs. CDS et al. vs. CDN et al. vs. CDG 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	↘	2
Mexico (women's protests)*	feminist groups, human rights activists, women's rights groups vs. government	system/ideology	2020	•	3
Mexico – USA (border security)	Mexico vs. United States	other	2005	•	3
Nicaragua (indigenous groups)	Mayangna, Miskito groups, Rama, YATAMA vs. government, non-indigenous settlers	autonomy, resources	2015	•	3
Nicaragua (opposition)*	anti-government protesters, opposition groups vs. government, paramilitary groups	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	↘	2
Peru (Shining Path)	SL vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1980	•	3
USA (racial tensions)	BLM, local protesters et al. vs. right-wing groups 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 (FARC dissidents)	FARC dissidents vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2020	↗	4
Venezuela (opposition)*	opposition (MUD) vs. government, pro-government militias	system/ideology, national power	1992	↘	2

<sup>1</sup> Conflicts marked with \* are without description

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> 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 national power between opposition parties and groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

On March 13, former interim president and opposition politician Jeanine Añez from the Democrat Social Movement was arrested alongside two former members of her cabinet. Añez was accused of allegedly pursuing a coup d'état when proclaimed interim president, after the forced resignation of former president Evo Morales in 2019, and of "massacres" against Movement Towards Socialism (MAS)-affiliates in the aftermath. This sparked several nationwide protests throughout the year with Añez supporters demanding her immediate release, due to the allegedly unlawful accusations as well as her poor health condition.

Former president and opposition leader Carlos Mesa of Comunidad Ciudadana, for instance, criticized Añez' detainment and called for the country's "democratic forces" to come together and confront this "extremely grave" situation. On March 15, thousands protested in the departments of Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, El Beni, La Paz and Santa Cruz.

On April 13, civil society organizations, such as the Comité Nacional de Defensa de la Democracia and the Comité Cívico of La Paz along with Añez' daughter, held a protest march in the city centre of the capital La Paz, demanding the release of Añez. On August 5, opposition groups and pro-government groups clashed in the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz as investigations of electoral fraud in the 2019 election were closed, leaving at least one protester injured. The investigations were closed due to a lack of evidence for electoral fraud. On August 21, Añez attempted suicide. On August 25, Añez' supporters clashed with opponents again in a protest in front of the prison in Santa Cruz where Añez was held. No injuries were reported.

On October 11, opposition groups protesting against the government and demanding Añez' release clashed with security forces in the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, and Tarija. Security forces used tear gas in La Paz and Cochabamba to disperse the protests.

On November 17, ten police officers prevented Añez's daughter from protesting in front of a University in Trinidad, Beni department, where the incumbent president Luis Arce (MAS) was located. The protest would have been against the continued detainment of her mother.

International organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch voiced concerns over Añez' detainment. The European Parliament urged the Bolivian government to immediately release Añez, as well as other opposition detainees. fbm

## BOLIVIA (SOCIOECONOMIC PROTESTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1983**

Conflict parties: various social groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and resources, such as coca or the health sector, between various social groups, on the one hand, and the government, supported by the Central Bolivian Union, on the other, continued.


Throughout the year, healthcare personnel, supported by the National Health Council of Bolivia (Conasa) and the Colegio Médico de Bolivia, protested against measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the Health Emergency Law, promulgated by the government. For instance, on February 19, Conasa initiated a national strike of healthcare personnel, mainly in the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz, demanding the repeal of the Health Emergency Law.

Coca farmers disagreed over the establishment of a parallel coca market in La Paz, smaller in size, and supported by the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) led government. This led to increased division of the coca producers' association Adepcoca into two different factions, based on different views on organizational structure and of Adepcoca's presidency. One faction was backed by the government, while the other was led by government-opposing figures and supported by groups of traditional coca growers from the Bolivian Yungas. This resulted in mobilizations throughout the year, predominantly in the capital La Paz, which spiked in September and October. On September 27, for instance, clashes between the different factions left 15 injured. Police arrested a further 24. Security forces used tear gas while protesters of the Yungas faction used explosives. On October 20, the MAS-affiliated candidate was declared president of Adepcoca. This triggered weeks of protests by the opposing Yungas faction, including violent clashes with police authorities and explosives, which caused damage to several buildings including the headquarters of Adepcoca, in La Paz. Throughout the year, at least one person died and 23 were injured.

On September 17, the government approved a law against the legitimization of illicit profits. Subsequently, several civil society groups and platforms like the National Committee for Democracy Defense (Conade) and Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos staged protests, demanding the suspension of the law. Starting on October 11, national strikes and protests involving road blockages were held, resulting in violent clashes with police authorities and MAS-affiliated groups. From November 8, protests and strikes intensified, especially in the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Potosí, Tarija, Oruro, and El Beni. On November 9, for instance, a civilian involved in the protests in Potosí died, allegedly as a consequence of a tear gas attack by the police. Several more protesters were injured in parallel protests in Santa Cruz, Tarija, and Oruro. Violence decreased following the suspension of the law by the government on November 16. Several persons were injured and at least 107 arrested during the protests. ala

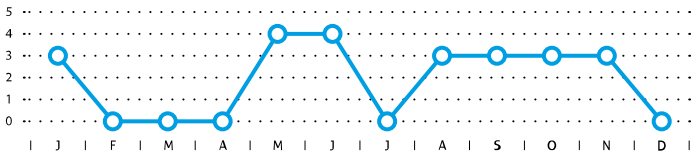


BRAZIL (DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS)

Intensity: **4** | 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), present in seven states, Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), present in 23 states, Família do Norte (FDN), present in one state, and various militias on the one hand, and the government on the other, de-escalated to a limited war.

Homicide rates remained high throughout the first six months of the year, although there was a slight annual decrease to 21,042 when compared to 2020, according to the G1 project "Monitor of Violence". Favelas of Rio de Janeiro, eponymous state, continued to be targeted in regular police operations as part of state policy to combat drug trafficking. For instance, on May 6, a police raid targeting CV saw heavily armed police officers with armored helicopters, rifles, and armored vehicles kill 24 residents suspected to be members of DTOs in favela Jacarezinho. One police officer was also killed during the gunfight. Another large-scale police operation took place on November 16 in the militia-controlled neighborhood of Baixada Fluminense: 23 were arrested, with no deaths or injuries reported.

The police also raided the neighborhood of Salgueiro several times, leaving one police officer dead in mid-November. Subsequently, on November 22, residents found eight bodies with signs of torture after a gunfight with military police, which was considered revenge for the police officer's death. The state of Amazonas experienced a high level of violent crime in June. During a police raid in Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, military police killed one of the leaders of CV. DTO members retaliated by severely damaging infrastructure in Manaus. On one major occasion, on June 8, members of CV burned 29 vehicles, damaged seven bank branches and eight public buildings using petrol bombs and grenades. The government reacted by deploying the National Guard, suspending public transport and closing schools. Subsequently, police arrested 31 persons suspected of planning the attacks. In addition to the high levels of violence in the context of police raids, between January and March, up to 13.5 percent of overall homicides in Brazil were attributed to inter-gang violence in Bahia state. Besides the presence of CV and PCC, the favela Valeria in the outskirts of Salvador, Bahia state, experienced a turf war between the smaller DTOs Katiara and Bonde do Maluco.

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, led by President Jair Bolsonaro, continued. Several indigenous communities continued to urge the government to delimitate indigenous lands, ensure their rights, and stop illegal mining and farming. The most prominent indigenous groups were the Kayapo, Guarani, Munduruku, Pataxó, Yanomami, Krahô, and Tabajara.

From August 22 to September 15, Brazil's largest mobilization in the history of the indigenous movements took place. Approx. 6,000 indigenous people with representatives from 173 ethnic groups came to the capital Brasília. The protests concerned indigenous land rights and, in particular, a discriminatory reform on the land-property verification laws (marco temporal) that would disadvantage indigenous people. In this context, hundreds of indigenous groups also protested against the aggravation of land demarcation in other cities like Sao Paulo, eponymous state, Vitoria, Espiritu Santo state, Abare, Rio de Janeiro state, and Bom Jardim, Bahia state.

Indigenous activists explicitly accused Bolsonaro of supporting illegal logging and mining activities, destruction of the environment, and violence against the indigenous groups. A subsequent request for an investigation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the basis of crimes against humanity was filed in early October.


Throughout the year, indigenous people continued to be threatened by an invasion of loggers, miners, and farmers. According to Greenpeace, indigenous reserve deforestation increased by 35 percent in the first half of 2021 compared to the same period last year. Moreover, the number of illegal gold miners in Yanomami territory increased to 20,000.

Violent attacks on indigenous people occurred throughout the year. For instance, on March 25, a group of illegal miners broke into and vandalized the premises of the Munduruku Wakoborün Women's Association in Jacareacanga, Pará state. On April 18, miners stole more than 830 liters of fuel and a boat engine belonging to the Association. On May 10 and 16, illegal miners attacked Palimiú village, Roraima state, using guns and tear gas. Five people were injured, and two Yanomami children drowned during the events. On February 12, in the Alto Rio Guama Indigenous Territory, Pará state, military police killed an indigenous leader. According to the NGO Amazon Watch, military police have allegedly been collaborating with land owners.

Alongside violent threats, the Covid-19 pandemic has endangered indigenous people. More than one thousand people died this year, in part due to lower immune response. The government was criticized for failing to take adequate measures to protect indigenous communities against the virus.

mvo

## BRAZIL (MST, MTST)

Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **1996**


Conflict parties: MST, MTST vs. government  
 Conflict items: resources

The violent crisis over land and housing between several left-ist 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 hand, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

Several casualties involving individuals linked to MST occurred throughout the year, but no violence has been attributed to government security forces. However, MST has occasionally accused the government of inaction against violence. For instance, on July 18, four unidentified gunmen shot a pastor and MST activist at the MST-encampment in Recife, Pernambuco state. While military police saw no connection between the shooting and the agrarian or housing interests, MST denounced the alleged lack of first aid from police officers at the scene and described the incident as intimidation. In a separate incident, on May 1, police found the dead body of a politician and LGBTQ and MST activist in Paraná state, after he was tied up in his vehicle, shot, and set on fire.

In multiple further violent incidents, unidentified assailants also fired shots that did not result in casualties at sites linked to the MST. Most notably, on October 31, 20 armed men, allegedly Bolsonaro supporters, attacked residents of the Fábio Henrique settlement in Prada city, Bahia. They burned two buses, destroyed houses, shot at cars, and took hostages intending to find local MST leaders. The Governor of Piauí state condemned the attack, and the Public Security Secretariat of Bahia launched an investigation and ordered specialized military police units to patrol the area. Further gunfire incidents at other MST sites were reported, for example, on October 15 in Dom Celso camp in Porto Nacional, Tocantins state. pke

## CHILE (MAPUCHE / ARAUCANIA)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **2008**

Conflict parties: CAM, Mapuche, WAM vs. government  
 Conflict items: territory, autonomy

The violent crisis over ancestral territory and autonomy of the Araucanía region between the Mapuche indigenous people, mainly represented by the organizations Weichan Auka Mapu (WAM) and the Coordinadora Arauco-Malleco (CAM), on the one hand, and the government, together with forestry companies, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, the Mapuche continued to claim ancestral land, which is currently owned by forestry companies. This resulted in several clashes with forestry companies and government forces, mainly in the Araucanía region, including arson attacks, street barricades, and armed attacks.


For example, on July 9, a police officer killed a member of the CAM in a clash in Carahue municipality, La Araucanía. According to government sources, in the three weeks following the death of the CAM member, Mapuche organizations committed at least 150 attacks against forestry companies in

the region. However, most of the attacks were not claimed by Mapuche organizations. After some attacks, flyers referring to the Mapuche cause were found but could be connected to other armed groups that have previously hidden behind the Mapuche cause.

On October 12, then-President Sebastián Piñera declared a state of emergency over the regions of La Araucanía and Bio-Bío due to the Mapuche conflict and deployed additional armored vehicles and troops to the regions. The increased presence of police and military exacerbated violent outbreaks in the regions, with police repeatedly using violence against Mapuche protesters. On November 3, for instance, during a protest against the state of emergency, the military killed at least one Mapuche protester in the town of Cañete, Bio-Bío. Subsequently, hundred protesters gathered in front of congress in the capital Santiago, Metropolitana region, and tried to break into the building. They were prevented from entering by security forces.

The 2019 social protests [→ Chile (social protests)] and the subsequent popular referendum had urged the government to agree to write a new constitution, which took place over the course of the year. For the very first time in Chilean history, indigenous people, amongst other societal groups, were involved in writing the constitution. On July 4, Elisa Loncón, a Mapuche representative, was appointed president of the Constitutional Convention. The new constitution is supposed to officially recognise indigenous groups, including the Mapuche communities. Also, on December 19, the newly elected President Gabriel Boric promised to strengthen the rights of indigenous people in Chile. eke

## CHILE (SOCIAL PROTESTS)

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

Conflict parties: social movements 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.

The year was marked by continuing social unrest initiated by the 2019 mass protests, at which protesters sought social and economic equality. However, the year also saw opportunities to solidify a process of change, such as the rewriting of the constitution and the election of a new president.

The first two months of the year were marked by continued protests following the 2019 social unrest. On January 22, for example, hundreds of people protested in the capital Santiago, demanding the release of detained protesters. Police used tear gas and water launchers against protesters while they retaliated with stones. On October 18, the two-year anniversary of the 2019 social unrest, protesters took to the streets across the country. In Santiago, ACES mobilized thousands of protesters in Plaza Dignidad, while 5,000 police officers were stationed across the city. Clashes erupted when a group of protesters vandalized public property and attacked a police station. Two protesters were killed and 56 people injured on both sides, while security forces detained 450 protesters throughout the country.

Throughout the year, protests focusing on police reform took place across the country. On February 5, protesters gathered all over the country after images of police officers killing a street artist in Panguipulli, Los Ríos region, were circulated,


deepening their demand for police reforms. The protesters torched ten public offices and the town hall in Panguipulli. On May 15, Chileans voted to elect members of the Constitutional Convention (CC), which is responsible for drafting a new constitution. The CC approved a proposal to replace the militarized police unit Carabineros de Chile with a human rights-focused civilian institution on August 28.

Further social protests took place on September 28, when thousands of women took to the streets throughout the country, demanding reproductive rights. On the same day, a bill decriminalizing elective abortion was approved, beginning its legislative journey to become law. Additionally, on December 7, Congress approved a bill to legalize same-sex marriage.

Furthermore, Chileans elected former student leader Gabriel Boric of the left-wing Approve Dignity coalition as their new president on December 19, in a runoff election against a right-wing candidate. Popular amongst youth, Boric had vowed to support progressive social reforms and overhaul neoliberal economic policies.

Illegal migration also became a polarized topic, as increasing numbers of Venezuelan migrants entered Chile [→ Venezuela (opposition)]. This sparked further social protests, such as on September 25, when over 5,000 protesters marched to a camp in Iquique, Tarapacá region, and set fire to tents and belongings of Venezuelan migrants. By contrast, on October 2, a pro-migrant march in Plaza Colón, Antofagasta region, condemned xenophobia. paj

## COLOMBIA (ELN)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1964**

Conflict parties: ELN vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance, resources

The limited war over the orientation of the political system, subnational predominance, and resources between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the government escalated to a violent crisis.

Throughout the year, clashes with security forces and attacks of ELN left 39 people dead and 68 injured, a decrease compared to the previous year. For instance, on January 22, ELN damaged an oil pipeline with explosives in the municipality of Saraven, Arauca department. Moreover, on June 16, 36 people were injured in a car bomb attack on a military base outside of the city of Cúcuta, Norte de Santander department. The government blamed ELN for the attack while the group denied responsibility.


In the second half of the year, violent incidents mainly took place in the departments of Cauca, Arauca, and Norte de Santander. For example, on September 11, ELN ambushed an army unit that was conducting control operations in Arauquita municipality in Arauca, killing five soldiers and injuring six more. On September 17, six ELN members, including a high-ranking ELN leader, were killed and four more were injured in an airstrike conducted by the army in the San Juan area of Choco.

Towards the end of the year, tensions increased in Norte de Santander. For instance, on November 11, ELN ambushed and killed three soldiers. In a further incident on December 14, ELN detonated an IED in the proximity of Cúcuta airport, killing two soldiers and the carrier of the IED. Cauca also saw increased violence at the end of the year, most notably a clash between ELN and the army on November 27, which left

two soldiers and two ELN members dead. Four further ELN members were captured.

ELN allegedly financed itself predominantly through involvement with the production and commercialization of narcotics, extortion, illegal mining, and kidnapping. This year, ELN and other armed groups, such as FARC dissidents, expanded their activities to Venezuelan states [→ Venezuela (opposition); Venezuela (FARC dissidents)]. smo

## COLOMBIA (FARC DISSIDENTS)

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

Conflict parties: FARC dissidents 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 several dissident groups of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The different groups of militant dissidents of FARC remained active throughout the year, most notably in the departments of Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Arauca, and Caquetá.

The conflict was dominated by disputes over control over territory, as well as drug trafficking routes. FARC dissidents were among the groups vying for control over areas previously held by FARC [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants); → Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)]. In October, the Institute for Development and Peace Studies (INDEPAZ) pointed out that FARC dissidents are currently composed of 34 subgroups with a total of 5,200 members.

Active fighting between FARC dissident groups and the government continued throughout the year. On March 2, for example, the air force carried out a military operation in the municipality of Calamar, Guaviare department. According to government reports, ten members of the subgroup of Gentil Duarte were killed. On June 25, the helicopter in which President Ivan Duque and other officials were traveling, was hit by six shots as it approached the city of Cúcuta, Norte de Santander. A FARC dissident commander claimed responsibility for the attack. The same commander also claimed responsibility for a bomb attack on June 15, on a military base in Cúcuta, which left 44 people injured. Moreover, on October 2, the army clashed with the Carlos Patiño subgroup in the Cañón de Micay, Cauca department, resulting in the death of ten people.

Several arrests of prominent FARC dissident leaders were reported throughout the year. For example, in April, in the department of Cauca, in a large-scale joint operation, security forces arrested ten dissidents of the Dagoberto Ramos subgroup and killed two others.

Security forces also suffered several fatalities. For instance, on May 16, FARC dissidents planted a bomb in La Gabarra de Tibú, Norte de Santander, killing two soldiers and leaving one wounded.

FARC dissident groups continued to target communal leaders, a strategy commonly used by different armed groups in Colombia. According to INDEPAZ, 168 community leaders were assassinated throughout the year, many either in areas with the presence of FARC dissidents or other illegal armed groups [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. For example, on March 28, in

Jamundi municipality, Valle del Cauca, suspected FARC dissidents opened fire against a group of civilians, killing three people including a community leader. The conflict caused further internal displacement during the year. In April, for instance, at least 250 civilians were displaced in Cauca, following a clash between suspected FARC dissidents of the Carlos Patiño subgroup and security forces, resulting in the death of ten dissidents and one soldier. cja

## COLOMBIA (INDIGENOUS GROUPS)

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

Conflict parties: indigenous groups vs. government

Conflict items: resources

The violent crisis over resources, especially the distribution of land, between several indigenous groups including the Nasa, Embera, Misak, and Pijao communities, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Over the course of the year, indigenous groups claimed that the government had neglected to protect their communities and urged it to take action. According to the Institute for Studies on Development and Peace, by November 14, at least 46 indigenous leaders had been killed by armed groups in Colombia [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)].

Several indigenous communities including Awa, Nasa, and Bari protested throughout the year, mainly in the departments of Antioquia, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Putumayo. On May 2, the indigenous communities from the Cauca and Valle del Cauca regions, organized in their ‘Minga Indígena’, marched to the city of Cali, Valle del Cauca department, to join national protests that included several thousand people [→ Colombia (social protests)]. Multiple cases of violence towards members of the indigenous communities were reported, especially in the city of Cali, where armed civilians shot at the Minga and injured several people.

Throughout the year, public security forces and indigenous communities clashed several times. For example, on March 10, in the urban surroundings of Santander de Quilichao, Cauca department, the police stopped a truck with members of the indigenous communities to check their identity and destination. The situation escalated and police detained the indigenous, leaving one person injured. On another occasion, on May 16, in the municipality of Barbacoa, Nariño department, a member of the Awa community was shot in the leg by a military officer while on the way to join the indigenous protests. In the municipality of Dagua, Valle del Cauca, police used tear gas and stun grenades against a resistance point of the indigenous guards, a collective non-violent organization of self-protection by the indigenous communities.

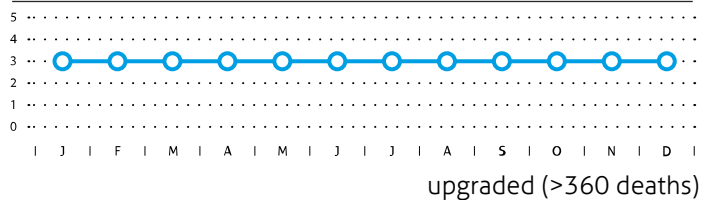
From May 18 to 21, around 300 members of indigenous communities marched to the city of Medellin, Antioquia department, to protest for human and environmental rights, education, housing, and human dignity. They reached an agreement with the regional governor to work together on these topics. msc

## 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, Los Pelusos, and Los Contadores, 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, as well as reinforcing their power over territories they had previously owned whilst pushing to take areas which were previously dominated by the FARC. Violent incidents mainly took place in the departments of Valle del Cauca, Arauca, Bolivar, Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Sucre, and Norte de Santander.

On February 4, for instance, a killing took place in Argelia municipality, Cauca, resulting in three fatalities. Besides the corpses a leaflet was found claiming the perpetrators to be members of the FARC-dissident subgroup Carlos-Patiño and the victims as ELN spies. On February 26, clashes between AGC and Los Caparros in the communities of Tamaná and Piemont, Antioquia, left one civilian dead and one injured. On March 26, suspected members of the FARC subgroup Dagoberto Ramos detonated a car bomb in the town of Corinto, Cauca, leaving 43 people injured and eight houses destroyed. At the end of March, more than a week of clashes between two unidentified groups over the control of the drug-trafficking routes took place in Bocas de Satinga municipality, Nariño, displacing over 1,000 people.

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 21, in Quibdó, Chocó, Los Locos Yam, a subgroup of Los Urabenos, tortured and killed three civilians for entering the subgroup’s self-defined territory. In another incident on May 22, suspected members of AGC killed one and injured five people in the town of Ovejas, Sucre, allegedly for not having adhered to curfew rules implemented by the armed group. Besides curfew measures, armed groups increasingly invested in gathering vaccines to trade on the black market. Moreover, the shutdown of schools due to the pandemic led to an increasing danger of recruitment of minors. Between July 2019 and June 2021, at least 220 minors were forcibly enrolled. On March 14 and 16, two young people were found

tortured and killed in Argelia, Cauca. A local community leader claimed this to be typical for forced recruitment by ELN or the Carlos-Patiño subgroup of the FARC.

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. For instance, on June 9, suspected ELN members assassinated a community leader and her partner in Corinto, Cauca. Throughout the year, at least 168 community and political leaders were killed.

The power-vacuum of the dismantled FARC gave space to several small criminal organizations, establishing themselves in cities and rural areas. For example, on April 4, suspected members of La Aldea, killed four and injured three people in Circasia municipality, Quindío department. Moreover, drug cartels and other armed organizations continued to target demobilized FARC members and members of the Comunes political party, killing at least 48.

The civilian population was specifically affected by armed clashes, resulting in forced displacements. Between January 1 and March 31, several armed clashes between armed groups led to the displacement of over 27,000 people. For instance, by the end of March, several days of clashes between the AGC and ELN led to the displacement of over 2,000 people in the rural areas of Alto Baudó municipality, Chocó. In another incident in Argelia, Cauca, in March, around 2,000 people were displaced due to continuous clashes between unidentified armed groups. Later in June, armed groups clashed for over a month in the rural area near Roberto Payán municipality, Nariño, resulting in the displacement of over 5,000 people.

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 [→ Venezuela (FARC Dissidents)]. Also, armed groups participated in nationwide protests [→ Colombia (social protests)], using the chaos to their advantage. For instance, ELN allegedly financed the anti-government group Primera Línea. lsc

## 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 violent crisis 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, continued.

Armed clashes among armed groups attempting to control drug trafficking routes and other illicit economies such as mining remained a contentious issue for national security [→ Colombia (inter-cartel violence, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)].

Throughout the year, security forces intervened in several of

these clashes often leaving casualties on both sides. Particularly the departments of Antioquia, Córdoba, and Norte de Santander were affected. For example, on September 11, the army killed seven members of AGC in a clash in the town of Ituango, Antioquia department. On October 26, AGC killed three soldiers and wounded four in an attack in the town of Puerto Libertador, Córdoba department. Throughout Colombia, neo-paramilitary groups and drug cartels tried to increase their sphere of influence and challenge the legitimacy of the state, often threatening local communities and enforcing curfews during the Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, the governor of the department of Magdalena, Carlos Caicedo, was forced to leave the country on August 19 due to alleged death threats against him, reportedly from AGC.

The government continued to target the leaders of cartels and neo-paramilitary groups. On July 21, security forces successfully captured the leader of the paramilitary group Los Puntillero ‘‘Quemarrancho’’. On another occasion, on October 23, Dairo Antonio Úsuga, known as Otoniel, one of Colombia’s most sought after drug traffickers and leader of AGC, was captured. President Iván Duque likened the arrest of Otoniel to the capture of drug cartel leader Pablo Escobar three decades ago. jke

## COLOMBIA (SOCIAL PROTESTS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2019**

Conflict parties: Comité Nacional de Paro, Primera Línea vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, namely economic, social, and cultural rights between Primera Línea and the Comité Nacional de Paro (CNP), supported by student groups, workers associations, and the indigenous communities [→ Colombia (Indigenous Groups)], on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Social protests first erupted in November 2019 and were reignited in April this year throughout the country due to a tax reform planned by the government. They were primarily mobilized and organized by CNP and Primera Línea.

The protesters took to the streets against the insufficient fulfillment of economic, social, and cultural rights based on poverty, economic inequality, limited access to education and to work and health care systems, gender-based violence, racial and ethnical discrimination, rising violence within the country, impunity, and the slow and incomplete implementation of the peace agreement between the government and the FARC [→ Colombia (FARC dissidents)]. On April 28, CNP, Primera Línea, and other actors called for protests that continued on a daily basis for almost three months in 860 municipalities across 32 of the country’s 33 departments.

During some of the protests, especially in Cali city, Valle del Cauca department, and the capital Bogotá, violent confrontations occurred between the police and protesters. Throughout May, in Cali, Medellín city, Antioquia department, and Pereira city, Risaraldo department, protesters were attacked with firearms by civilians, allegedly partly tolerated by or occurred in collaboration with state forces. According to the UN, during the protests in Cali, Medellín, and Pereira, at least 46 people died. In Cali, protesters reported several disappearances, as well as several cases of sexual violence committed by police officers. , Protests resumed on the 28th of every month until the end of the year in major cities of the

country, such as Bogotá, Cali, and Medellín, mostly without further violent incidents.

Dialog between the government and CNP began on May 10, but was suspended a month later without results. msc

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## COLOMBIA – NICARAGUA (SEA BORDER)

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Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **1825**

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Conflict parties: Colombia vs. Nicaragua

Conflict items: territory, resources

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The non-violent dispute over territory and resources between Nicaragua and Colombia continued. The disputed area, namely the San Andrés Archipelago, is rich in fishing and mineral deposits and also includes gas and oil reserves. In 2012, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) granted the majority of the contended area to Colombia, but Nicaragua has autonomy of the maritime area 200 miles from its shoreline, which includes vast gas and oil reserves as well as rich fishing waters.

On January 28, Nicaragua declared four million hectares off the Caribbean coast to be a Biosphere Reserve, including areas controlled by Colombia. Colombia lodged a protest at the ICJ against Nicaragua for unilaterally claiming territorial waters and called it a 'meaningless law' as the area was already considered a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. On September 20, the case between Nicaragua and Colombia commenced at the ICJ, in which Colombia claimed that it could not comply with the ruling because, according to their law, a new bilateral treaty must be drawn up. Nicaragua, on the other hand, claimed that this was a ploy by Colombia to avoid compliance with the 2012 court ruling. kmt

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## ECUADOR (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1980**

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Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, resources

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The violent crisis over resources and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups, such as the United Front of Workers (FUT), the Popular Front (FP), and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The beginning of the year was marked by national elections. The close loss of Indigenous candidate Yaku Pérez in the first round of voting led to protests in the capital of Quito, Pichincha province. For instance, on February 23, hundreds gathered in support of Pérez to demand a recount, with police responding with tear gas and water cannons. In a runoff election on April 11, Guillermo Lasso of the centre-right Creating Opportunities won the presidency.

Throughout the year, violence and discrimination faced by Indigenous communities and environmental activists led to protests. On March 5, Indigenous Kichwa peoples from the Ecuadorian Amazon traveled to the Constitutional Court in Quito, demanding justice for a massive oil spill that had taken place in April 2020. Furthermore, the murder of anti-mining activist Andrés Durazno on March 17 sparked outrage from human rights and Indigenous organizations.

In July and August, teachers protested against poverty increases affecting salaries and public education for students. For example, several teachers from the National Union of Educators began a hunger strike on July 12 that lasted two months and included 89 teachers and hundreds of supporters across 13 provinces. They demanded ratification of the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI). On August 2, police repressed dozens of teachers who held a sit-in outside the headquarters of the Ecuadorian Social Security Institute. The strike ended on August 12 after the Constitutional Court ratified the LOEI and accepted most provisions.

On October 22, Lasso increased the fuel prices, which prompted FUT, CONAIE, and FP to mobilize supporters on October 26. Thousands took to the streets in at least five provinces including Pichincha, Imbabura, Cotopaxi, Azuay, and Guayas. In Quito, police and military used tear gas on protesters who responded by throwing stones. Five officers were injured and 37 protesters arrested. The next day, main roads across ten provinces remained blocked as tens of thousands mobilized demanding the release of those detained. On November 10, Lasso's administration invited CONAIE to a discussion to bring an end to the unrest. paj

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## EL SALVADOR (INTER-GANG RIVALRY)

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

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Conflict parties: Barrio 18 vs. MS-13 vs. MS-503

Conflict items: subnational predominance

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance between Barrio 18, which is split into Revolutionaries and Southerners, and Mara Salvatrucha-13 (MS-13) and its splinter group MS 503, continued. The rival gangs maintained de facto power in their respective territories distributed over all 14 state departments, but in comparison to 2020 the homicide rate dropped by 12.5 percent to 17.6 per 100,000, according to the National Ministry of Defense.

President Nayib Bukele continued to credit this development to his Territorial Control Plan, launched in 2019, that aimed to curb inter-gang-violence [→ El Salvador (Maras)]. However, the government allegedly brokered a deal with the gangs. In exchange for fewer homicides and electoral support, Bukele supposedly offered prison privileges. Bukele repeatedly denied these negotiations. According to Insight Crime, the decreased levels of inter-gang violence might also be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic, since gangs continued to order and enforce curfews and restrictions in their respective territories.

Nonetheless, confrontations between different gangs led to a number of casualties this year. On April 21, for instance, a shoot-out between gang members in Santa Elena municipality, Usulután department, left two people dead. On July 16, four youths were shot after leaving school in Turín municipality, Ahuachapán department, one of them supposedly affiliated with a gang. Their school was allegedly located on the border of territories belonging to MS-13 and Barrio 18 respectively. On September 19, a Barrio 18 member was shot while driving his motorcycle in Izalco municipality, Sonsonate department. On December 25, in Coatepeque municipality, Santa Ana department, gang members with alleged ties to MS-13 shot two individuals dead and injured two more. At least one of the victims was known to be affiliated with Barrio 18.

Violence spiked between November 9 and 11 when 46 peo-

ple were killed and 20 injured, the majority due to gang rivalry. However, the specific background of the sudden increase in violence remained unclear. Some police officials attributed it to inter-gang rivalry while others related the violence to disagreements over the alleged government deal.

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## GUATEMALA (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1985**

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Conflict parties: indigenous groups et al., opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between opposition groups, including opposition groups, consisting of university students, feminist organizations, labor unions, and indigenous peoples, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Issues included wide-spread corruption, gender-based violence, and indigenous land rights.

On January 26, several hundred people gathered in the capital Guatemala City, to protest femicide and violence against women.

On July 9, unknown perpetrators killed four people and injured two in an attack in a nightclub in the capital city of Guatemala. One of the casualties was the anti-government activist Frank Ramazzini.

On July 30, labor unions and other civil groups protested the dismissal of the former Special Prosecutor against Impunity, who investigated government officials close to President Alejandro Giammattei. Civilians demonstrated in front of the presidential palace in Guatemala City and established road-blocks across the country. On August 19, protests demanding the president's resignation following the special prosecutor's dismissal continued. An estimated 200,000 civilians blocked roads between Guatemala and Mexico.

On October 19, military veterans used violence in an attempt to enter the parliament building in Guatemala City, injuring six journalists. The veterans demanded a damage payment for their service in the civil war promised by the president.

On October 23, approx. 500 soldiers and 350 police officers were sent to break up protests in the indigenous community of El Estor, Izabal state, using tear gas and batons. The protesters demanded a local nickel mine to stop its activity due to environmental reasons. Four police officers were injured, several protesters were injured by tear gas.

On November 16, several hundred police officers used tear gas to force the eviction of approx. 500 inhabitants of the indigenous community Palestina in Izabal state. Property rights in the region had been contentious for many years and the government now ordered eviction in favor of a palm oil company. Several houses were burnt down in the incident.

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## HAITI (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1986**

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Conflict parties: anti-government protesters, Fanmi Lavalas, Pitit Dessalines vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between several opposition parties, including Fanmi Lavalas and Pitit Dessalines, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The socioeconomic, institutional, and security situation in Haiti further deteriorated throughout 2021. The country experienced widespread gang violence and, according to the Center for Analysis and Research in Human Rights, at least 782 kidnappings by October.

Protests in response to these conditions continued throughout the year, at which the police and protesters clashed regularly. Police used tear gas, guns, and rubber bullets, while protesters were armed with machetes and threw stones. At protests in the capital Port-au-prince, between February 8 and 14, at least eight people were injured, several of them journalists, and two killed.

On February 7, President Jovenel Moïse announced that a coup d'état had been attempted against him. Subsequently, 23 people were arrested. Moïse had ruled by decree since 2020, insisting that his presidential term would last until 2022. Political turmoil regarding his term limits continued. His government set a date for the elections in September and for a constitutional referendum in April 2022.

On July 7, armed men entered President Moïse's private residence, killed him and injured his wife. Subsequently, security forces engaged the attackers in a gunfight, killing three. While by November 46 people had been arrested in connection to the event, details remained unknown.

On July 20, Ariel Henry was sworn in as prime minister. In September, Henry refused to cooperate with the authorities over suspicions of his possible involvement in Moïse's killing. In the same month, Henry postponed the planned elections. A new constitutional referendum was planned for 2022.

On September 11, Henry signed an agreement with members from various opposition parties in order to establish a transitional government. On December 14, the National Transitional Council consisting of 52 members was sworn in with the task of electing a provisional president and prime minister. *swc*

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## HONDURAS (DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS, ORGANIZED CRIME)

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

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Conflict parties: drug trafficking organizations, criminal organizations vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources between various drug trafficking and other criminal organizations, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Official homicide rates remained high, with the police recording a rate of 38.6 per 100,000 inhabitants and the National Autonomous University of Honduras registering a rate of 40. Though the clearance rate remained low, security forces attributed a majority of killings to drug trafficking organizations.

As in previous years, security forces continued efforts to break up major drug trafficking organizations and captured several high-ranking cartel members. Additionally, a number of smaller and local organizations gained importance. In the Western departments of Copán and Ocotepeque, both formerly controlled by the Valle cartel, this increased competition caused spikes in violence and killings.

Security forces increasingly confiscated coca as well as marijuana plants and drug laboratories, suggesting that cartels engaged in drug production on Honduran territory in addition to their drug trafficking activities. Meanwhile, the importance of Honduras as a transit state for narcotics remained high. From January to mid-April alone, Honduran authorities seized approx. four tons of cocaine in the department of Colón, significantly exceeding the amount seized in previous years.

Urban centers remained a focus for gang-related violence and inter-gang conflict. In the department of Cortés, which is a center of gang activity, rival organizations such as MS-13 and Barrio 18 competed for influence. On November 19, a shootout between members of Barrio 18 and security forces left two security forces dead in Choloma municipality, Cortés department. The next day, police captured 14 members of Barrio 18, accusing them of involvement in the killings.

Both gangs were also heavily involved in continued prison violence. For instance, on June 17, at least five inmates were killed and 39 injured, as three grenades exploded in the prison compound La Tolva, El Paraíso department, which led to a shootout with semi-automatic rifles involving incarcerated members of both gangs.

As in previous years, national trials and trials in the USA indicated links between drug trafficking organizations and the government. A US court filing from February 5 in the case against Honduran drug trafficker Geovanny Fuentes Ramirez, for instance, suggested that then-president Juan Orlando Hernández of the National Party, who had already been connected to the case, became a target of US investigations himself. On October 10, a Honduran judge convicted seven police officers of participation in drug trafficking and the possession of illegal firearms. [jhu](#)

## HONDURAS (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: opposition movement vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources

The non-violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, resources, and national power between the opposition movement and the government of President Juan Orlando Hernández, belonging to the National Party (PN), escalated to a violent crisis. After the allegedly fraudulent presidential elections in 2017, the opposition had repeatedly demanded new elections. Elections were held on November 28, which were won by Xiomara Castro of the Liberty and Refoundation (LIBRE) party.

Over the course of the year, the National Violence Obser-

vatory registered more than 60 assassinations of politicians and political candidates. For instance, on November 13, the mayor of Cantarranas municipality of the LIBRE party was shot during an electoral campaign in San Luis, Santa Bárbara department. On the same day, another LIBRE mayoral candidate was shot during a political campaign event in the town of El Colirio, Santa Bárbara.

Hernández announced he would not run for office again in the general elections. Castro won the presidential election held on November 28 with more than 50 percent of the vote. She is the wife of former president Manuel Zelaya. Following months of heightened political tensions, the country saw a peaceful transfer of power after Hernández recognized Castro's victory.

Employment and Development Zones (ZEDE) promoted by Hernández' government were one of the major points of friction between the government and the opposition. Following the "promotion" of ZEDes by the Hernández government, tensions between the government and the opposition increased. ZEDes enable the establishment of autonomous and independent courts with exclusive jurisdiction and significant tax benefits. On July 2, mayors of 126 municipalities officially closed their doors to ZEDes, claiming they threatened the country's sovereignty. [jke](#)

## JAMAICA (DRUG GANGS)

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

Conflict parties: drug gangs vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between various drug gangs and the government continued.

Jamaica recorded the highest murder rate in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2021, with 70 percent of the killings in the country attributed to Jamaican gangs. Against the backdrop of high gang activity, Prime Minister Andrew Holness announced several measures to reduce gang-related crimes. Violent confrontations between drug gangs and security forces, in particular the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF), left at least ten alleged gang members dead over the year. For instance, on March 3, a JCF raid in August Town, St. Andrew parish was met with machine gunfire. The subsequent shootout, which involved a JCF helicopter, left five alleged gang members dead. On July 30, the JCF arrested ten gang members during a police operation in St. Andrew parish. In a separate incident, on November 14, the JCF killed two alleged gang members who resisted regular traffic control in Anotto Bay, St. Mary parish.

According to Insight Crime, the gangs maintained international connections and alleged ties to corrupt police units. For example, on April 14, detectives from the narcotics division and the Saint Catherine South police seized around 55 kilograms of cocaine. Two suspects were taken into custody and one of them was a JCF officer. The seizure was related to the guns-for-drugs-trade with Haiti, which remained a problem for Jamaican police's anti-gang efforts, as it served to fund criminal gangs.

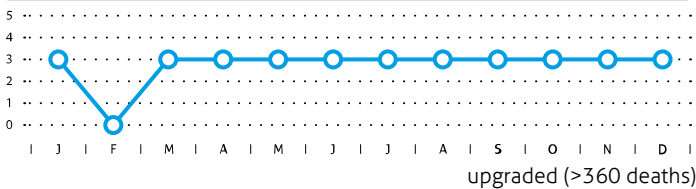
On September 20, Jamaica's largest-ever anti-gang trial began against 33 suspected gang members, accused of murder and other gang-related crimes. [lim](#)



MEXICO (DRUG CARTELS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2006

Conflict parties: drug cartels vs. vigilante groups vs. government  
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The limited 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 continued.

The most active and comprehensive drug cartels were the Gulf Cartel (CDG), Northeastern Cartel (CDN), Sinaloa Cartel (CDS), Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel (CSRL), and Carteles Unidos (CU), as well as their respective splinter groups.

As in the previous year, the government of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador continued its strategy of “abrazos no balazos” against drug traffickers, while continuing to deploy the military against drug cartels. Heavy fighting over local predominance between drug cartels continued [→ Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)], resulting in the country’s homicide rate remaining unchanged compared to last year’s high level. Moreover, more than 8,000 people disappeared over the course of the year.

Guanajuato state remained a hotspot for violence, with CJNG targeting police officers on numerous occasions, for instance when a shootout between CSRL members and state police forces in the municipality of Juventino Rosas resulted in five casualties on January 24. As a response to the high cartel violence, the state government published a new decree on May 17, providing more funding for protection mechanisms for police and prison officials. Similarly, Chihuahua state registered a high number of casualties among police forces and state officials. Most notably, on June 15, a former commander of the municipal police was murdered, which subsequently led to another casualty during an ensuing search operation in Juarez municipality.

On July 14, several shootouts between state officers and cartel members took place in Michoacán state. For instance, members of CJNG ambushed police on three separate occasions, prompting the involvement of the National Guard and the military, resulting in two casualties in the municipality of Santiago Tangamandapio.

After last year’s arrests of former CJNG leaders, security forces took the leader of CSRL into custody on October 8.

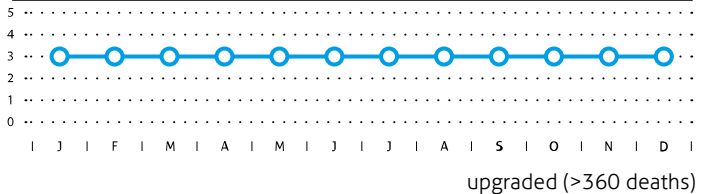
On November 15, police made another high profile arrest in Zapopan municipality, Jalisco state, when they took the CJNG leader’s wife into custody. Shortly after, CJNG members kidnapped two members of the Mexican Navy in response to her arrest.

According to Reporters Without Borders, seven journalists were killed this year, making Mexico the most dangerous country in the world for journalists. bho

MEXICO (INTER-CARTEL RIVALRY, PARAMILITARY GROUPS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2005

Conflict parties: CJNG et al. vs. CU et al. vs. CSRL et al. vs. CDS et al. vs. CDN et al. vs. CDG et al.  
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The limited war over subnational predominance and resources, such as 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 groups most involved in the conflict were Sinaloa Cartel (CDS), Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), Northeastern Cartel (CDN), Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel (CSRL), and the cartel alliance United Cartels (CU).

As in previous years, the detention or killing of cartel leaders by state forces [→Mexico (drug cartels)] or rivaling cartels caused internal fights over succession and increased fragmentation of the criminal groups. This also led to a wide variety of alliances between different cartels and a growing influence of formerly comparatively small cartels. Throughout the year, authorities recorded over 33,000 killings, the majority of which can be related to inter-cartel rivalry.

As in the previous year, CJNG continued to be the most active cartel in Mexico, though CDS was considered the most regionally stable and powerful cartel in terms of resources. This led to heavy clashes between the two rivaling groups throughout the year, primarily in Zacatecas state. Armed groups of the two cartels clashed for instance in the municipality of San Juan Capistrano, Zacatecas, on June 26, killing 19 people. In a similar incident on July 1, members of CJNG and CDS clashed again in San Juan Capistrano. The shooting left at least 30 people dead. Another violent clash between the cartels on September 13, in Valparaíso municipality, Zacatecas, resulted in the death of at least 20 people. On October 7, ten dismembered bodies and one injured person were found in Villa de Cos municipality, Zacatecas.

According to national statistics, this year was the most violent since 2015. The state of Zacatecas registered approx. 1,300 homicides related to inter-cartel rivalry. In response, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced on November 25 the transfer of 460 soldiers to Zacatecas to reinforce the 3,900 troops already operating in the region.

As in previous years, the fights over control of CDS operations between “Los Chapitos”, sons of Joaquín Guzmán Loera, alias “El Chapo”, and their uncle continued. On July 13, for instance, members of the rivaling CDS factions clashed in Culicán municipality, Sinaloa state, leaving 50 people dead.

In the state of Michoacán, CJNG tried to grow its influence through invasions into territory held by other cartels. As a result, Michoacán was the most contested state in the first half of the year. For example, on April 1, a shooting between armed CJNG and CU personnel in Aguillilla municipality left 26 people dead, according to media reports, while govern-

mental reports stated eight dead. Another intense clash took place in Buenavista municipality on July 11. The incident was marked by the use of heavy weapons, such as a narco tanks and explosive drones, and left at least 21 people dead.

Fights between CSRL and CJNG continued, particularly in the state of Guanajuato after the detention of José Antonio Yépez Ortiz, alias 'el Marro', the CSRL leader in 2020, though on a less intense level compared to last year.


For instance, in the last week of March and the first week of April, several dismembered bodies were found in plastic bags in the city of Celaya, Guanajuato, alongside so-called narco-messages which accused the casualties of being members of the respective rivaling group. On August 28, CJNG admitted to killing the nephew of 'el Marro' earlier this year. CDN and CDG continued to fight over the northeastern states of Mexico, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas, due to their strategic location along the border with the USA. For instance, on March 14, the cartels clashed in the municipality of Doctor Cross, Nuevo León, using several narco-tanks with an unknown number of casualties. On October 15, a clash between CDN and CDG took place in the city of Monterrey, Nuevo León, leaving two people dead.

National and international policymakers such as the Mexican government have closely followed how the Covid-19 pandemic affected cartel operations in Mexico. Statistics show that, since the onset of the pandemic, the range of inter-cartel competition has intensified, favoring the territorial ambitions of larger Mexican cartels. hst, apv

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## MEXICO (PUBLIC SECURITY)

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Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **2014**

Conflict parties: normalistas et al. vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and the handling of public security between trainee teachers, so-called normalistas, and associated social movements, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

The conflict was triggered by the abduction of 43 normalistas from Raul Isidro Burgos normal school in Ayotzinapa town, Guerrero state, 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 normalistas continued to demand an investigation into the case.


Normalistas, families of the victims, and associated social movements protested throughout the year. On several occasions, normalistas vandalized public buildings. For instance, on May 14, at least 50 teaching students belonging to the Ayotzinapa's Raul Isidro Burgos school vandalized property of the Democratic Revolution Party and of a leader of the ruling Morena party in Chilpancingo municipality, Guerrero state. On June 2, about 90 normalistas protested at the Attorney General's office in the capital of Mexico City, damaging the building with explosives. On June 28, as students and parents commemorated the 81st month since the normalistas' disappearance, several students rioted at the justice palace in Chilpancingo municipality. On August 8, students vandalized Guerrero's secretary of education building in Chilpancingo. On September 19, unknown perpetrators burned the monument in Mexico City, in commemoration of the 43 who had disappeared.

As in previous years, normalistas and parents regularly took control over road toll booths, not only to demonstrate but also to finance protest activities. These takeovers concentrated along the Federal Highway 95D in Guerrero state. In contrast to 2020, no violence was reported during the takeovers. run

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## MEXICO – USA (BORDER SECURITY)

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

Conflict parties: Mexico vs. United States  
 Conflict items: other

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The violent crisis over border security between the USA and Mexico continued. Throughout the year, 1,734,686 encounters between border authorities and undocumented people as well as 557 deaths were recorded, which marks a significant increase on previous years. However, many of these deaths were related to heat exposure rather than violent encounters.

Law enforcement units exerted violence against migrants on both sides of the border. On January 24, for instance, Mexican state police agents killed 19 Guatemalan migrants and set two vehicles on fire near the city of Camargo, Chihuahua state. Five days later, on January 29, a US border patrol agent chased and killed a person attempting to enter the country illegally near the Hidalgo Port of Entry, Texas state. On April 29, a US border patrol vehicle ran over two Honduran migrants in a search raid at a ranch near Kingsville city, Texas, leaving one killed and one injured. On June 16, US border authorities shot at two undocumented people during a car chase in Nogales, Arizona state. One of the victims later filed a lawsuit against the authorities. On November 17, an undocumented migrant injured two officials by throwing stones at them in Otay Mountain, California, before being arrested. On December 12, US migration agents shot at a car which refused to stop near to the San Ysidro Entry Point, California state. This resulted in a crash with another car that left 18 passengers injured.

Border patrol authorities have been criticized for failing to render medical assistance and provide adequate humanitarian support to the increasing number of people gathering at the border. On February 15, for instance, two migrants were injured after falling from the border wall and reportedly being pushed back by US authorities in El Paso, Texas. Furthermore, several thousand people were held by US authorities in a temporary camp throughout the year under the Anzalduas International Bridge in Rio Grande, Texas. On September 20, violence erupted when mounted local US border officers attempted to push back migrants crossing the border, which was strongly criticized by NGOs as well as the US White House. The number of injured remained unknown.

Finally, migration authorities were also targeted in several incidents. For instance, a group of US border patrol agents were attacked by unknown persons on August 9 near Otay Mountain, when arresting a group of migrants. This led to the deployment of US tactical units and Mexican police on either side of the border. On August 28, one US immigration official was injured while preventing an illegal crossing near San Isidro Entry Point. run

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**NICARAGUA (INDIGENOUS GROUPS)**


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


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Conflict parties: Mayangna, Miskito groups, Rama, YATAMA vs. government, non-indigenous settlers

 Conflict items: autonomy, resources
 

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The violent crisis over resources and autonomy between indigenous groups, primarily consisting of Miskitos, Mayangnas, and Ramas, as well as the indigenous party Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Aslatakanka (YATAMA), on the one hand, and the government on the other, continued. The struggle for indigenous rights and their efforts to reclaim and protect their land from settlers was supported by national and international organizations and funds such as the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

As in previous years, the extractive potential of indigenous territory caused invasions, fires, and violent attacks by settlers which resulted in the migration and mitigation of indigenous communities. Despite its legal obligation as imposed by national law and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the government did not support indigenous communities in recovering their land by relocating settlers.

Throughout the year, settlers frequently killed or injured members of indigenous communities, especially in the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN). The Bosawas Nature Reserve in Jinotega Department also saw several violent incidents. On August 23, for instance, settlers repeatedly attacked the Miskito and Mayangna communities living there, using machetes and shotguns. They killed a minimum of twelve people, raped several women and injured others. In another incident on October 4, settlers again invaded the Bosawas Nature Reserve, shooting one Mayangna dead.

This year was also marked by developments around the general elections, held on November 7, which saw President Ortega from the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) retain office with approx. 75 percent of the vote. In the run-up to the election, Ortega's government made 24 indigenous and afro-descendant community governments publicly endorse FSLN, threatening otherwise to withhold budget transfers. Shortly after, on August 26, the legislature ordered the closure of 15 human rights organizations. The YATAMA party won one seat in the National Assembly.

The conflict was further enhanced through reduced governmental support for crisis relief. According to an activist, the Covid-19 pandemic imposed an additional threat of cultural extinction as access to healthcare was unequal. Additionally, communities continued to wait for governmental emergency relief after the storms "Eta" and "Iota" caused destruction, especially to the Miskito community in 2020. rra

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**PARAGUAY (EPP, AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS)**


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


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Conflict parties: agrarian movements, EPP vs. government

 Conflict items: system/ideology, resources
 

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The violent crisis over resources and the orientation of

the political system between the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP) and its splinter groups Agrupación Campesina Armada-Ejército del Pueblo (ACA-EP) and Ejército del Mariscal López (EML), on the one hand, and the government on the other, continued. Left-oriented organizations continued to claim political and agrarian reforms due to compounding issues of land inequality and absence of well-defined property-rights. In addition, EPP, ACA-EP, and EML members targeted indigenous communities to access their lands, often resulting in invasion, destruction, and expulsion from their ancestral lands.

Throughout the year, EPP members conducted several attacks on indigenous people and their farms. For instance, on March 17, two EPP associates entered an indigenous community located in the district of Yby Yaú, department of Amambay, threatening two indigenous people to provide information concerning the whereabouts of the daughter of two EPP leaders. The daughter had been missing since the latest armed confrontation between EPP combatants and the government forces Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta (FTC) in December 2020. Moreover, EPP combatants carried out several armed attacks on different ranches in northern departments of the country, assaulting farm workers and occasionally destroying farmhouses and farm machinery. For example, on April 6, EPP members killed an indigenous person in the area of Ñuapy, Amambay.

Similarly, the ACA-EP was involved in several attacks on farms. For instance, on June 18, three unknown men, one of them wearing the symbols of the ACA-EP, burned down a farmhouse and destroyed farming machinery.

Moreover, the insurgent groups conducted several abductions. On July 3, the dead body of a civilian, who had reportedly been abducted by ACA-EP members in the district of Puentesíño, Concepción, was found in the municipality of Nuevo Caracol, Brazil. The incident was followed by a series of armed confrontations between ACA-EP members and civilians as well as military forces, resulting in several fatalities. For example, during a military patrol on July 29, three soldiers were killed in a bomb attack in the district of Tacuatí, department of San Pedro, which was supposedly carried out by the EPP. The explosion was followed by the detonation of a second device and a one-hour armed clash between combatants and soldiers. On August 1, FTC forces killed two alleged EML members during a military patrol in Horqueta, Concepción. On August 3, authorities reported that two police officers and one security guard had been shot dead in an armed attack by suspected ACA-EP members in the district of San Alfredo, Concepción.

Furthermore, on November 19, four ACA-EP members were killed in clashes with drug traffickers in Puentesíño, Concepción. On December 16, police forces arrested three further members of the ACA-EP in the same area and killed what is thought to be the last member of the group, subsequently declaring ACA-EP to be dismantled. aha

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**PERU (OPPOSITION)**


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


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Conflict parties: opposition movements vs. government

 Conflict items: system/ideology, resources
 

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and resources between various opposition movements on

the one hand, and the government on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. As in previous years, members of indigenous communities, trade unions, coca farmers, and other movements staged numerous strikes and protests throughout the country.

This year's presidential elections brought about a very close result with the left-leaning Pedro Castillo, candidate of Peru Libre, defeating his conservative counterpart Keiko Fujimori of Fuerza Popular in the runoff election on June 6. The following six weeks before the official declaration of Pedro Castillo as president were marked by numerous protests involving supporters of both sides, accompanied by unsubstantiated claims of electoral fraud raised by Fujimori.

The new president faced a number of controversies. The indigenous rural population in the municipality of Pumallacta, Cusco department, for example, went on an indefinite strike accompanied by roadblocks in mid-July. They demanded the immediate withdrawal of the mining company Anabi SAC as well as payment for the environmental damage caused by heavy metal pollution. They lifted the roadblocks only after being offered talks with Prime Minister Guido Bellido on August 19.

On October 4, hundreds of indigenous people, mobilized by the Pueblos Afectados por la Actividad Petrolera occupied the site of a Petroperu pipeline station in the Manseriche district, Loreto department, as part of regional protests by indigenous groups in the Amazon. They demanded better economic and social support as well as measures against environmental pollution and only agreed to retreat from the site after being promised negotiations with the federal government, starting in January 2022. They remained on the site for 74 days, stopping the transport of oil for that period. mgm

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## PERU (SHINING PATH)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1980**

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Conflict parties: SL vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance, resources

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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 was predominantly active in the Valley of the Apurímac, Ene, and Mantaro rivers (VRAEM), the main coca-growing region in the country, covering parts of Ayacucho, Cusco, and Junín departments. The government accused SL of protecting and operating with coca growers and drug traffickers, and tried to force SL out of its operating region. On February 18, the Ministry of Defense reported the seizure of weapons and ammunition from SL during a January territorial control operation in Vilcabamba district, Cusco department.

In a press release on March 30, the Joint Command of the Armed Forces announced the death of one of the heads of SL in VRAEM, Jorge Quispe Palomino. SL claimed that it was a consequence of being wounded during the military attack on 10/29/2020.

On May 19, in Junín department, security forces destroyed five coca processing laboratories, seized 43 kilograms of cocaine alongside processing tools, and detained one person. On May 23, 16 people were killed in the village San Miguel del Ene, Junín department. Pamphlets calling for a boycott of the presidential runoff elections scheduled for June 6 were

allegedly found at the site. The Peruvian Armed Forces accused the SL faction headed by Jorge's brother, Victor Quispe Palomino, for being responsible for the killings. However, SL did not claim responsibility for the attack. After the incident, the government sent troops to VRAEM.

On September 11, Abimel Guzmán, the founder of SL, died in prison at the age of 86 while serving a life sentence for terrorism. mgm

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## USA (RACIAL TENSIONS)

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

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Conflict parties: BLM, local protesters et al. vs. right-wing groups vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology

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The violent crisis over racial discrimination in the law enforcement and justice system as well as in society between anti-discrimination protesters, right-wing groups, and the government continued.

The majority of protests remained peaceful, except for some incidents of local riots and police clashes. The activities remained below last year's nationwide protests.

On April 12, a police officer fatally shot a Black man in Minneapolis city, Minnesota state. Subsequently, local protests erupted which developed into nationwide protests after the shooting of a Black teenager in Chicago city, Illinois state on April 15, attended by thousands of protesters.

On May 25, the one-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd's by a police officer, thousands rallied across the USA, with the largest protests taking place in Minneapolis, and New York City, eponymous state.

On November 19, protests erupted in several cities across the US after the acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse, who had fatally shot two people during last year's protests in Kenosha city, Wisconsin state.

Throughout the year, the cities of Minneapolis and Oregon were the most prominent epicenters of protest and riots related to the shootings of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and police-defunding initiatives. In Minneapolis, protest activities continued against police brutality following shootings of Black inhabitants. Portland city, Oregon state, saw regular riots in reaction to police shootings in other US cities, including on April 15, April 20, May 25 or November 19, as well as local incidents like the shooting of a protester on April 16.

Smaller protests erupted after police shot BIPOC, for instance after the shootings on April 21, in Elizabeth City, North Carolina state or on June 4, in Minneapolis, Minnesota state. lvd

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## USA (RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS)

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

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Conflict parties: right-wing extremists vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology

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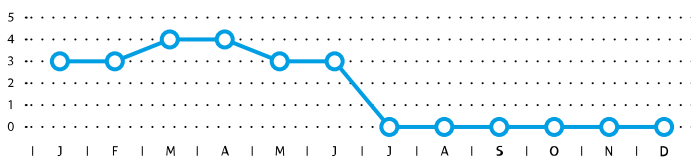
The violent crisis over ideology and the orientation of the political system between various right-wing extremist groups such as the Proud Boys or The Oath Keepers, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Following the 2020 presidential elections, then-President Donald Trump repeatedly claimed that the elections were “stolen by emboldened radical-left Democrats”. On January 6, approx. 80,000 people protested in front of the Capitol Building in the capital Washington D.C. against the certification of election results, with Trump renewing his claims in a podium speech. Subsequently, the situation escalated when a mob of approx. 2,000 - 2,500 people, including right-wing militia members, stormed the Capitol armed with stun guns, baseball bats, and hand guns. After the complex was breached, National Guard troops were sent to aid the 1,200 Capitol police officers already deployed there. Protesters vandalized and occupied the building for several hours, while the certification process was halted and lawmakers and their staff were evacuated. Four police officers and one protester were killed, and 140 law enforcement officers and numerous protesters injured during the incident. More than 700 people were arrested and eight lawsuits were filed in the days and months that followed, respectively. All lawsuits involved Trump. The Federal Bureau of Investigation classified the event as domestic terrorism on June 15. Throughout the year, members of right-wing extremist groups carried out attacks, which led to several fatalities. On March 16, an assailant attacked three Asian massage parlors in Atlanta city, Georgia state, killing eight. The assailant did not plead guilty of hate crime, stating he was suffering from mental illness. On June 28, an assailant killed a Black retired state trooper and a Black police officer in Massachusetts state. During the investigation, white supremacist and racist passages were found in journals belonging to the assailant. On August 22, protests by far-right groups, including members of Proud Boys, and anti-fascist groups descended into violence in Portland city, Oregon state. Security forces arrested one man after shooting a gun at demonstrators. According to the Brookings Institution, the threat of violence from right-wing extremists increased. Reports from Homeland Security and other intelligence branches stated that racially-motivated violence threatened law enforcement and government personnel and facilities. cib, smo, apv

VENEZUELA (FARC DISSIDENTS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2020

Conflict parties: FARC dissidents vs. government  
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The violent crisis over resources and subnational predomi-

nance between at least one dissident FARC group, the 10th Front, and the government escalated to a limited war. Clashes began in the second half of 2020, mainly over illicit profits of drug trafficking, but also rare metals in the Orinoco basin. On 9/19/2020, security forces targeted dissidents' camps at Tres Esquinas, Mata de Bambú, and Las Palmitas, Apure state, leaving four soldiers dead and another four injured. Throughout the year, clashes between security forces and FARC dissidents left at least 45 people dead and 51 injured. Armed clashes occurred mainly in Apure state, displacing more than 5,800 people and destroying local infrastructure in the city of La Victoria and its outskirts. On January 29, authorities seized landing strips, at least one Cessna airplane, and cocaine in Apure state. Subsequent violent encounters on February 5 and 13 in Amazonas and Apure state left at least eight dead. On March 21, security forces launched the large-scale offensive “Bolivarian Shield 2021”, and attacked members of the 10th Front in the rural area of La Victoria, Apure state. At least six dissidents and two soldiers died, according to the Ministry of Defense. On March 22 and 31, dissidents inflicted damage upon at least four armored personnel carriers using IEDs, landmines, and rocket-propelled grenades. On March 23, the 10th Front demolished a customs checkpoint in La Victoria, Apure state and severely damaged the electrical grid. On April 23, dissidents ambushed at least 28 soldiers and two helicopters, leaving at least eight soldiers dead and capturing another eight. According to reports of local NGOs, such as Fundaredes, the incident allegedly marked the beginning of secret negotiations between the military and the dissidents, leading to the end of hostilities by May 30 and the release of all retained personnel one day later. Despite the truce achieved in May in Apure, both parties continued to engage in violence against the civilian population. For instance, on June 12, dissidents displaced civilians and returnees from El Ripial and La Capilla, Apure state. In a separate incident on June 16, dissidents killed six indigenous people in Oasis de la Macanilla and El Fraile, Apure state. Venezuelan security forces captured civilians allegedly involved with the dissidents and killed at least four civilians, deposing them as dissidents on March 23. On July 2, Javier Tarazona, director of Fundaredes, was charged with terrorism in front of a military court, alongside two associated activists. On May 17, a high-level commander of Segunda Marquetalia, another FARC dissident group operating on both sides of the border with Colombia, and his bodyguards were ambushed and killed by an unknown commando in Zulia state. Throughout the year, several clashes between FARC dissident factions also took place on Venezuelan soil [ → Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. The forced displacement and armed violence also increased the political tensions along the Colombian-Venezuelan border [ → Colombia-Venezuela (border security)]. run

# Venezuela (FARC dissidents)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



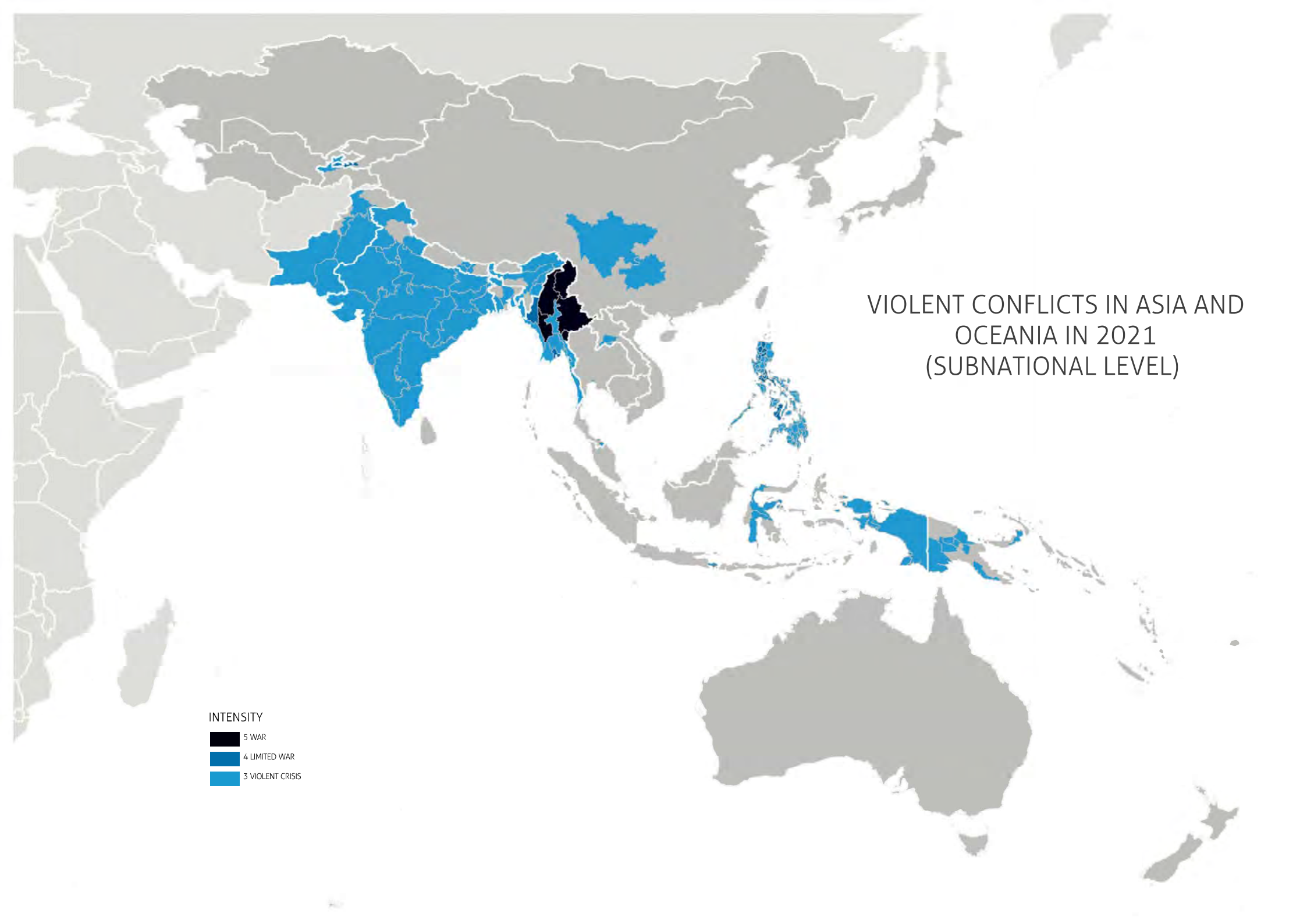
December

ASIA AND OCEANIA

VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2021  
(SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)

INTENSITY

- 5 WAR
- 4 LIMITED WAR
- 3 VIOLENT CRISIS





## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With 100 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 one. This year, 54 conflicts were fought on a violent level, a decrease by four compared to 2019. For the first time since 2017, HIIK observed a conflict on a war-level in the region. Two limited wars de-escalated to violent crises, while four violent crises escalated to limited wars. Including two ongoing limited wars, overall six limited wars were observed this year, two more than last year.

Violence across all of Myanmar's states and administrative regions escalated to a high level following the military coup on February 1 and continued throughout the year. At least 1,121 people were killed in direct relation to the coup, with a majority of violence occurring in the former capital, Yangon. The People's Defense Force (PDF) was formed by civilians opposing the coup and claimed to act in the name of the interim civilian government, the National Unity Government [→ Myanmar (opposition)].

Many ethnic armed organizations opposed the coup, supporting instead the newly formed PDF. In Rakhine State, the Arakan Army and its allies threatened to break the second month-long ceasefire for the year imposed by the Tatmadaw on April 1 if it did not cease violence against anti-coup protesters. The conflict did however de-escalate from the level of a limited war to a violent crisis [→ Myanmar (AA / Rakhine State)]. Meanwhile in Kachin State, the violent crisis over autonomy and resources between the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and its armed wing, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), on the one hand, and the Tatmadaw, on the other, escalated to limited war, totalling at least 384 deaths. With the KIA declared limited support for the PFD and its regional Kachin chapters, the KIA also increasingly became a target for attacks by the Tatmadaw [→ Myanmar (KIO, KIA / Kachin State)].

Shan State remained a hotspot for violence. The conflict between the North and South Shan State Armies, their respective political organizations of Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP) and Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Tatmadaw continued with consistent levels of violence. The historically allied North and South Shan State Armies also increasingly clashed with each other despite both the RCSS and SSPP urging both sides to return to peace talks [→ Myanmar (SSA / Shan State)]. Also in Shan State, sustained levels of violence between the T'ang National Liberation Army and the RCSS over subnational predominance caused the temporary displacement of thousands of civilians throughout the year [→ Myanmar (TNLA-RCSS / Shan State)]. The TNLA also continued to clash with the Tatmadaw throughout the year over resources, sub-national predominance and now also in opposition to the coup. In addition to launching military operations, the TNLA imposed its own sanctions on the Tatmadaw by banning products of military-owned companies within territories under its control [→ Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)]. Further violence transpired in Shan State between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and the Tatmadaw over the autonomy of the Kokang region. Skirmishes consistently occurred between the two armies with the Tatmadaw launching airstrikes at least once in Mongkoe district, killing at least 100 people. In neighboring Kayah / Karen State, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), its political wing of the Karen National Union, and its ally, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army continued to clash violently with the Tatmadaw. Violence resulting from the coup and attacks by the Tatmadaw against the KNLA caused massive influxes of IDPs into Karen State from neighboring regions as well as into Thailand [→ Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)].

In Bangladesh, security forces arrested more than a hundred alleged members of established Islamist militant groups, who did not succeed in launching attacks. However, following the alleged desecration of a Quran in October, large-scale protests took place, during which protestors killed several non-Muslims [→ Bangladesh (Islamist groups)]. The conflict between the supporters of Bangladesh's political parties remained violent, especially during protests against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attendance of Bangladesh's 50th independence anniversary. At least twelve people died and more than 130 were injured during the protests [→ Bangladesh (opposition)]. Textile workers continued to protest, strike, and erect road blockades for better working conditions, the payment of wages, and other causes. On July 13, police shot rubber bullets into a protest in the capital Dhaka, killing one worker [→ Bangladesh (RMG workers)].

In Nepal, opposition groups continued to protest against the government, after the former prime minister dissolved parliament on 12/20/2020. Throughout the year at least 30 protesters were injured and over 150 were arrested [→ Nepal (opposition)].

Caste-based violence continued in India, including upper caste members demolishing property of Dalits, assaulting, raping, and murdering them. Local authorities continued to forcefully evict Adivasis from their homes [→ India (Dalits - Adivasis)].

In India, protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) continued in several states. Passed on 12/11/2019, the CAA aimed to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslim immigrants and persecuted religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, who have been living in India prior to 12/2014. Among others, ethnic Assamese continued to protest the CAA. The federal government continued its eviction campaign, which was criticized by pro-Benagli Organizations [→ India (inter-ethnic rivalry / Assam)]. Farmers' protests over the Indian Farm Laws, passed in 09/2020, continued throughout the year, primarily in the states of Haryana, Punjab, and the capital New Delhi. Protests on Republic Day on January 26 turned violent, leaving at least 300 security forces injured [→ India (farmers protest)].

Various actors continued to pursue autonomy or secession throughout the country. Over the course of the year, various factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) clashed with security forces in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland, leaving at least 16 dead. The federal government continued peace talks with NSCN factions, resulting in the extension of ceasefires with NSCN-Neopao Kitovi, NSCN-Reformation, and NSCN-K-Khango [→ India (Nagalim)]. Furthermore, the United Liberation Front of Assam Independent faction (ULFA-I) and security forces continued to clash across Assam, leaving at least one high ranking militant dead and several injured. The number of clashes between ULFA-I and security forces increased [→ India (ULFA-I et al. / Assam)]. Assam Rifles continued to clash with the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak and People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Manipur. The number of violent encounters increased in comparison to the previous year [→ India (Manipur)]. The violent crisis over the secession of Khalistan between various Sikh groups and the Indian government also continued, with groups such as Sikhs for Justice continuing to conduct political agitation and

engaging in acts of terror against government targets. Most notable was the bomb attack on the Ludhiana District Court House, resulting in one civilian death and seven casualties.

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. This included mass assaults, murder, and vandalism of Christian sites by various Hindu radical groups, such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal [→ India (Hindus – Christians)]. The violent crisis between the left-wing extremists Naxalites and security forces continued, resulting in the deaths of at least 194 people. Security forces carried out multiple search operations and patrols in affected areas across the country [→ India (Naxalites)].

The conflict between India and Pakistan was marked by the signing of a renewed ceasefire in March that saw the end of violent measures for the year. However, both sides continued to mutually accuse each other in international forums [→ India - Pakistan].

In Pakistan's Balochistan province, several armed groups continued attacks against the government and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Security forces arrested at least 17 militants and killed 45 people, both civilians and militants [→ Pakistan (Balochistan)]. The Islamist militant group Tehreek-e-Labbaik dominated the conflict with two large-scale marches in April and October. The government arrested the group's leader, before banning it completely [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)]. Pashtun groups protested following the death of four Pashtuns in March. They first threatened to march on the capital Islamabad, but did not, following negotiations. Other similar cases and arrests of PTM leaders followed [→ Pakistan (Pashtuns/PTM)]. The conflict in the province of Sindh continued to be divided between the activities of the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army, which carried out several attacks, and Sindh political parties, whose supporters and authorities continued to clash [→ Pakistan (Sindh)]. National opposition parties united as the Pakistan Democratic Movement in October, holding nationwide demonstrations against the sitting government of Prime Minister Imran Khan [→ Pakistan (opposition)].

In Central Asia, the violent crisis over territory and international power in the Fergana Valley border region between Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek border communities, backed by their respective governments, escalated to a limited war, leaving 200 people injured, 40 dead and 20,000 displaced. Over 70 homes and public buildings were destroyed [→ Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Tajikistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)]. Throughout the rest of the Central Asian region, conflicts largely de-escalated or became inactive [→ Tajikistan (Islamist groups); Kyrgyzstan (opposition); Kazakhstan (opposition); Kazakhstan (Islamist groups); Uzbekistan (opposition)].

In China, the government continued the policy of surveillance, repression, and Sinicization of religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities. By introducing the national database for registered religious groups, the government continuously banned Christians and Muslims from gathering or online broadcasting. Demolition of Christian buildings continued but on a smaller scale compared to previous years [→ China (Hui); China (Christians)]. Inner Mongolia joined other autonomous regions including Tibet and Xinjiang to adopt nationally unified textbooks and teaching in Chinese instead of local languages [→ China (Inner Mongolia); China (Tibet); China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)]. Forced labor remained a point of contention in Xinjiang, with the US and several other countries calling the Chinese government's action in Xinjiang genocide, leading to a series of sanctions on individuals and affiliated officials [→ China – USA]. The protests in Hong Kong for democracy and/or independence persisted but decreased significantly due to the enforcement of the National Security Law (NSL) and Covid-19 restrictions. In the second half of the year, two pro-democracy news agencies terminated their operation after being accused by the local government of violating the NSL [→ China (Hong Kong)].

On the international scene, China faced tensions with neighboring countries including India and Vietnam. Despite one violent clash in January between Chinese and Indian troops at the disputed border, both sides established means of communication afterwards and the conflict remained non-violent for the rest of the year [→ China – India]. In the South China Sea, multiple countries including China and Malaysia conducted military drills or published official white papers to claim sovereignty [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. Notably, the US and its allies also conducted naval operations in the disputed waters, highlighting tensions between China and the US for international power and regional dominance. In addition to its military presence in Asia Pacific, the US also publicly supported Taiwan<sup>o</sup> through high level official visits, leading to objections from the Chinese government [→ China (Taiwan)].

Northeast Asia was characterized by continued rearmament efforts from all actors. The Korean peninsula remained an epicenter. North Korea presented a number of new technologically more advanced missile types and delivery systems, while South Korea also tested new weapons systems [→ Japan, ROK, USA – DPRK]. Japan increased its defense spending due to perceived threats from the People's Republic of China and North Korea [→ Japan – China]. Russia increased its military contingents on its Pacific coast and undertook joint military maneuvers with China, among others [→ Japan – Russia]. Historical legacies and concerns about cultural assimilation led to further tensions between actors [→ Japan – ROK; PRC – ROK]. As a whole, the region also saw greater engagement by the new US administration with a focus on strengthening security partnerships with regional actors.

Numerous domestic conflicts continued in the Philippines, some of them at a high intensity. In particular, the government fought Islamist groups with military means, in some cases forcing them into Malaysia [→ Philippines (Islamist Militant Groups)]. Violence forced thousands of families to leave their homes [→ Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – government, MILF)]. A fluidity within the Islamist groups was also characteristic in these conflicts; groups fought partly with and partly against each other [→ Philippines (MILF – MNLF)]. The intensity of the fighting against communist groups was not lesser, but the lines of conflict were clearer [→ Philippines (CPP, NPA)]. Finally, despite international proceedings, the government continued to crack down on real and alleged drug criminals [→ Philippines (Drugs)]. Ongoing peace processes experienced delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic and political issues, raising concerns about a resurgence of the conflict.

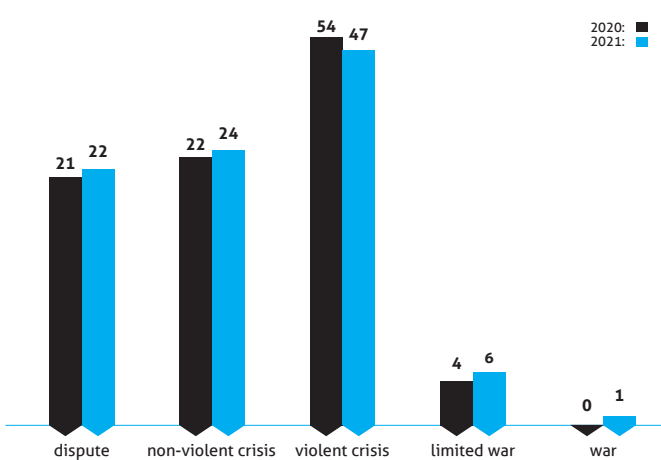
In Indonesia, the violent crisis over natural resources and the secession of the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat between indigenous Papuans, especially the armed West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB), and the government continued. On April 25, TPNPB shot dead Papua province's highest ranking intelligence officer. Also in April, the government officially designated TPNPB a terrorist organization. In total, at least 56 people died and more than 14,369 persons were displaced

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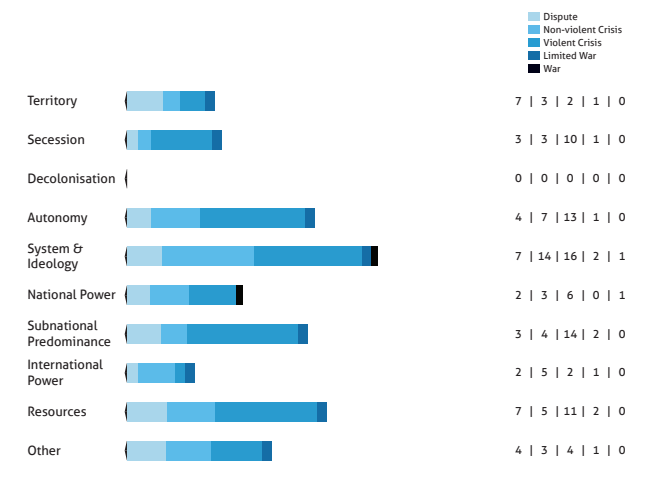
throughout the year [→ Indonesia (Papua)]. Over the course of the year, Islamist militant groups, such as Jamaah Ansharut Daulah and Mujahidin Indonesia Timur, committed numerous attacks. On March 28, two JAD affiliated militants attacked a Catholic church in Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan province, killing themselves and injuring at least 19. Government forces also continued persecuting MIT militants in Sulawesi Tengah province, shooting dead MIT's leader and another militant on September 18 in Torue District [→ Indonesia (Islamist militant groups)].

In Papua New Guinea, the violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources continued between various communal groups. Over the course of the year, inter-communal clashes, particularly in the Highlands region, left at least 76 people dead and at least 2,000 internally displaced [→ Papua New Guinea (inter-communal rivalry)]. Furthermore, the dispute over autonomy of the Autonomous Region Bougainville and resources between the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the national government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) continued. Both parties agreed on power transfers to Bougainville from 2023 and on full independence of Bougainville between 2025 and 2027 [→ Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)].

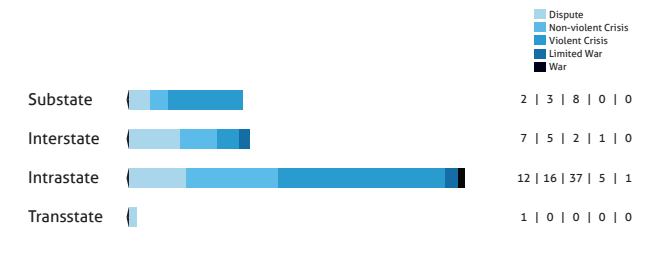
### CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2021 COMPARED TO 2020



### FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2021



### FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2021



## ASIA AND OCEANIA

### Overview: Conflicts in Asia and Oceania in 2021

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
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, Allahr Dal, HuT, JMB vs. Buddhists, government, Hindus	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	↘	1
China (Hong Kong)	pro-democracy groups, pro-independence groups vs. HKSAR government, PRC government	secession, autonomy, system/ideology	1997	↘	2
China (Hui)	Hui vs. government	system/ideology	1949	•	2
China (Inner Mongolia)	Mongolian ethnic minorities vs. government	autonomy, subnational predominance, resources	1981	•	2
China (Taiwan <sup>o</sup> )	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 – South Korea	PRC vs. ROK	territory, international power, resources, other	2003	•	1
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	↘	2
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 (farmers protests)	Farmer Unions vs. government	system/ideology	2020	•	3
India (GJM et al. / West Bengal)	GJM vs. government	autonomy	1907	•	1
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, AAMSU 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, NNGP	subnational predominance	1992	•	3
India (Mafia Raj)	sand mafia, timber mafia vs. civil society actors, government	subnational predominance, resources, other	1986	•	3
India (Manipur)	UNLF, PLA, PREPAK, KCP, KYKL, KNF vs. government	secession, autonomy	1964	•	3
India (Meghalaya)	HNLC, ANSC, ARA vs. government	autonomy	1992	•	3
India (Nagalim)	NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, NSCN-NK, NSCN-KK, NSCN-R, NSCN-U, NSCN-KYA, NSCN-K-NS, NSCN-K-Khango vs. government	secession, autonomy	1947	•	3
India (Naxalites)	Naxalites vs. government	system/ideology	1967	•	3

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Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
India (NLFT factions et al. / Tripura)*	NLFT, IPFT vs. government	secession, autonomy	1978	↑	3
India (Patels et al.)*	Dalits, Gujjars, Jats, Kapus, Marathas, Patels vs. government	other	1981	•	2
India (Sikhs)	AISSF, BKI, Dal Khalsa, KLF, SAD (Amritsar), SFJ, SLF vs. government	secession	1947	•	3
India (TJAC / Telangana)*	TJAC, TJS vs. government	autonomy	1969	↗	2
India (ULFA-I et al. / Assam)	ULFA-I, ULFA-PTF, DNLA, NLFB, UPRF, ULB 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	↘	2
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
Japan – Russia	Japan vs. Russia	territory, international power, resources	1945	•	1
Japan – South Korea	Japan vs. ROK	territory, other	1951	↘	1
Japan, South Korea, USA – North Korea	Japan, ROK, USA vs. DPRK	system/ideology, international power, other	1993	•	2
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	↘	2
Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Tajikistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)	Kyrgyz border communities, Kyrgyzstan vs. Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan border communities vs. Tajik border communities, Tajikistan	territory, international power	2000	↗	4
Laos (Christians)*	Christians vs. government	system/ideology	1975	↘	1
Laos (Hmong)*	Hmong vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1975	•	3
Malaysia (eastern Sabah)*	Philippines, Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo vs. government	secession	2013	•	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. Myanmar Army	autonomy	2015	↘	3
Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State)	KIO, KIA vs. Myanmar Army	autonomy, resources	1961	↗	4
Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)	KNU, KNLA, DKBA, DKBA-splinter group vs. Myanmar Army	autonomy	1948	↘	3
Myanmar (MNDAA / Shan State)	MNDAA vs. Myanmar Army	subnational predominance, resources	1989	↗	4
Myanmar (opposition)	opposition vs. Myanmar Army	system/ideology, national power	1962	↑	5
Myanmar (RCSS – TNLA / Shan State)	RCSS, SSA-S vs. PSLF, TNLA	subnational predominance	2015	•	3
Myanmar (Rohingya)*	Rohingya, ARSA vs. Myanmar Army, Buddhists	subnational predominance, other	2012	•	3
Myanmar (socioeconomic protests)*	local protesters vs. Myanmar Army, resource companies	resources	2012	•	3
Myanmar (SSA / Shan State)	SSA-N, SSA-S vs. Myanmar Army	autonomy	1952	•	3

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Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)	TNLA vs. Myanmar Army	subnational predominance, resources	2013	•	3
Myanmar (UWSA, NDAA / Shan State)*	UWSA, NDAA vs. Myanmar Army	autonomy	1988	•	1
Nepal (Madhesis, Tharus / Terai)*	UDMF, JTMM, NLF, RJPN, JSPN vs. government	autonomy	2004	•	2
Nepal (opposition)	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2008	↗	3
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	↘	2
North Korea, China (defectors)	DPRK, PRC vs. defectors (network)	system/ideology, other	2000	↘	1
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, Pashtuns vs. government	secession, subnational predominance, resources	1947	•	3
Pakistan (Sunni militants – religious groups)*	IS, JuA, LeJ, TTP vs. Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, Shiites, Sufis	subnational predominance	1985	•	3
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	national government vs. Autonomous Bougainville Government	secession, resources	1964	•	1
Papua New Guinea (inter-communal rivalry)	Agarabi vs. Tapo vs. Enga Tari vs. Kopiago vs. various other tribes	subnational predominance, resources	1975	•	3
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 (urban tensions)*	highlanders vs. lowlanders vs. Ethnic Chinese	subnational predominance	1975	•	1
Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – government)	BIFF, BIFM vs. government	secession, subnational predominance	2008	↗	4
Philippines (CPP, NPA)	CPP, NPA vs. government	system/ideology	1968	•	4
Philippines (drugs)	Cartels, Drug syndicates vs. Human rights activists vs. government	resources	2017	•	3
Philippines (Islamist militant groups)	Abu Sayaf Group, Maute et al. vs. government	system/ideology, other	1991	•	4
Philippines (MILF – MNLF)*	MILF vs. MNLF	subnational predominance	2009	↘	2
Philippines (MILF)	MILF vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources	1977	↗	3
Philippines (MNLF)	MNLF vs. government	secession, system/ideology, resources	1969	↘	1
Sri Lanka (inter-religious tensions)*	Sinhalese Buddhists vs. Muslims vs. Christians vs. Hindus	system/ideology	1948	↘	2
Sri Lanka (Northern Province, Eastern Province)*	Sinhalese Nationalists, JHU, BBS, JVP vs. Tamils, TNA vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	2009	↘	2
Tajikistan (Islamist groups)	Islamist groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1997	↘	1
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	↗	2
Vietnam (socioeconomic protests)*	factory workers, peasants, other civilians vs. manufacturing companies, government	resources, other	1986	↘	2

<sup>1</sup> Conflicts marked with \* are without description

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

<sup>3</sup> 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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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")

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## BANGLADESH (ISLAMIST GROUPS)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1971**

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Conflict parties: Aal, Allahr Dal, HuT, JMB vs. Buddhists, government, Hindus

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

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The violent crisis over ideology, the orientation of the political system, and religious predominance between various Islamist militant groups, on the one hand, and the government and religious minorities, such as Buddhists and Hindus, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, security forces such as 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 (AAI), also known as Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), or Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami (HuJI). Operations were primarily carried out in the Divisions of Dhaka, Chittagong, Rangpur, and Mymensingh. In total, security forces arrested at least 101 alleged militants.

For instance, on June 26, security forces arrested three members of AAI for trying to recruit Rohingya refugees as operatives in Rampura area, Dhaka Division. During other arrests, security forces retrieved extremist publications, for example following the detention of four alleged AAI members in Rayerbagh area, Dhaka Division, on August 11. On September 4, RAB forces exchanged fire with four JMB militants in Khagdahar, Mymensingh, before arresting them and seizing a cache of arms and explosives. On December 4, RAB forces arrested five JMB militants in Majhpara village, Rangpur Division, recovering a pistol, ammunition, and various types of bomb-making equipment. On January 14, nine alleged militants surrendered to the police.

On October 13, a Quran was left in front of a Hindu temple in Cumilla, Chittagong Division. In ensuing protests against the “demeaning of the Holy Quran”, police clashed with protesters, leaving four persons dead and at least 60 people, including journalists, police and civilians, injured. During the Hindu festivities of Durga Puja, security forces recovered 18 bombs from the gate of a Hindu temple in Khulna city, eponymous Division, on October 14. On October 15 and 16, major protests relating to the Quran incident took place in Chittagong and Dhaka. Muslim protesters stabbed one man to death in Begumganj, and the body of a Hindu man was found next to a temple in Noakhali, both locations in Chittagong Division

At the judicial level, 44 alleged militants were sentenced to death over the course of the year. For example, ten HuJI members were sentenced to death on February 17 for planting a bomb in an attempt to assassinate of the leader of the Awami League, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in Kotalipara, Dhaka Division, in 2000.

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## BANGLADESH (OPPOSITION)

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

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Conflict parties: BNP, Jel vs. AL, government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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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. In addition, Hefazat-e-Islam (Hel), an Islamic advocacy group, and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the student wing of Jel, who first became involved last year, were connected to violent protests.

Throughout the year, opposition and government supporters engaged in violent protests across the country. For instance, the presence of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Bangladesh’s 50th Independence Day anniversary was met with the violent protests of Hel supporters throughout the country. Between March 26 and 28, at least twelve people died and over 130 were injured in clashes with police. For example, on March 26, in total five people died and 50 were injured in two separate incidents after Hel activists clashed violently with the police in Chattogram and Brahmanbaria, Chittagong Division. Hel’s ties to the protests were debated throughout the year. On April 5, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina alleged in parliament that BNP and Jel had provided separate messages in support of Hel in the March protests. On May 31, police stated that Hel, which dissolved itself on April 25, was financially linked to BNP.

Following Islamist groups’ attacks on Hindu temples throughout the country, civil society activists and politicians marched peacefully in the capital of Dhaka on October 20 [→ Bangladesh (Islamist groups)]. On October 21, one Jel leader admitted in court to his involvement in the attacks.

Over the course of the year, police arrested at least 76 members of Hel, 88 members of Jel, and 18 members of ICS. On November 24, Bangladesh’s International Crimes Tribunal sentenced a former BNP lawmaker to death for crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War. On September 11, the Law Ministry agreed to a six month extension of former prime minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia’s jail sentence suspension for medical treatment. Zia was convicted in 2017.

On December 17, members of a rival group killed one and injured three AL members, seeking to establish local supremacy in Rampal area, Khulna Division.

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## BANGLADESH (RMG WORKERS)

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

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Conflict parties: RMG workers vs. factory owners, government

Conflict items: other

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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

and benefits, the reinstatement of fired workers, the reopening of closed factories and an end to sexual violence against workers. Their methods of contention included protests, in some cases violent, and road blocks. The most violent cases involved police intervention using batons, rubber bullets, and live warning shots.

On January 9, RMG workers protested for wage payments and the reopening of their factory in the capital of Dhaka. Police intervened, using batons, pepper spray, and rubber bullets, injuring at least 50. Furthermore, on May 10, RMG workers protested in Gazipur city, Dhaka Division, to demand a holiday extension. Police shot at the protesters using rubber bullets, injuring some protesters. On July 13, RMG workers protested in Dhaka, demanding wage payment. Police again employed rubber bullets in crowd control, killing one worker and injuring another.

As in previous years, factory owners also resorted to violence. For example, on January 11, factory owners hired thugs to attack workers in Gazipur. In another instance, on July 30, a factory owner abducted and tortured a trade union leader in Dhaka.

RMG workers also resorted to violence. For example, on March 16, RMG workers protested for a wage increase in Dhaka. When police fired live shots to disperse them, injuring nine workers, workers injured one policeman by throwing stones. On May 2, RMG workers attacked and injured a government official in Gazipur over corruption allegations. Many other protests, however, remained peaceful. For example, on June 18, RMG workers demanded priority vaccination against Covid-19.

RMG workers repeatedly blocked roads during their protests. For example, on January 7, 3,500 RMG workers blocked a road in Dhaka, demanding wage payments. On March 3, RMG workers blocked a road in Chittogram Division, also demanding wage payments and the reopening of their factory.

The year was also marked by the expiration of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, an agreement signed following the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013 between international brands, factories, and trade unions. The agreement held brands legally accountable for safety in their factories and had led to a marked improvement of workplace safety in RMG factories. All three sides agreed to a new International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry just prior the expiration of the old agreement on August 31. The new accord expands the old agreement in content and to other countries.

hen

## 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. Government regulation of religious activities online and offline continued. In January, religious venues were closed and gatherings banned in the capital Beijing and Qingdao city, Shandong province. On January 29, online preaching and mass broadcasts were banned by the United Front Work in Shandong, the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic (TSP) Association, and the Catholic Christian Council (CCC) of Qingdao.

On January 9, provincial authorities implemented a tip-off system in Xingtai city, Hebei province, to encourage citizen reporting on underground religious activities. The Korean Christian movement Good News Church was banned and their churches later raided by the Civil Affairs Bureau of Shaoxing city, Zhejiang province, on March 30 and in Yanban city, Jilin province, on April 30.

On May 1, China's National Religious Affairs Administration mandated clergy members register in a state-approved database and claimed authority over the appointment of bishops without papal input, in open violation of the compromise agreement reached with the Vatican in 2018. On May 1 and June 17, state authorities censored Bible apps and Christian WeChat. Furthermore, later in the year, it was announced that online dissemination and broadcasting of religious activities by unregistered persons and institutions would be prohibited nationwide starting in March 2022.

However, the demolition of church buildings in China reportedly continued on a lesser scale. The government forcibly removed crosses from two churches in Wenzhou city, Zhejiang, on January 16 and 31 respectively, and demolished the state-sanctioned church in Yining county, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on February 19.

Government raids and arrests of Christians in churches and unregistered institutions continued throughout the year. For instance, on March 27, local authorities raided a house church in Sanhe city, Hebei province, after its pastor refused to join the TSP. On July 11, police raided a church in Shenzhen city, Guangdong province, during a virtually-held service. On August 22, a raid turned violent when twelve police officers and local authorities arrested 28 members of an Early Rain Covenant Church house church in Chengdu city, Sichuan province, injuring at least one congregation member.

Furthermore, on May 23, a plain clothes police officer injured a pastor in Guiyang city, Guizhou province. On October 25, authorities arrested the prominent Catholic bishop Peter Shao Zhumin, who had been approved by the Vatican but refused to collaborate with PRC-controlled bodies. Furthermore, the government targeted the new religious movement, Church of Almighty God, arresting up to 1,400 members in Shanxi, Henan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Anhui, and Shandong provinces and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region throughout the year.

## CHINA (HONG KONG)

Intensity: **2** | 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 pro-democracy and pro-independence groups and individuals, on the one hand, and the governments of the People's Republic of China and of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. Compared to last year, protests were non-violent and decreased in number and turn-out.

The beginning of the year was marked by arrests and trials of individuals including former lawmakers James To and student leader Chi-fung Wongwho, who had been involved in



protests or had violated the National Security Law (NSL) in other ways. The HKSAR government banned most protests and social gatherings, such as the annual Tiananmen Massacre park vigil, due to the NSL or Covid-19 prevention measures. Nonetheless, on January 28, over 60 employees of Radio Television Hong Kong staged a silent protest over the ill-treatment of another employee due to her involvement in the protests. On March 1, approx. 250 protesters gathered outside West Kowloon Law Courts to support pro-democracy activists, who were arrested in January and subsequently put on trial. On July 1, a man injured a police officer with a knife and later killed himself. While the motive remains unconfirmed, the act was perceived as a statement against the HK police. Following an outpour of sympathies, with many calling him a martyr, police banned mourning his death in any way. On July 6, police arrested nine people allegedly belonging to a pro-democracy group on suspicion of planning a city-wide bomb attack.

The HKSAR government also continued to tighten its control over pro-democracy and pro-independence activities through various other measures, such as mandatory declarations of allegiance for government officials and in-depth screening of election candidates. Various pro-democracy and human rights groups, including foreign INGOs, such as Amnesty International, ceased operations in August, each citing increasing risks and government pressure. The pro-democracy newspapers Apple Daily and Stand News halted all operations permanently on June 23 and December 29 respectively. Previously, police had raided both newspapers and arrested several workers, citing possible breaches of the NSL.

In December, HK's Legislative Council elections were held with an all-time low voter turnout of 30.2 percent. Most of the elected candidates identified themselves with the pro-Beijing camp. Police arrested several people for allegedly trying to incite others to cast a blank ballot. *spi*

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## CHINA (HUI)

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Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

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Conflict parties: Hui vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

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The non-violent crisis over ideology between the Hui minority and the government continued. Tensions between the Han-dominated government and the predominantly Muslim Hui minority unfolded within the broader context of the Chinese crackdown on religious activities.

Throughout the year, the government continued its attempts to expand control over religious activities. Citing concerns around the Covid-19 pandemic, the deputy head of Hubei's provincial United Front Work Department banned religious gatherings for Muslims in January. On April 1, the China Islamic Association effectively banned Muslims from traveling to Mecca for the annual religious pilgrimage, Hajj, as a Covid-19 safety precaution. On May 1, China's National Religious Affairs Administration put new regulations into force mandating religious activities be registered in a national database, to control foreign influence and to protect national security. Affected communities claimed the database further jeopardized independently operating mosques and imams.

Religious practices, such as calls for prayer, using and teaching Arabic, and wearing traditional clothing remained restricted even for small communities such as the Utsuls in

Sanya city, Hainan province. In April, in Quzhou city, Zhejiang province, Hui Muslim participants of a Go tournament, wearing headscarves as part of their traditional dress to represent ethnic inclusivity, triggered strong online criticism.

The remodeling of mosques by authorities also continued, albeit at a lower scale. For instance, starting on July 9, the government removed the religious symbols of at least ten mosques in Xining city, Qinghai province. *llg*

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## CHINA (INNER MONGOLIA)

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Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1981**

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Conflict parties: Mongolian ethnic minorities vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy, subnational predominance, resources

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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. The conflict was marked by ongoing tensions over language policies, cultural identity, and land expropriations.

In January, the central government ordered the Inner Mongolia Radio and Television Station to replace Mongolian content with Han cultural programs. At the Central Conference on Ethnic Affairs on August 28, Chinese President Xi Jinping focused on guiding ethnic groups to put the interests of China above all else and to share a sense of community with the Chinese nation. In September, the central government appointed the first-ever non-IMAR-born ethnic Mongolian chairwoman of IMAR.

Following the termination of schooling in Mongolian language in 2020, NGOs and activists wrote to the UN on February 5. In September, the Inner Mongolian Ministry of Education expanded these educational reforms, introducing new measures, such as the removal of books on Mongolian history and culture from all primary and secondary schools. IMAR remained the last autonomous region to introduce the unified national textbooks in primary and secondary education systems. From August to September, thousands of people protested against the reforms by signing petitions and withdrawing their children from schools in IMAR's capital Hohhot. In January, Mongolian herders complained about land expropriation by the IMAR government and the ecological consequences of the Poverty Alleviation Program. On May 13, six Mongolian herders protested against land seizures by Chinese peasants and local authorities in Tevseg township, Horchin Right Wing Front Banner, IMAR. Allegedly, local police detained the herders. *ski*

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## CHINA (TAIWAN°)

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Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

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Conflict parties: ROC vs. PRC

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

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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 referred to as Taiwan°, continued.

Tensions between the PRC and Taiwan over high-ranking visits between US and Taiwanese officials continued. For instance, on June 6, three US senators visited Taiwan. The PRC firmly opposed the visit. Similarly, high-level intergovernmental visits from other countries to Taiwan elevated tensions. The PRC responded to the visit of Palau's President Surangel Whipps Jr. to the capital Taipei on March 29 with a military drill, during which eight fighter jets and two surveillance planes entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) on the same day. The PRC also opposed the visit of Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández to Taipei on November 13.

Furthermore, Taiwan's status within international organizations remained a point of contention. On May 24, the Taiwanese government criticized the WHO for not having been granted observer status at the organization's Health Assembly, after the PRC had continued to prevent the participation of the Taiwanese delegation.

Throughout the year, both sides conducted military maneuvers. Most notably, on June 15, the ROC government stated that 28 PRC aircrafts, consisting of J-16 and J-11 fighters as well as nuclear-capable H-6 bombers, entered Taiwan's ADIZ close to the Pratas Islands. The exercises took place on the same day the US carrier group Ronald Reagan entered the South China Sea amid rising Sino-American tensions [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea); China – USA]. Furthermore, on October 4, the PRC airforce entered Taiwanese airspace, again near the Pratas Islands, with 38 J-16 fighters and 12 H-6 bombers, marking it the largest ever incursion of PRC warplanes into Taiwanese airspace. lja

## 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) as well as ideology between the Uyghur minority and the government continued. Chinese authorities continued to rely on a comprehensive policing, surveillance, and incarceration program in XUAR, constraining civil liberties of ethnic Uyghurs among others.

As in previous years, the government cracked down on Islamic religious practices in XUAR, for example forcibly keeping mosques closed during Ramadan. Additionally, authorities continued to target religious leaders, having detained at least 630 imams and other Muslim religious figures since 2014, according to a new report by the Uyghur Human Rights Project.

Compared to last year, the number of arrests of ethnic Uyghurs is estimated to have stayed constant throughout the year, while other sinicizing policies were introduced. In mid-August, the Chinese government declared the extension of compulsory Mandarin teaching to preschoolers, thus ousting minority languages. According to reports from XUAR's county Ili Kazakh (Yili Hasake), elementary school students whose parents had been incarcerated in camps were subjected to "special political education" classes in schools. Several countries including the USA publicly labeled the PRC's actions in XUAR as genocide, while others threatened to follow suit, leading to diplomatic rifts and sanctions against Chinese firms and individuals (→ China – US). Following reports on the use of forced labor in XUAR cotton fields, several

Western governments increased their pressure on the PRC, leading to a rise in anti-Western resentments in the PRC. Additionally, with the upcoming Winter Olympic Games 2022, several NGOs called for a boycott of the PRC over its treatment of Uyghurs. rld

## CHINA – INDIA

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1954**

Conflict parties: PRC vs. India  
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The violent crisis over territory, resources such as water, and international and regional power between China and India continued.

Violent altercations were centered in Sikkim state, India. For instance, on January 20, an unidentified number of Indian and Chinese army personnel clashed at Naku La pass, at the border of Sikkim / Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China, leaving 20 Chinese and four Indian soldiers injured. The altercation directly followed the ninth round of military talks between both sides on January 19, which had not resulted in any conclusive de-escalation measures.

Throughout the year, Chinese troops continued to advance into Indian-controlled territory. For instance, on August 30, 100 People's Liberation Army soldiers crossed the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at the Tun Jun La pass, Chamoli district, Uttarakhand state, damaging infrastructure including a bridge.

At the same time, India continued to increase its military presence along the border. Most notably, India deployed an additional 50,000 soldiers along the LAC throughout the year. The Indian military reportedly brought in additional heavy military equipment such as howitzer artillery in Tawang Plateau town, Tawang district, Arunachal Pradesh state, along the LAC.

Nonetheless, both sides continued the process of partial disengagement along the LAC. For instance, on February 20, Indian and Chinese military representatives agreed to a complete withdrawal of troops, tanks, and artillery from Pangong Tso lake, Ladakh Union Territory (LUT) / TAR. On August 1, India and China established a second hotline between ground commanders in northern Sikkim / TAR. On August 6, both sides agreed to a disengagement at key patrol point 17, eastern LUT / TAR. 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° (ROC), and Japan continued.

All parties held several military exercises throughout the year. In May, two military exercises involving Japan, the USA, and other states took place in the East China Sea. In October, as a demonstration of strengthened military ties, the PRC and

Russia completed a joint naval exercise for the first time in the Western Pacific crossing the Tsugaru Strait [→ Japan – Russia]. In September, Japan launched a nationwide large-scale military exercise lasting into November. In the same month, Japan and the US held a joint anti-submarine exercise in the South China Sea for the first time [→ China – USA; China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. In December, the Japanese-American exercises Resolute Dragon 21 and Rising Thunder 21 were conducted all across Japan.

On January 22, the PRC government passed legislation enabling its coastguard the use of force against foreign vessels in “maritime areas under Chinese jurisdiction”. Two days later, Japan and the US reaffirmed a security treaty concerning the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu/Diaoyutai islands. On November 17, the Japanese government disclosed a Chinese naval vessel’s incursion into Japanese waters for the first time since 2017. The Japanese Defense Ministry made several warnings that Japan and the ROC should be cautious about the PRC’s increased military presence [→ China – Taiwan]. On December 23, local media revealed a US-Japanese draft joint operation plan in the event of an ROC contingency.

In April, the PRC protested the Japanese foreign minister’s call to improve human rights conditions for Uyghurs and his concern about the situation in Hong Kong. On June 15, a proposed resolution highlighting human rights violations committed by the PRC failed to pass Japan’s parliament. Nevertheless, Japan voiced the same concerns in November and December leading President Kishida to announce he would not attend the 2022 Winter Olympics. jwl

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## CHINA – SOUTH KOREA

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Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **2003**

Conflict parties: PRC vs. ROK  
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources, other

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The dispute over regional power, resources, territory, and historical perceptions between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) continued.

The conflict began in 2003 when the ROK established a research station on the long-disputed Socotra Rock in the East China Sea, effectively controlling the rock ever since. In 2004, controversy over a Chinese research project (“Northeast Project”) on the historical origins of the Gaogouli/Goguryeo Kingdom sparked strong criticism and concerns over cultural assimilation from the ROK. The conflict reached its peak in 2017, when the PRC responded to the deployment of a US missile defense system to ROK with punitive economic measures against the ROK.

In 2021, however, both countries generally worked towards an improvement of bilateral relations. Nonetheless, the PRC voiced criticism over the US-ROK alliance as well as the ROK’s position regarding Taiwan. On November 19, ROK fighter jets monitored several Chinese and Russian fighter jets allegedly violating the ROK’s air identification zone. Furthermore, illegal fishing activities near the Northern Limit Line remained a major issue. To contain this issue, both countries agreed to conduct joint operations.

Finally, controversies regarding historical-cultural claims continued. On July 22, the ROK Ministry of Agriculture passed a guideline for the translation of the word “Kimchi” into Chinese characters to distinguish the dish from Chinese dishes. On September 13, a new Chinese movie about the Korean

War was withdrawn by ROK distributors after sparking a public controversy. Both countries experienced significant media outrage over cultural misbehavior of non-state actors perceived as culturally threatening. jkl

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## CHINA – USA

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Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1949**

Conflict parties: PRC vs. USA  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

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The non-violent crisis over international power and ideology between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the USA continued. The conflict was marked by ongoing regional security tensions, increasing international power competition, economic disputes, and controversies over human rights issues.

The new US administration maintained a confrontational approach towards the PRC. In total, the US conducted eight Freedom Of Navigation Operations in the Taiwan Strait and 14 naval exercises in the South China Sea (SCS) [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. Moreover, the new US administration reaffirmed its security commitments to regional partners, such as the Philippines and Japan, against PRC threats. At the end of October, the US and Japan held joint naval exercises in the SCS for the first time [→ China – Japan (East China Sea)]. Several countries such as Australia joined the US in its freedom of navigation efforts.


This year, the PRC increased its naval activities both in size and number with a focus on the SCS and the Taiwan Strait. On January 23 and 24, PRC naval forces allegedly conducted a mock attack on a US aircraft carrier group in the Taiwan Strait. On March 15, PRC naval forces simultaneously conducted three combat-oriented naval exercises in the East China Sea, the Yellow Sea and the SCS. On April 15, PRC naval forces held a six-day live-fire drill near the Pratas Islands during a US delegation’s visit to Taiwan. At the end of April, the PRC held aircraft carrier combat exercises in the SCS. At the end of August and for the first time since 2015, four PRC warships were reportedly spotted off the coast of Alaska in international waters within the US exclusive economic zone. Throughout the year, PRC forces held several more live-fire exercises in the SCS. Both countries repeatedly accused each other of destabilizing behaviors.

Human rights issues and economic tensions remained other points of contention. In January, the US announced an import ban on certain products from Xinjiang and officially labeled the PRC’s policies against Uyghurs as “genocide”. Throughout the year, the US sanctioned several Chinese individuals for alleged human rights violations related to Xinjiang, Hong Kong, or violating international sanctions. [→ China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)] [→ China (Hong Kong)]. On December 7, the US announced it would not send government officials to the 2022 Winter Olympics, prompting criticism from the PRC. Moreover, US authorities placed new trade restrictions on Chinese companies deemed national security threats. jkl

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**CHINA – VIETNAM ET AL. (SOUTH CHINA SEA)**


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Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **1951**

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Conflict parties: PRC vs. Vietnam vs. Brunei vs. ROC vs. Malaysia vs. Indonesia vs. Philippines

Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

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The violent crisis in the South China Sea (SCS) over territory, international power, and resources between Brunei, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China<sup>o</sup> (ROC), Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.


The PRC maintained its position of territorial assertiveness in the region throughout the year. On February 1, the PRC introduced a new law authorizing the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) to use force against foreign vessels in maritime territory, followed by the Philippines' objection.

Throughout the year, several infringements of Chinese fishing vessels on various Filipino-claimed territories led to diplomatic protest by the Philippine government. On May 31, 16 PRC transport aircrafts passed through Malaysian airspace and were intercepted. The PRC continued to send survey vessels searching for oil and gas into the SCS, causing the deployment of several Indonesian naval ships in January and late September. On October 4, Malaysia summoned the Chinese ambassador over this issue. On November 16, the CCG fired water cannons at Malaysian supply vessels near Second Thomas Shoal. In December, PRC continued its military exercises and drills in the SCS and Gulf of Tonkin [→ China – USA]. Bilateral disputes over territory also persisted among other actors. On May 4, Malaysian authorities detained 19 Vietnamese fishermen, seized two fishing boats, and detained 15 other fishermen in Malaysian territorial waters on May 25. Between August 6 and 12, Malaysia held its Taming Sari Military exercise, including the successful test-launch of three anti-ship missiles. On October 20, the Philippines issued a protest against the PRC, after more than 200 radio challenges to Philippine patrols in the SCS. Vietnam reportedly continued constructions and landfilling on the Vietnamese-controlled Pearson Reef and Namyit Island. Tensions between the Philippines and the PRC intensified in November, when three CCG vessels blocked and fired water cannons at two Philippine boats transporting supplies to military personnel at Second Thomas Shoal. Brunei released a Defense White Paper on May 31, identifying the SCS dispute as a major security challenge. At a parallel event to the G20 summit on October 29, ROC officials called for the use of Freedom of Navigation Operations in the SCS to counter PRC behavior [→ China (Taiwan<sup>o</sup>)]. [cni](#)

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**INDIA (DALITS / ADIVASIS)**


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Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1950**

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Conflict parties: Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes), Dalits (Scheduled Castes) vs. Upper Caste members

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

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The violent crisis over the Hindu caste system and subna-

tional predominance between Dalits and Adivasis, recognized by the government as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively, on the one hand, and upper caste members, on the other, continued.

The number of acts of violence that took place, mainly between private individuals in the context of caste-related incidents, remained steady throughout the year. The vast majority of incidents involved attacks by upper caste members against members of the Dalit and Adivasi communities. Actions ranged from the demolition of property to assault, rape, and murder among others.


For example, on January 28, four upper caste members attacked a Dalit family, injuring three and damaging the statue of a Dalit activist in Kanwar village, Uttar Pradesh state. On March 2, about 50 members of an upper caste community killed a Dalit activist in Bhavnagar district, Gujarat state, with spears, iron pipes, and swords. The man had been attacked by upper caste members before and was under police protection. On June 12, an argument in Sehore district, Madhya Pradesh state, over the disposal of waste between six upper caste and two Dalit men turned violent. The upper caste members insulted and assaulted the Dalits and their family members with sticks, and set their house on fire. At least two Dalits were injured. On October 26, a mob of approx. 20 upper caste members assaulted a Dalit family in Kutch, Gujarat, for visiting a local temple. The upper caste members first damaged the family's crops before attacking them with sticks, injuring six.

As in previous years, forced evictions of Adivasi settlements continued with the involvement of local forest departments and police authorities. On July 10, in Khandwa district, Madhya Pradesh, a mob of non-Adivasi villagers threw stones and destroyed the huts and belongings of over 200 Adivasi people. Members of the forest department and police were present during the attack but did not intervene. Approx. 40 families were left homeless as a result of the incident. [lii](#)

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**INDIA (FARMERS PROTESTS)**


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

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Conflict parties: Farmer Unions vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

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The violent crisis over the Indian Farm Laws of 2020 between Indian farmers, including farmer unions, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government, continued. Protests were held across the country, primarily in the capital New Delhi and in the Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh states.

The conflict started after the government passed the Farm Laws in September 2020. The federal government claimed the laws would lift regulations over the sale, pricing, and storage of farmers' produce. However, farmers and unions believed the three bills to be more beneficial to corporate and private firms. Through the reduction of the so-called Mandi-tax, Haryana and Punjab would lose an important source of income. Soon after the bill was passed, six states passed counter resolutions, asking for the withdrawal of the acts. A few days later, farmers began protesting by marching to New Delhi, primarily from Haryana and Punjab.

Over the course of the year, farmers continued their protests, with some escalating to violent confrontations with police forces. For instance, on January 26, tens of thousands of farmers protested in a tractor parade in New Delhi, reportedly with over 6,000 tractors. Subsequent clashes throughout

the city between security forces and protesters resulted in the police assaulting farmers with batons and tear gas. Some protesters broke police barricades and moved towards the Red Fort to hoist flags, allegedly damaging some parts of the building. One protester died after falling from his tractor. Security forces detained at least 200 people. According to police statements, at least 300 police officers were injured, however, the number of injured protesters remained unclear. On the same day, further protests were held in Punjab and Haryana, as well as in the states of Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. On September 27, farmers blocked railways and roads in more than 500 locations across Punjab, leading to a shutdown of businesses across the state, and affecting the infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

During a further protest on October 3, BJP members crashed two vehicles into the crowd, running over the protesters, in Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh, resulting in the death of four farmers, one journalist, and three BJP members and leaving at least ten farmers injured. On November 5, farmers protested in Hisar district, Haryana, smashing the car window of a BJP member.

On November 19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the government's decision to repeal the Farm Laws due to continued protest against them. Modi apologized, but also expressed regret that the farmers remained unconvinced by the acts. The coalition of over 40 unions, collectively known as Samyukt Kisan Morcha, welcomed Modi's decision. On November 29, the Farm Laws Repeal Bill was passed in Parliament. Following the repeal, thousands of protesters in New Delhi packed up, removed roadblocks, and returned to their homes. iha

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## INDIA (GJM ET AL. / WEST BENGAL)

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Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **1907**

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Conflict parties: GJM vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

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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 continued.

After GJM leader Bimal Gurung announced his faction's support for the Trinamool Congress Party (TMC), TMC proclaimed its support for the faction on April 4. The West Bengal legislative assembly elections were held between March 27 and April 29. The GJM-Gurung faction lost all three of its seats in the assembly. Subsequently, Gurung stated that he would continue fighting peacefully for the rights of Gorkhas. Following the elections, the leader of the GJM-Tamang faction quit and founded a new party, called Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha, on September 9. Another former leader of the Tamang faction left the party to join TMC on December 24. jsc

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## INDIA (HINDUS – CHRISTIANS)

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

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Conflict parties: BD, BJP, Hindu Munnani, Hindus, RSS, VHP vs. Christians

Conflict items: subnational predominance

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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 one Christian dead. On January 31, Hindu radicals disrupted a worship service and injured 28 Christians in Ramanagara district, Karnataka state. On March 8, eight Christians were injured after Hindu radicals attacked them and accused them of forceful conversions in Bastar district, Chhattisgarh state. On May 18, a Christian was shot dead by Hindu radicals in Bansawra district, Rajasthan state. On May 25, four Hindu radicals assaulted a Christian woman with clubs in Mansura village, Uttar Pradesh state. On August 1, Hindu radicals beat a Christian with iron rods in Karur district, Tamil Nadu state. On December 29, Hindu radicals beat a Christian Dalit family, injuring five family members for allegedly forcibly converting their neighbors in Belagavi district, Karnataka.

Hindu militants also resorted to vandalism. On October 3, around 200 Hindu radicals affiliated with Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal vandalized a church and injured at least three Christians in Roorkee city, Uttarakhand state, accusing the Christians of forced conversions. On December 6, around 300 to 500 Bajrang Dal and VHP followers vandalized a Catholic school in Ganj Basoda city, Madhya Pradesh state. Around Christmas Day, several acts of vandalism, such as the burning of effigies of Santa Claus, were reported in several states.

Attacks on Christian pastors by Hindu radicals remained consistent throughout the year. On March 1, Hindu nationalists belonging to Bajrang Dal assaulted eight Christians, including two pastors, in Chitradurga district, Karnataka. On April 22, VHP members attacked a pastor, his wife, and a church member with sticks at the pastor's home in Sitamarhi city, Bihar state. On June 13, RSS members attacked a pastor and his wife with wooden sticks in Salem district, Tamil Nadu. On August 29, around 100 Hindu nationalists attacked a pastor in Polmi village, Chhattisgarh, to protest religious conversion. On September 5, a Christian pastor was attacked by Hindu radicals at a police station in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. On September 28, more than two dozen Hindu nationalists assaulted a pastor near Simri village, Bihar.

Further instances included conversion disputes. For instance, on December 26, three Christians were arrested in Madhya Pradesh for allegedly conducting forced conversions. Additionally, on October 25, more than 6,000 Christians gathered in Hubli, Karnataka, to protest against the proposed state anti-conversion law and assaults against Christians. On December 23, the anti-conversion law was passed by the Karnataka state assembly. It was still awaiting approval by the state legislative council at the end of the year. mki

INDIA (INTER-ETHNIC RIVALRY / ASSAM)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1979**

Conflict parties: Assamese, AASU, AJYCP vs. Bangladeshi immigrants, AABYSF, AAMSU 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, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), continued.

Despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, protests and demonstrations opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which were mostly organized by the All Assam Students Union (AASU), continued throughout the year. The oppositional state party Assam Jatiya Parishad passed a statement on November 25, announcing a ten-day state-wide program to continue the anti-CAA protests. The North East Students' Organisation, which comprises eight student bodies such as AASU, held further protests against the CAA, displaying black flags and banners. On December 15, the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad held state-wide protests against the Act.

Throughout the year, Bengalis reportedly assaulted indigenous Assamese. For instance, on June 11, two indigenous girls were found dead in Abhayakuti village, Kokrajhar district. Subsequently, on June 16, seven Bengali men were arrested and charged with assault and murder.

After BJP won the mandate in Assam's state elections on May 2, the state government continued the eviction of people perceived as illegal settlers. Between May and September, state authorities destroyed hundreds of houses, leaving over 1,000 families homeless, and cleared thousands of hectares of land, among others for a state farming project. On September 23, an eviction in Darrang district escalated as a group of Bengalis clashed with police forces, resulting in the deaths of two Bengalis and eleven civilians and police forces injured. The evictions were heavily criticized by pro-Bengali organizations, such as the opposition party All India United Democratic Front and the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU). On November 8, AAMSU held a protest in the capital New Delhi against a state government-led eviction in the Lumding reserve forest, Hojai district. 1,410 hectares of forest were cleared and the homes of over 1,000 people destroyed. Another eviction was launched on December 20, in Karbi Anglong, displacing more than 2,000 Bengalis, as well as Nagas and Nepalese.

On October 19, two members of the All Bengali Students Youth Organisation (ABYSO) and the Bengali Democratic Youth Front, were arrested for allegedly defacing a state government hoarding by writing Bengali text over the Assamese words at a train station in Silchar, Chachar district. However, ABYSO's secretary stated that the organization was not involved. The two members were granted bail by the court. twm

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.

Over the course of the year, the sand mafia conducted a series of attacks on government officials and civil society actors. For instance, on January 21, members of the mafia attacked a toll plaza employee in Rohtas district, Bihar state, after he refused overloaded sand trucks to pass earlier that day. On March 4, members of the mafia injured a revenue inspector in Balasore district, Odisha state, by trying to run him over with a sand truck during a raid. On April 16, a mafia member stabbed a farmer in Mahabubnagar district, Telangana state, for opposing illegal sand extraction. On May 31, mafia members conducted an attack against a Sub-Divisional Magistrate in Bareilly city, Uttar Pradesh state. While the Magistrate remained unharmed, three civil servants were injured. The same day, mafia members pelted four police officers with stones in Nawada district, Bihar. On June 9, over 100 mafia members attacked police officers on patrol with sticks, injuring at least one in Morena district, Madhya Pradesh state. On July 27, approx. 100 members of the mafia attacked four police officers in Jagtial district, Telangana, with boulders and shovels after police tried to stop the mafia from smuggling sand. On August 20, mafia members assaulted at least eight police officers during a raid in Patna city, Bihar. One day later, members of the mafia shot dead a farmer near Bihta township, Bihar, for protesting illegal sand mining. On September 6, mafia members injured six police personnel and one civilian in Saran district, Bihar, during a police raid against illegal sand mining. On December 1, up to 25 members of the mafia assaulted and injured a revenue inspector and his wife and son at their home in Ballari district, Karnataka state, after the inspector seized a tractor used for illegal sand mining the day before. On February 4, timber mafia members allegedly shot dead a forest guard on patrol in Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh. On February 13, timber mafia members assaulted three forest guards with axes near Panna National Park, Madhya Pradesh. On March 3, a timber smuggler was killed in a fire-fight between mafia members and forest department officials at the Garampani Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam state, where smugglers were in the process of felling trees. Police conducted raids, seized mining equipment, and arrested numerous people on the grounds of illegally mining sand. Moreover, several officers were suspended on the grounds of aiding illegal sand mining. For instance, in July, 35 police officers were suspended for aiding illegal sand mining in Bihar. mki

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**INDIA (MANIPUR)**


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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1964**

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Conflict parties: UNLF, PLA, PREPAK, KCP, KYKL, KNF vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

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The violent crisis over either 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, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), People's Liberation Army (PLA), Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), and United National Liberation Front (UNLF). In contrast to the previous year, the number of violent encounters increased.

On March 10, an Assam Rifles (AR) personnel was injured after militants threw a hand grenade at the AR transit camp in Imphal West District. On the following day, PREPAK-Progressive militants claimed responsibility for the attack. On November 13, PLA insurgents ambushed an AR convoy in Churachandpur district, killing two civilians and five AR personnel, and injuring at least six security forces.

Throughout the year, special forces continued to arrest militants. For example, on November 16, one PLA member was arrested in Bishnupur district and one Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) member was arrested in Imphal East district.

In addition to their fight against the Indian government, the militant groups clashed with one another in violent encounters. For example, on March 2, UNLF militants killed a member of the KCP. The KCP member had previously escaped from jail in Manipur after kidnapping and murdering the child of a former state minister in 2003.

A new armed outfit was formed in Manipur on October 3. The former members of KYKL formed the Socialist Revolutionary Party, with the goal of regaining the independence of Kangleipak. ths

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**INDIA (MEGHALAYA)**


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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1992**

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Conflict parties: HNLC, ANSC, ARA vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

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The violent crisis over autonomy in Meghalaya state between militant Garo and Khasi groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The most active group throughout the year was the Hynniewtre National Liberation Council (HNLC). The goal of the HNLC remained an autonomous state within the Indian Union in the Khasi Hills area of Meghalaya. In comparison to last year, violence between militants and security forces decreased.

Over the course of the year, HNLC militants continued to carry out IED attacks. For instance, on July 14, HNLC militants detonated an IED at the police reserve in Khliehriat, a part of East Jaintia Hills district, injuring a police officer and damaging part of the building. On August 10, HNLC militants detonated an IED at Laitumkhrah market in Shillong city, East Khasi Hills district, injuring two people.

On August 13, the police killed a former leader of HNLC dur-

ing an attempt to arrest him at his residence in Shillong. On September 25, a leader of the newly formed Achik National Socialist Council was arrested by the police in Tura municipality, West Garo Hills district. Following his interrogation, the police arrested ten members of ANSC and seized their weapons in West Garo Hills.

Throughout the year, several HNLC militants surrendered to the police. For instance, on October 18, an HNLC leader, suspected of involvement in multiple killings and kidnappings, surrendered to the police. adi

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**INDIA (NAGALIM)**


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

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Conflict parties: NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, NSCN-NK, NSCN-KK, NSCN-R, NSCN-U, NSCN-KYA, NSCN-K-NS, NSCN-K-Khango vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

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The violent crisis over either secession or autonomy of the Naga inhabited areas between militant Naga groups and the government in the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, continued.

Throughout the year, violent encounters between the various factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and security forces such as the Assam Rifles (AR) took place. For instance, on November 15, AR killed three members of the NSCN-Khaplang Yung Aung faction (NSCN-K-YA) during a clash in Longding district, Arunachal Pradesh. On December 4, AR fired at a vehicle believed to be carrying NSCN-KYA insurgents, in Tiru Village, Mon district, Nagaland, killing six civilians. Later that day, villagers alarmed by the gunshots clashed with AR, leading to the deaths of a further seven civilians and one security personnel. On December 5, NSCN-Isaak Muivah (NSCN-IM) condemned the attack, claiming the incident was a further attempt to suppress the legitimate Naga political movement. They further stated that the AR could act against the Naga movement with impunity under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

Violent encounters among various NSCN factions continued. For instance, on November 17, a NSCN-Khaplang Nikki Sumi (NSCN-K-NS) militant was killed during a shootout between NSCN-K-NS and NSCN-Unification.

Security forces continued to arrest NSCN militants throughout the year. For instance, in a joint mission on February 13, AR and Nagaland police arrested two militants of NSCN-IM in Wokha district and one NSCN-Kitovi-Neopak militant in Dimapur district, Nagaland. During the operations, security forces apprehended rifles, pistols, ammunition and contraband. On May 31, AR arrested an NSCN-IM militant in Laisong village, Dima Hasao district, Assam.

The government and NSCN factions held further peace talks. On April 11, NSCN-Neopao Kitovi, NSCN-Reformation and NSCN-K-Khango signed an agreement to extend the ceasefire with the government from 04/28/21 to 04/27/22. On September 8, the government and NSCN-K-NS signed a ceasefire agreement for a year. Both sides agreed to hold weapons and ammunition of NSCN-K-NS under the joint supervision of security forces and NSCN-K-NS. iha

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## INDIA (NAXALITES)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1967**

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Conflict parties: Naxalites vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between the left-wing extremist Naxalites and the government continued. The Naxalites were primarily organized in the Communist Party of India-Maoist. Noteworthy splinter organizations were the Jharkhand Jan-Mukti Parishad, the People's Liberation Front of India, and the Tiritiya Prastuti Committee. On the government side, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), especially the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), collaborated with state and district forces.

Throughout the year, violent encounters, IED explosions, and other attacks resulted in the deaths of at least 194 people and left 106 injured on both sides. Violence occurred primarily in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra. Naxalites were also active in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha.

Security forces carried out search operations and patrols in affected areas. For example, on April 3, 2,400 security forces conducted an operation near Teklagudam village, Chhattisgarh. They were ambushed by Naxalites, who killed 22 security forces and injured 30, while security forces killed at least ten Naxalites. On May 21, security forces killed at least 13 Naxalites in an encounter near Etapalli village, Maharashtra. Furthermore, on November 13, 600 security forces encountered Naxalites near Korchi village, Maharashtra, and killed at least 27, while four security personnel were injured. The Naxalites continued to use IEDs. For example, on March 23, five security personnel were killed and 15 injured in an IED attack on a bus carrying security forces on the Kanhargaon-Kadenar Road, Chhattisgarh. On September 6, a civilian was injured by an IED in Cherla town, Telangana. Naxalites also carried out attacks on infrastructure, particularly construction vehicles. For example, on February 16, Naxalites burned eight construction vehicles in Malewahi village, Chhattisgarh. Further, on April 24 and 26, Naxalites carried out two attacks on railroads, derailing a train in Chhattisgarh and damaging a railroad in Jharkhand, respectively.

On May 11, security forces, including CRPF, CoBRA and the District Reserve Guard erected an anti-Naxalites security camp in Silger village, Chattisgarh. Consequently, thousands of civilians protested in Silger against the construction until June 9. During protests on May 17, security forces opened fire, killing three and injuring 18, later claiming there had been Naxalites in the crowd.

Naxalites assassinated and abducted civilians suspected of working with the police, as well as former members and members of security forces. For example, on March 5, Naxalites killed a civilian in Kothapalem village, Andhra Pradesh, suspecting he was a police informant. In a similar incident, on August 30, Naxalites killed a villager in Rayagada district, Odisha.

The Naxalites claimed that security forces had been using drones to carry out bomb attacks in Bijapur district, Chhattisgarh, on April 19. Security forces denied this claim. On July 30, security forces alleged that Naxalites had used small commercial drones for reconnaissance. hen

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## INDIA (SIKHS)

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

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Conflict parties: AISSF, BKI, Dal Khalsa, KLF, SAD (Amritsar), SFJ, SLF vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession

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The violent crisis over the secession of Khalistan between various Sikh groups and the government continued. Sikh secessionist actors remained active within the Indian subcontinent and continued planning attacks, smuggling weapons, and developing new forms of militant activity, most notably the increased usage and possession of IEDs that were seized in police raids throughout the year. In an attack on December 23, the militant group Sikhs for Justice destroyed the Ludhiana District Court House in an IED attack, resulting in one civilian death and seven injured. Weapon smuggling increased compared to previous years, with live ammunition and small arms seized in several police raids. For instance, security forces operating in the Jammu and Kashmir region conducted a raid on June 11 and seized 48 pistols. The militant groups involved in smuggling included Khalistan Liberation Force and Babbar Khalsa International (BKI).

Drug smuggling by militant groups continued with several raids seizing supplies of heroin. For instance, the National Investigation Agency in the Majha area of Jammu and Kashmir conducted an operation on January 7, in which 61 kilograms of heroin, along with arms and ammunition, were seized from BKI operatives.

Diaspora money funneled through the militant group Sikhs for Justice continued to play a role in agitating secessionist activities, such as providing cash sums of USD 350,000 to any citizen that would unfurl a pro-Khalistan flag over the Indian Parliament. Iha

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## INDIA (ULFA-I ET AL. / ASSAM)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1979**

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Conflict parties: ULFA-I, ULFA-PTF, DNLA, NLFB, UPRF, ULB vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession, autonomy

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The violent crisis over either secession or autonomy in Assam state between militant Assamese, Bodo and Karbi groups, on the one hand, and the Indian government, on the other, continued. The most active groups throughout the year were the United Liberation Front of Assam Independent faction (ULFA-I), the Dimasa National Liberation Army (DNLA), and the National Liberation Front of Bodoland (NLFB). The goal of ULFA-I was an independent socialist Assam, while DNLA aimed to create an independent Dimasa nation and NLFB for an independent Bodo state. Violence between militants and security forces increased in comparison to last year.

During an operation between January 4 and 8, security forces arrested six ULFA-I militants and one ULFA Pro-Talks faction (ULFA-PTF) leader across Assam. A high-ranking ULFA-PTF member was arrested on March 8 in Guwahati city for allegedly plotting to assassinate the Assamese chief minister. On April 29, a high-ranking ULFA-I member was killed in an encounter with security forces at Besimari village, Bongaigaon district. On May 15, ULFA-I announced a unilateral



ceasefire for three months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which was then extended in August and November. On July 9, police injured a ULFA-I militant trying to escape custody in Sadiya town, Tinsukia district.

Security forces continued to clash with DNLA militants throughout the year. For instance, on May 23, during a joint operation of Assam Rifles and police officers, eight DNLA militants were killed in Michibailung, West Karbi Anglong district. On September 8, DNLA declared a unilateral ceasefire for three months. At the end of the year, at least 114 DNLA militants surrendered.

On April 21, security forces arrested a high-ranking member of NLFB in Amlarem village, West Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya. On July 13, police killed a high-ranking NLFB member in Dimachang, Udalguri district. During the second half of the year, at least 150 NLFB militants surrendered all across Assam.

On September 15, a new militant group called the United Liberation of Bodoland (ULB) was founded, and demanded the creation of a separate state of Bodoland. On September 16, police killed two ULB militants in Ultapani Reserve Forest, Kokrajhar district. On September 24, security forces arrested ten ULB militants across the Bodoland Territorial Region.

On February 23, People’s Democratic Council of Karbi Longri (PDCK) leader and high-ranking member of NDFB-Saoraigwra faction surrendered together with 1,040 militants from Karbi People’s Liberation Tiger, PDCK, Karbi Longri NC Hills Liberation Front, Kuki Liberation Front, and United People’s Liberation Army (UPLA) in Guwahati. On September 4, these five groups signed a peace agreement with the government, with UPLA subsequently announcing its disbandment. adi

**INDIA – PAKISTAN**

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

Conflict parties: India vs. Pakistan  
 Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The violent crisis over the status of the Kashmir region, international and regional power, and water distribution between India and Pakistan continued. 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 decreased significantly this year. After 7,000 reported ceasefire violations in 2020, less than 600 were reported in 2021. Most cross-border firings between the Pakistani and the Indian army occurred in the first two months of the year, killing at least three Indian soldiers and injuring eight civilians. Both countries’ military forces used small arms as well as heavy weapons like mortars.

On February 24, the Indian and Pakistani Director-Generals of Military Operations agreed to a renewed ceasefire agreement along the LoC and at the international border taking effect at midnight. The agreement was preceded by talks in January mediated by the United Arab Emirates. On March 26, the Indian and Pakistani armies held a meeting at the Poonch-Rawlakote crossing point to discuss implementation mechanisms for the agreement. After the February agreement, only a few border violations were recorded in J&K

before the end of the year, taking place in Samba, Jammu, and Kupwara districts. On October 16, the Pakistani navy claimed it had “detected and blocked” an Indian military submarine from entering Pakistan’s territorial waters south of Karachi city, Sindh province.

In another example of stabilizing diplomatic relations, from March 23 to 24, Pakistani and Indian Indus Commissioners agreed to resume efforts to resolve Indus water issues and to conduct inspection tours in their first meeting since 2018. Pakistan’s representative reiterated objections to Indian hydropower projects.

However, diplomatic tensions between the two countries remained high with regard to mutual accusations of state-sponsored terrorism and the situation in J&K. For instance, on March 30, Pakistan deferred a decision to import cotton and sugar from India until India reviewed the 2019 revocation of J&K’s special status [→ India (Kashmir)]. On several occasions throughout the year, Indian and Pakistani diplomats attacked each other verbally at UN meetings. For example, on July 4, Pakistan’s National Security Adviser accused India of sponsoring “terrorism against Pakistan”, referring to a bombing in Pakistan on June 23. Furthermore, on August 12, Pakistan’s foreign minister accused Afghan and Indian intelligence of having planned another attack on a bus carrying Chinese engineers working on a hydropower project on the Indus river. 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 on the other, continued. Throughout the year, joint security forces arrested 364 suspected Islamist militants across the country.

The first half of the year saw high levels of violence between JAD and the government. For instance, on January 6, Densus 88, the National Police’s counter-terrorism force, raided a JAD hideout in Biringkanaya district of Makassar city, Sulawesi Selatan province. They shot dead two JAD militants, injured another, and arrested at least 17. On March 28, two JAD-affiliated militants approached a Catholic church in Makassar on a motorcycle during a service. When security personnel asked them to dismount the motorcycle, they detonated a bomb outside the church, killing themselves and injuring at least 19. This marked the first church bombing attack in Indonesia since the 2018 Surabaya attacks. Subsequently, the government deployed an additional 200 security personnel to the capital Jakarta and arrested 31 suspects in various regions within two weeks. During a raid related to the church bombing on April 15, Densus 88 forces in Makassar shot dead a suspect attacking them with sickles.

Throughout the year, the government continued persecuting MIT militants in Sulawesi Tengah province in a joint police and military operation called Madago Raya, previously called Operation Tinombala, which began in 2016. It was extended several times this year. On March 1, Madago Raya task force members engaged in a firefight with MIT militants in Tambarana village, Poso regency. As a result, two MIT militants and one TNI soldier were killed. On May 11, MIT retaliated

by killing four farmers in Kalimango village, Poso Regency, reportedly beheading one. On July 11 and 17, Madago Raya task force shot dead three MIT militants in two raids in Torue district, Parigi Moutong Regency. On September 18, Madago Raya task force members shot dead two MIT militants, including their leader, in a raid in the same district. This left just four MIT members on the task force's wanted list.

The government also increased its efforts against other Islamist militant groups. Over the course of the year, government forces arrested 178 persons affiliated with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), including several that were involved with civil institutions. For instance, on November 3, police forces arrested a high school principal in Lampung province for alleged involvement in a charity organization financing JI. On November 16, Densus 88 arrested three people accused of financing JI, including a high-ranking cleric and the general chairman of the Indonesian People's Da'wah Party, near Jakarta. 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 violent crisis over the secession of the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat and natural resources, such as gold, copper, and timber, between indigenous Papuans and the government continued. Violent clashes between security personnel and Papuan militant groups, such as the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB), and protests and extrajudicial violence resulted in at least 56 deaths, while at least 75 were injured. Over the course of the year, at least 14,369 persons were displaced.

Throughout the year, levels of violence remained high in Intan Jaya Regency, Papua province. On January 22, TPNPB-affiliated militants twice attacked an Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) post in Titigi village, Sugapa district, shooting two TNI soldiers dead. On October 28 and 29, a series of firefights between TNI and TPNPB left two civilians dead and led to the displacement of 5,859 people in Sugapa town, eponymous district.

On April 25, TPNPB militants shot dead Papua's highest ranking intelligence officer in Dambet village, Beoga district, Puncak Regency. Subsequently, the government deployed an additional 400 TNI troops to the province and officially labelled the various militant groups that constitute TPNPB as terrorist organization on April 29. The following military operations and clashes with TPNPB resulted in the displacement of 3,019 civilians by early June.

Over the course of the year, TPNPB conducted several attacks in Yahukimo Regency, Papua. TPNPB shot dead at least six civilians in separate incidents in June and August. On November 20, TPNPB also attacked TNI soldiers in Suru-Suru district, shooting one dead and injuring another.

Pegunungan Bintang Regency, Papua, saw high levels of violence in the latter half of the year. On September 13, TPNPB attacked and destroyed a health center in Kiwirok district, shooting one civilian dead and injuring four others. Furthermore, TPNPB destroyed a regional office building, a school, and a market. Subsequent firefights resulted in the death of one TPNPB militant and at least one security personnel, while another was injured and at least 2,000 people displaced.

In Papua Barat, violence concentrated in Maybrat Regency. On September 2, dozens of TPNPB militants attacked a TNI post with machetes and bows and arrows in Kisor village, Aifat Selatan district, killing four soldiers and injuring two. This incident and subsequent military operations resulted in the arrests of at least 19 suspects and the displacement of at least 2,000 people from 36 nearby villages.

Throughout the year, protests were held in Papua, Papua Barat, and other parts of the country in relation to the arrest of a prominent Papuan activist on May 9, and the extension of the controversial special autonomy law for Papua on July 15. hbe

## JAPAN – RUSSIA

Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **1945**

Conflict parties: Japan vs. Russia

Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The dispute over territory concerning the Southern Kuril Islands/Northern Territories and resources such as fish between Japan and Russia continued.

Both countries continuously voiced their intentions to improve bilateral relations. However, on several occasions, Japanese officials emphasized Japan's sovereignty over the disputed islands. In February, Japanese President Yoshihide Suga spoke of Russia's "occupation" of the islands, for the first time since 2019. Furthermore, Japan participated in two joint military drills with the USA [→ China - USA].

Similarly, the Russian military deployed a coastal defense missile system on Matua Island, Sakhalin Oblast, and undertook seven military drills on and around the disputed islands. The scale of these varied. From October 14 to 17, the Russian and the military of the People's Republic of China (PRC) conducted a joint exercise [→ Japan - China].

Japan regularly protested these drills citing, among other reasons, that they run counter to Japanese sovereignty over the Southern islands. This was repeatedly denied by the Russian side. mts

## JAPAN – SOUTH KOREA

Intensity: **1** | 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) de-escalated to a dispute.

Throughout the year, both countries repeatedly made claims to Liancourt Rocks. Protests erupted, for example, on May 24 when the Tokyo Olympic Committee showed the islands as part of Japanese territory on an official map, and on June 15 when ROK began its annual military drills around the islands. On January 8, the Seoul Central District Court ordered the Japanese government to pay approximately USD 91,800 each to twelve Korean so-called "comfort women", forced sex laborers during Japan's occupation of Korea. While similar cases were later dismissed, referring to the 2015 Comfort Women Agreement and Japan's sovereign immunity, on December 30 a different ROK court ordered the sale of Nippon

Steel Corp. assets to compensate earlier plaintiffs from a wartime forced labor lawsuit. Nevertheless, both countries expressed the wish to strengthen regional security cooperation despite bilateral disagreements and cooperated with the USA regarding their North Korea policy. Meetings took place in July, September, and October [→Japan et al. – DPRK]. jwl

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## JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, USA – NORTH KOREA

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Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **1993**

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Conflict parties: Japan, ROK, USA vs. DPRK  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, international power, other

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The non-violent crisis over international power, ideology, and historical perceptions between Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the USA on the one hand, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) supported by the People’s Republic of China (PRC), on the other, continued. DPRK armament efforts and regional security topics remained core issues [→ DPRK – ROK]. DPRK repeatedly tested presumably more sophisticated missiles. On March 25, DPRK launched two projectiles suspected to be ballistic missiles off its Eastern coast. The test was met with strong international protest. DPRK accused the US and UNSC of violating its sovereignty and applying double-standards. On September 28, DPRK claimed that it had tested a new hypersonic missile followed two days later by a new anti-aircraft missile. On October 19, DPRK presumably test-fired a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM). ROK also introduced new weapons systems such as a SLBM, a submarine, and a fighter jet. As in previous years, the annual US-ROK military exercises were met with strong criticism from the DPRK. On November 6 and 7, DPRK conducted a large-scale “artillery fire competition” claiming it to be “completely defensive”. Japan, ROK, and the US reaffirmed their alliances and discussed a coordinated approach to the DPRK. The US reiterated its stance that North Korean armament efforts pose a threat to the US and its allies. Moreover, the US accused the DPRK of human trafficking and violating human rights on several occasions. While the ROK and the US repeatedly expressed their willingness for dialog, DPRK representatives reacted in the second half of the year, demanding an end of “hostile policies” towards DPRK as a precondition. The DPRK also strongly criticized Japan’s current defense policy [→ China – Japan (East China Sea)]. jkl

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## KAZAKHSTAN (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **2** | Change: • | Start: **2004**

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Conflict parties: civil rights activists, DPK, DVK, independent trade unions, journalists, Oyan Qazaqstan vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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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 opposition groups and independent journalists. Several activists were detained and jailed for association with the DVK or the Koshe Party, which authorities had declared illegal in 2020 due to an alleged association with the DVK. In the first mass trial in years, on October 11, a court in Almaty city, eponymous region, sentenced 13 activists to up to five years in prison for their alleged connection with the aforementioned groups. Furthermore, media outlets, journalists, and bloggers remained a target of government repression, often based on the grounds of participation in banned groups. A Kazakh news website that reported on former president Nazarbayev’s appearance in the so-called Pandora Papers was blocked by authorities for ten days in early October. On May 15, a member of the Oyan Qazaqstan movement and administrator of a satirical social media page was detained for spreading false information. Throughout the year several reports of violence in Kazakh penitentiary facilities surfaced. On January 18, a prison guard was charged with abuse of authority for beating a jailed activist. At least 13 people self-harmed to protest the conditions in prison, among them opposition activists. For instance, on April 21, two prisoners in the Mangystau region swallowed spoons. On October 31, an activist swallowed nails to protest his imprisonment. mor

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## KYRGYZSTAN (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **2** | Change: ▼ | Start: **2005**

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

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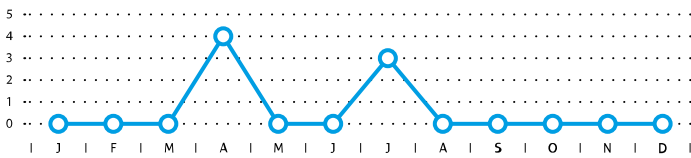
The violent crisis over system ideology and national power in Kyrgyzstan between the opposition and the government continued. Civil rights groups and political activists protested against the government throughout the year for its alleged failure to respond to violence against women and corruption. On March 15, police arrested the organizer of rallies protesting Kyrgyzstan’s proposed constitutional amendments in the capital Bishkek. This organizer was later sentenced to 18 months in prison. On April 13, police arrested two political activists pending an investigation into high treason. An opposition politician was arrested by the police on May 10 and charged with organizing mass disorder. On June 30, around 30 civil rights activists and public figures protested a bill in Bishkek. On September 1, the Interior Ministry admitted to wiretapping activists’ phones between January 9 and February 10. On September 10, a member of the United Kyrgyzstan party was arrested at the airport in Osh. On December 1, unknown assailants attacked the leader of the Ata-Meken party in Bishkek. adi

**KYRGYZSTAN – UZBEKISTAN – TAJIKISTAN  
(BORDER COMMUNITIES / FERGANA VALLEY)**

Intensity: **4** | Change: **↗** | Start: **2000**

Conflict parties: Kyrgyz border communities, Kyrgyzstan vs. Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan border communities vs. Tajik border communities, Tajikistan

Conflict items: territory, international power



The violent crisis over territory and international power in the Fergana Valley border region between Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek border communities, backed by their respective governments, escalated to a limited war. Despite recurrent clashes, the tensions were always accompanied by meetings between officials of the involved parties, which emphasized the importance of the demarcation process and friendly relations.

On April 28, violent clashes broke out on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. The incident was triggered by the installation of a video camera by Tajik officials to observe a shared water supply system in the Kok Tash village, Batken region, Kyrgyzstan. The clashes spread to the Tajik region of Sughd and the Kyrgyz region of Lejlek. At first, the border communities threw stones at each other. After reinforcing border troops on both sides, they exchanged gunfire. The unrest injured 200 people, and killed at least 40. Another 20,000 people were evacuated and over 70 homes and public buildings were destroyed. After the ceasefire agreement and the withdrawal of the border troops, both conflict parties agreed to complete the border demarcation. In May, the Kyrgyz government imposed entry and import restrictions to increase Tajik willingness to negotiate the border.

Clashes continued at the border. For example, on June 4, there were further clashes between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan at a disputed section of the Unzhu-Bulak border in the Chon-Alai district, Osh region, Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz border communities accused Tajik border troops of placing a container in what the Kyrgyz side described as disputed territory. Tajikistan rejected the accusation, referring to a settlement. Finally, the two parties agreed to withdraw within three kilometers from the disputed point. On July 8, Kyrgyz and Tajik border troops exchanged gunfire near the mountain pass of Chashmagildan, Batken region, Kyrgyzstan, leaving one Kyrgyz soldier dead and one injured. On December 21, Tajik border personnel used weapons against Kyrgyz citizens in the Kocho-Boyu area of Batken district.

Meetings of the three respective countries' Heads of State took place with a view to improve cooperation. On March 11, the Uzbek and Kyrgyz presidents, Shavkat Miziyyev and Sadyr Japarov, met in the Uzbek capital Tashkent to discuss economic projects, cooperation, the demarcation of the border, as well as the situation of the Uzbek exclave of Soch. An agreement was signed on March 25. The Tajik and Uzbek ministers met on May 14 to discuss closer economic cooperation. No similar agreement has ever existed between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Restrictions on entry and imports

on the Kyrgyz side were partially lifted for the first time since 1932, allowing Tajik students to enter Kyrgyzstan. *msa*

**MALDIVES (OPPOSITION)**

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

Conflict parties: opposition vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between the opposition, consisting of the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM), People's National Congress (PNC), Dhivehi Rayyithunge Party, as well as the Maldives Development Alliance (MDA) on the one hand, and the government, consisting of the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), on the other, continued.

On May 6, former president and current Parliament Speaker Mohamed Nasheed, also head of the MDP, was injured by an IED along with two bodyguards and two civilians in the capital of Malé. Three days later, police forces arrested three suspects connected to the attack in Malé. On September 13, the prosecutor forwarded to the Supreme Court three further charges against suspects connected to the attack on Nasheed. On June 2, police arrested a man who had threatened via social media an explosives attack on parliament.

On January 25, PNC leader Abdul Raheem Abdulla and his deputy were arrested at a demonstration organized by PNC and PPM. The protesters demanded more information about a Covid-19 vaccine donation from India. On January 7, the police arrested six persons from the opposition coalition at a protest held outside the criminal court in Malé. Police forces arrested at least 47 protesters in March after a string of demonstrations, demanding the release of former President Abdulla Yameen and free elections. The PPM stated that police used violence to thwart a protest on September 19, injuring several protesters and journalists. On July 12, Nasheed made an internal announcement to his party that he could no longer stand in political alignment with President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the MDP due to differences in political ideology. Consequently, there were reports of two factions having formed within the MDP. The main point of contention was the future of the political system, with Nasheed campaigning for a parliamentary system which Solih would not support, as well as the acquisition process for vaccines and its transparency. *she*

**MYANMAR (AA / RAKHINE STATE)**

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

Conflict parties: AA vs. Myanmar Army

Conflict items: autonomy

The limited war over the autonomy of Rakhine State between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) de-escalated to a violent crisis.

On January 28, the Tatmadaw extended its unilateral ceasefire for a month, for the first time since 2018 also including Rakhine State. AA welcomed this in a statement, also emphasizing that proposals passed by the state parliament concerning IDPs should be implemented soon. On February 10, the Rakhine State Administration Council stated that it planned to facilitate the return of thousands of IDPs within

the state, which AA responded was too early as landmines would not yet have been cleared and houses had been destroyed. In subsequent weeks, civil society organizations urged the Council to provide the conditions for IDPs to return without being harmed.

On April 1, the Tatmadaw declared another countrywide ceasefire for one month. This announcement came after a threat on March 30 by AA and its allies, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), which stated that they would break their truce if violence against anti-government protesters did not stop [→ Myanmar (opposition)].

AA, MNDAA, and TNLA troops jointly attacked a police station in Naung Mon village, Lashio city, eponymous township, Shan State, on April 10, killing 14 police staff using firearms. At least five were injured and the station was burnt down. The Tatmadaw reportedly reacted by sending helicopters after the three armies, resulting in further violent clashes in Khar Shwe village, Lashio township, and near Mawtaung village, Muse township, both in Shan State. Moreover, police and military forces erected roadblocks to check all traffic into Lashio. On May 31, at least eleven Tatmadaw soldiers were killed in another attack by the three armed groups on a Light Infantry Battalion in Namphatkar, Kutkai township, Shan State, using light weapons. Several houses in Namphatkar were damaged, injuring one civilian.

Between November 9 and 11, the Tatmadaw and AA clashed several times in Maungdaw township, breaking the ceasefire for the first time this year. No casualties were reported. AA claimed the clash occurred when Tatmadaw forces entering its territory. In a statement on November 26, the UNSC expressed concern about the clashes in Rakhine State and increasing violence in Myanmar.

Despite combined attacks and clashes, the military government declared its growing hope for peace talks with the AA and removed it from its list of designated terrorist organizations on March 11. Eight civilians allegedly connected to AA who had been under trial in Yangon Region were released on June 9. In turn, on June 16, AA freed 17 security personnel near the border of Rathedaung and Buthidaung townships and a further six at the border between Kyauktaw and Mrauk-U townships. kv

April 11, KIA attacked six military outposts and three police stations, including the strategically important Alaw Bum base, Momauk township. No casualties were reported but more than 6,000 civilians were displaced.

KIA captured Alaw Bum base on March 25. On April 11 and 29, Tatmadaw made attempts to recapture the base. KIA claimed to have completely defeated a Tatmadaw battalion, killing approx. 100 soldiers. KIA also took brief control of Nam Byu base, Tanai township, on April 15, but was forced to retreat under air fire. The next day, KIA attacked two Tatmadaw highway convoys carrying troop reinforcements, killing eight soldiers. On April 29, KIA attacked Bhamo airport, eponymous township, which is used by Tatmadaw for helicopter raids on KIA positions.

Throughout May, Momauk remained a major zone of contention. On May 3, KIA shot down a Tatmadaw helicopter. In retaliation, Tatmadaw bombed surrounding areas, killing four and injuring eight civilians. However, Tatmadaw reported high levels of collateral damage. On May 24, clashes between KIA and Tatmadaw soldiers displaced hundreds and killed one from the Tawar Kone and Kone Law areas within Momauk. KIA then directed its attention to material damage. On May 6, KIA ambushed a highway convoy. Later that month, KIA cut off a major road between Mansi and Namkham, Shan State, and ambushed seven oil tankers transporting aviation fuel along the Union Highway/Kutkai-Hseni Road. On May 22, KIA attacked jade mines in Hpakant township, taking several military and police personnel as hostages.

Three months after the coup, some KIA subunits began cooperating informally with local chapters of the People's Defense Force (PDF), a militia that formed in response to the coup [→ Myanmar (opposition)]. On May 30, Katha Township PDF ambushed a military convoy and called a nearby KIA unit for assistance. PDF killed eight Tatmadaw soldiers and injured 13, while Tatmadaw killed five PDF members. In a similar incident between June 24 to 26, that left at least 30 people dead, KIA did not officially declare assistance to PDF but acknowledged the autonomy of local KIA units. KIA units and PDF then jointly attacked two columns of military vehicles on July 2, in which KIA claimed to have killed 24 Tatmadaw soldiers.

From July 5 to 10, KIA and PDF forces clashed with Tatmadaw troops in Katha and Shwebo townships, Sagaing Region. PDF claimed both to operate under KIA command and to have killed 180 Tatmadaw soldiers, indicating no personal losses. Meanwhile, PDF claimed to have killed 44 Tatmadaw soldiers in nearby Kawlin township with KIA assistance. PDF forces in Mogoke township, Mandalay Region, also claimed to have killed six Tatmadaw soldiers in a joint ambush with KIA on August 17.

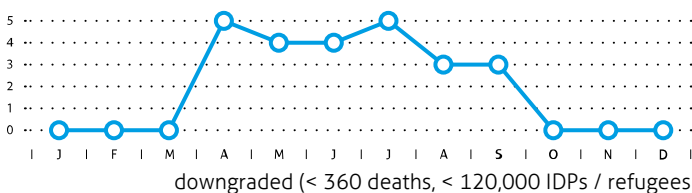
The number of violent measures initiated by KIA alone declined from June. After the National Unity Government (NUG)'s declaration of war against Tatmadaw on September 7, KIA and PDF forces clashed with Tatmadaw soldiers again on September 20 in the contested Katha. NUG claimed that the operation left 40 Tatmadaw soldiers dead.

On September 29, KIA targeted a military escort convoy supposed to secure supply convoys travelling the Ledo road from Mogaung town to Tanai. On the same day, the military government announced a unilateral ceasefire of goodwill with the ethnic armed groups taking effect on October 1. Nonetheless, the day after KIA ambushed a second military convoy near Momauk. mop

MYANMAR (KIA, KIO / KACHIN STATE)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1961


Conflict parties: KIO, KIA vs. Myanmar Army  
 Conflict items: autonomy, resources



The violent crisis over regional autonomy and resources like jade, between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), politically represented by the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) escalated to a limited war.

After the Tatmadaw took power on February 1, KIO and KIA representatives declared limited support for citizens opposing the military rule in Kachin State. On March 11, KIO refused to recognize the military government. From this date until

MYANMAR (KNU, KNLA, DKBA ET AL. / KAREN STATE, KAYAH STATE)

Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1948**

Conflict parties: KNU, KNLA, DKBA, DKBA-splinter group vs. Myanmar Army

Conflict items: autonomy

The violent conflict over autonomy between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed-wing of the Karen National Union (KNU), in alliance with the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), on the one hand, and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw), on the other, continued.

In January, violent clashes between KNLA and Tatmadaw resulted in one death and two injuries in Kyauk Gyi township and led to the displacement of at least 1,000 civilians in Mutraw district. After the military government began to repress the protest violently, protesters fled into Karen State to seek protection [→ Myanmar (socio-economic protests)]. On February 14, Tatmadaw began to block roads and restricting travel to Karen as shelling continued. The operations led to at least 212 villagers being displaced from Tha Kaw Toh Baw village.

Violence intensified in March as KNLA took over the Thi Mu Hta frontline base camp of the Tatmadaw, killing 10 Tatmadaw soldiers and imprisoning a further eight. This attack led to the Tatmadaw bombing the area on a daily basis from March 28 to 31, including Luthaw, Hsaw Hti and Dwe Lo townships. The bombings forced thousands of people to flee, some crossing the border to Thailand. On March 29, however, the Thai authorities refused entry to 2009 villagers from the Ei Tu Hta camp. On March 31, the Tatmadaw bombed a mining site under the control of KNLA in Shwe Kyin township, killing eleven workers and injuring five.


Airstrikes continued in April, killing at least 18 and injuring 46 civilians in several townships in the Mutraw district. KNLA attacked the Thaw Lae Hta camp of the Tatmadaw on April 27, killing 20 soldiers and imprisoning eight, reportedly in response to Tatmadaw troops shooting civilians. Tatmadaw airstrikes followed, killing at least 14, injuring 16 civilians in Mutraw district, and displacing thousands of villagers.

In May, the Tatmadaw accused the Karen National Defence Organisation, another armed wing of KNU, of killing 25 civilians in Waw Lay in Myawaddy township. On June 1, DKBA killed 29 Tatmadaw soldiers and three members from the Tatmadaw-supported Border Guard Force (BGF), as they entered DKBA territory. On June 15, leaders of KNU, DKBA and BGF met to seek peaceful resolutions. On June 21, KNLA killed eight Tatmadaw soldiers in Hpa-an city.

In August, BGF mobilized hundreds of troops in KNU-controlled areas to counter the People's Defense Force, which was formed from the civil disobedience movement [→ Myanmar (opposition)]. The two parties clashed in fighting which killed two soldiers on each side.

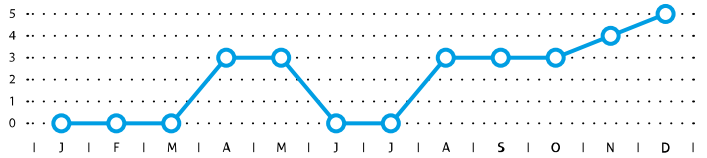
At the end of the year, between December 23 and 24, the military carried out three airstrikes within the Lay Kay Kaw area which targeted displaced civilians being protected by the KNU. No casualties were reported. fyn

MYANMAR (MNDAA / SHAN STATE)

Intensity: **4** | Change:  | Start: **1989**

Conflict parties: MNDAA vs. Myanmar Army

Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



downgraded (< 360 deaths, < 120,000 IDPs / refugees)

The violent crisis over the autonomy of Kokang region, Shan State, between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) escalated to a limited war.

The Brotherhood Alliance, consisting of the Arakan Army (AA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and MNDAA, announced a unilateral ceasefire on January 1 and extended it repeatedly until the end of March [→ Myanmar (Arakan Army / Rakhine State); Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)].


In May, nine clashes and raids occurred between the Tatmadaw and MNDAA. On May 31, the Brotherhood Alliance attacked the Tatmadaw in Namt Phat Kar, Kutkai township, northern Shan State, resulting in at least eleven deaths.

Between August and November, three clashes occurred between MNDAA and Tatmadaw forces in Mongkoe township, northern Shan State. At least 101 people were killed and at least 700 injured.

In August, there were four armed clashes between MNDAA and the Tatmadaw. On August 3, a clash took place in Muse township near the border to China in northern Shan State, which internally displaced hundreds of civilians. In addition, from August 26 to 30, three clashes between MNDAA and the Tatmadaw in Pang Hseng township, Shan State, resulted in 47 deaths and 20 injuries in total. The confrontation continued on September 1, leaving eight soldiers and one MNDAA fighter dead. On September 27, the Tatmadaw announced a unilateral ceasefire. Despite the announcement, five clashes took place from October 3 to 5.

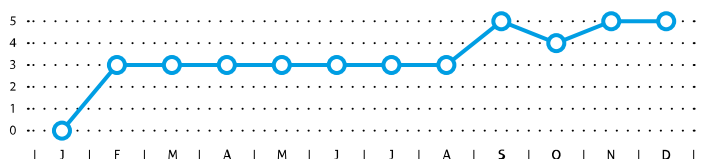
Finally, on December 20, Tatmadaw launched airstrikes and fired more than 1,500 artillery rounds on an MNDAA base in Mongkoe, resulting in at least 100 deaths. jpa

MYANMAR (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: **5** | Change:  | Start: **1962**

Conflict parties: opposition vs. Myanmar Army

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power



The violent crisis between the National League of Democracy (NLD) and its interim government, the National Unity Government (NUG), supported by the People's Defense Forces (PDF), on the one hand, and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) led by

# Myanmar (opposition)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



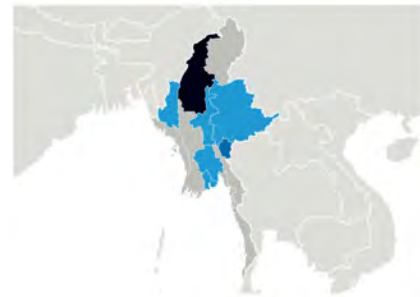
August



September



October



November



December



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, on the other, escalated to a war.

The armed wing of the opposition was supported and trained by various ethnic armed organizations (EAO), such as the Kachin Independence Army, Karen National Liberation Army, and Chin National Army. This is a new phenomenon, since EAOs formerly operated and fought independently.

Over the course of the year, the conflict left at least 1,121 people dead and 711 injured, also forcing at least 254,025 persons to flee their homes. In the second half of the year, the majority of violent fighting was most intense in the border regions, such as the Sagaing Region, Chin State, and Shan State, while the majority of protests, arrests, and non-violent clashes were focused in central Myanmar. The Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) withheld aid donated for Covid-19 as a means to pressure supporters of the opposition, leaving thousands without access to medical care or oxygen. The deteriorating human rights situation raised domestic as well as international criticism.

On February 1, the Tatmadaw staged a coup and arrested key political figures of the ruling party NLD, such as State Counsellor Aung Sang Suu Kyi, claiming that the state elections held in November 2020 had been fraudulent. As a response to the coup, countrywide demonstrations erupted, to which the Tatmadaw responded with violence. For instance, on February 28, security forces killed at least 18 people in the first major violent crackdown on protests in the cities of Yangon and Mandalay, eponymous regions. The clashes peaked on March 27, when Tatmadaw forces killed a minimum of 114 protesters amidst demonstrations across the country.

In May, the PDF was founded by the NUG. Between May and July, clashes between the Tatmadaw and PDF resulted in the death of 150 civilians and the forceful displacement of 150,000 people. Those displaced near the border regions fled to either India, Thailand, or the surrounding mountain areas. China had closed its borders.

On August 19 and 20, a total of 50 Tatmadaw soldiers were killed by landmines planted by PDF at roadblocks in the Magway region.

On September 7, NUG declared war against the Tatmadaw, asking all its partners and civilian armed groups to target the military and its assets. Following the announcement, fighting in the border regions reached new heights when the military intensified airstrikes while civilian armed groups and the EAOs resorted to guerilla techniques and bombings.

On December 21, intense fighting between KNLA and the Tatmadaw left 70 soldiers dead and forced approx. 7,000 people to flee to Thailand. No civilian casualties were reported [→ (Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al / Kayah State)]. Meanwhile in Chin State, the Tatmadaw, the Chinland Defense Force-Thantlang, and the Chin National Association clashed at least three times between September and October leaving 48 dead. In addition, approx. 30,000 people in Thantlang township, Chin State, were displaced as a result of violence.

Sagaing region also experienced violence with at least 48 dead after an intense clash between the Kalay PDF and the Tatmadaw on November 4 in Kalay township. cak

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## MYANMAR (RCSS – TNLA / SHAN STATE)

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

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Conflict parties: RCSS, SSA-S vs. PSLF, TNLA

Conflict items: subnational predominance

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance in Shan State between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) continued. Throughout the year, numerous clashes between TNLA and RCSS left at least five people dead and approx. 4,100 internally displaced. Clashes between RCSS and TNLA supported by SSPP, especially in Namtu, Hsipaw, Kyaukme, and Mongkaing, Shan State, also continued.

On January 4, approx. 600 people were displaced in Namtu after TNLA clashed with the RCSS. On February 13, the forces of RCSS, SSPP, and TNLA clashed in Namtu and Kyaukme townships. The fighting continued on February 14 and 15. Two civilians were killed and hundreds of locals displaced.

On March 11, violent encounters between TNLA and SSPP took place across multiple locations in Shan State including Namtu Township, leaving three civilians injured. On August 23, fighting between RCSS and TNLA/SSPP led to the displacement of approx. 100 civilians in Hsipaw Township. On September 14, violent clashes between SSPP and RCSS left 3,000 persons in Hohke Village, Shan State, internally displaced.

On October 4, RCSS engaged in fighting with SSPP in Mongkaing township, displacing at least 800 civilians. Four civilians were injured in crossfire, one of whom later died. ann

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## MYANMAR (SSA / SHAN STATE)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1952**

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Conflict parties: SSA-N, SSA-S vs. Myanmar Army

Conflict items: autonomy

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The violent conflict over the autonomy of Shan State between the northern and southern Shan State Armies (SSA-N and SSA-S) and their political wings, Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP) and Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) respectively, on the one hand, and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw), on the other, continued.

Following the February 1 military coup d'état, violent clashes escalated across Shan State, including confrontations in Khine Sin village, Hsipaw township, and Pang Hkar village. The conflict areas expanded from southern to northern parts of the Shan State. On February 15, RCSS accused the military government of breaking the National Ceasefire Agreement. In April, the Tatmadaw and SSA-S troops clashed in Na Khan, Kawng Yao villages, Loi Ngern village, and Pha Sawn village. On April 23 in Pha Sawn village, the Tatmadaw deployed at least 100 soldiers.

Violent clashes and ensuing mass displacement also occurred between SSA-N and SSA-S, sometimes involving the Ta'ang National Liberation Army [→ Myanmar (RCSS – TNLA / Shan State)]. Between April and June, at least 7,500 IDPs were reported in the state. On February 17, SSPP killed 18 RCSS soldiers, and detained ten.

On July 7, a new political organization was formed, under the



name Shan State Liberation Party, including a corresponding armed wing, Shan State Front for Federal (SSFF). It declared as its aim the unification of Shan State and the confederation of Myanmar. Five days later, SSFF declared war on the Tatmadaw.

On July 13, RCSS called for peace talks with SSPP and had earlier withdrawn from the historically contested and strategically important Loi Hon township. SSPP took over the village shortly thereafter. The Council for Shan State Unity also urged peace negotiations among all conflicting parties in Shan State, including RCSS and SSPP. In September, another 700 civilians fled their villages due to conflict between RCSS and SSPP in the Mong Kung township, Shan State. Further clashes on October 5 resulted in the death of one civilian and left three injured.

SSPP joined the peace negotiations facilitated by the People's Republic of China on December 15 [→ Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)], fyn

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### MYANMAR (TNLA / SHAN STATE)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2013**

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Conflict parties: TNLA vs. Myanmar Army  
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

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The violent conflict over resources and autonomy of Shan State between Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) continued.

Following the military coup d'état on February 1, TNLA joined other ethnic armed organizations (EAO) including Karen National Union, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, and Restoration Council for Shan State [→ Myanmar (SSA / Shan State); Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)] in opposing the military's seizure of power.

Throughout Shan State, in April and May violence instigated by the coup significantly intensified protests, which turned violent as the military escalated countermeasures.

On April 10, in the Khar Shwe village outside Lashio, the Three Brotherhood Alliance, including TNLA, Arakan Army (AA), and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), destroyed the Naungmon police station, killing 15 police officers and injuring another seven [→ Myanmar (Arakan Army / Rakhine State)].

After an intense clash on April 5 between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Tatmadaw forces in Kutkai Township, TNLA and MNDAA killed at least 24 Tatmadaw soldiers in Kutkai Township and Manlon Village to support KIA, which also belongs to the Northern Alliance [→ Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State)]. On May 31, TNLA and MNDAA attacked a military base in Nampakha village in Kutkai Township, killing ten Tatmadaw soldiers and injuring at least three others. On August 8, in Namkham township, TNLA killed one Tatmadaw soldier and injured one civilian.

In June, TNLA banned products of military-owned companies in territories under their effective control in northern Shan State, in addition to voicing their opposition to the Tatmadaw and the fatal violent clashes.

Facilitated by the People's Republic of China government on December 15, the Tatmadaw initiated peace negotiations to restore the National Ceasefire Agreement with six EAOs, including United Wa State Army, Mong La's National Democratic Alliance Army, Shan State Progressive Party, AA, TNLA, and MNDAA. No consensus was reached, as EAO leaders were not

convinced of the Tatmadaw's ambition to build peace, while the Tatmadaw feared an alliance of northern-based EAOs. fyn

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### NEPAL (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: ↗ | Start: **2008**

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

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The non-violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between the opposition and the government escalated to a violent crisis.

Early in the year, opposition forces were mainly organized in the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist Centre (CPN-Maoist Centre) and the Nepali Congress, who called for the reinstatement of parliament. On July 13, Sher Bahadur Deuba, leader of the Nepali Congress, was appointed prime minister by the Supreme Court. Subsequently, splinter parties of the CPN-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) became part of the opposition. Pro-monarchy supporters, including the opposition parties Rashtriya Shakti Nepal and the United National People's Movement Front, continued to demand the restoration of the monarchy.

After then Prime Minister Sharma Oli of the CPN-UML had dissolved the parliament on 12/20/20, the Nepali Congress and CPN - Maoist Centre filed petitions challenging the dissolution. Throughout the year, opposition groups organized multiple protests, during which at least 30 protesters were injured and 150 arrested. For instance, on January 11, pro-monarchy supporters, led by the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, demonstrated in the capital Kathmandu, demanding the restoration of a monarchical Hindu state, as well as accusing Oli of corruption. The police attempted to block the road to the PM's office using batons. The protesters threw rocks and sticks. On January 25, amidst further protests in Kathmandu, the police used water cannons and batons against the protesters and detained 25 human rights activists.

On February 11, a CPN-Maoist Centre leader was arrested in Kathmandu for criticizing Oli and released a few hours later after activists protested against her imprisonment and the restriction of freedom of speech.

On February 22, the Supreme Court demanded the reinstatement of parliament. On May 10, Oli lost a vote of confidence. Subsequently, on May 21, President Bidya Bhandari dissolved the parliament and appointed himself as interim prime minister, announcing new elections for November 12 and 19. Consequently, student unions and factions of the CPN-UML organized protests against the dissolution of parliament. Following the protests, the Supreme Court reinstated parliament on July 12, overruling the decision to hold elections in November. Subsequently, Deuba was appointed prime minister. The same day, hundreds of Oli supporters protested against the Supreme Court in Kathmandu's decision, calling it unconstitutional.


On September 3, the All Nepal National Free Students' Union burned effigies of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kathmandu after Indian helicopters flew through Nepali airspace. The opposition further protested against the ratification of a development program between the US Millennium Challenge Corporation and the government. In response the home ministry released statements, on September 3 and 5, demanding that Nepalis refrain from criticizing 'friendly nations' and stating that the government would take legal action against citizens participating in protests. Nepalese

human rights activists accused the government of violating the right to protest. lrs

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## NORTH KOREA – SOUTH KOREA

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Intensity: **2** | Change:  | Start: **1948**

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Conflict parties: DPRK vs. ROK  
 Conflict items: territory, system/ideology, international power

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The 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, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. In January, March, September, and October, DPRK conducted at least seven launch tests of various missile types, including ballistic missiles prohibited by the UNSC [→ Japan et al. – DPRK]].

The peace process remained in deadlock. On September 21, ROK President Moon Jae-in called for a formal end-of-war declaration to the Korean War, which was rejected by the DPRK two days later, which noted that such a declaration would be meaningless as long as the US continued to maintain its “hostile policy” towards DPRK. In late October, DPRK further demanded an end to UN sanctions and the suspension of ROK-US joint military exercises as preconditions for discussions regarding a change of the current status quo.


In May, June, and September, hackers with apparent links to the DPRK targeted ROK government and civilian institutions at least five times. In August, civic activists in ROK who had protested the purchase of US stealth fighters were revealed by ROK authorities to have received instructions from DPRK. DPRK-ROK communication lines were cut after DPRK stopped responding on August 10 as the ROK-US joint military exercise started as planned. DPRK called for it to be cancelled. The lines were restored in early October.

DPRK continued to curb the growing influence of ROK pop culture on its youth. Following the December 2020 amendment enabling DPRK authorities to impose a maximum sentence of death for distribution of ROK entertainment, DPRK sentenced several secondary school students to imprisonment on at least three occasions for possession, distribution, or imitation of ROK entertainment. ile

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## NORTH KOREA, CHINA (DEFECTORS)

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Intensity: **1** | Change:  | Start: **2000**

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Conflict parties: DPRK, PRC vs. defectors (network)  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, other

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The non-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, defector support networks, such as aid groups and other NGO based mostly in the Republic of Korea (ROK), on the other, de-escalated to a dispute.

In July, PRC repatriated approx. 50 NKD to DPRK, the first reported repatriations since the PRC-DPRK border closed in January 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In September, ROK authorities arrested a DPRK Ministry of


State Security agent operating in the ROK. DPRK often pressures NKD to cooperate by threatening the safety of their families left behind. In November, the agent was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for breaching national security laws.

According to the ROK Ministry of Unification, the number of NKD entering the ROK dropped to another record annual low of 63 compared to 262 last year. ile

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## PAKISTAN (BALOCHISTAN)

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Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1948**

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Conflict parties: BLA, BLT, BNP-M, BRA, BRAS vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession, resources

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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, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Republican Army (BRA), and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) conducted several attacks and clashed with security forces. Overall, security forces arrested at least 17 militants and killed 45 people, among them 20 members of BLA, nine members of BLF, and three members of BRA.

BLA militants repeatedly attacked security forces, mostly in Balochistan, killing 15 and injuring 55 in total. For instance, on August 8, an IED killed two policemen and injured 21 people in Quetta city, Balochistan. On August 26, a landmine killed three security personnel and injured three others in Ziarat district, Balochistan. On September 25, a roadside IED killed four Frontier Corps personnel and injured two others in Harnai district, Balochistan. BLA claimed responsibility for these attacks. On September 26, BLA militants killed one and injured two members of the security forces in Machh town. Furthermore, on March 15, an explosion killed one ranger and injured ten people in Karachi city, Sindh province.

As in previous years, militants attacked targets in relation to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. On July 28, BLF militants shot at a car carrying Chinese engineers in Karachi, injuring one. On August 20, a BLA suicide bomber targeted a vehicle carrying Chinese nationals in Gwadar city, eponymous province, killing two children and injuring three people, including one Chinese citizen.

Militants also continued to attack symbols of the Pakistani state. On August 8, militants injured one civilian selling national flags in Quetta with a grenade. On September 26, BRA and BLF both claimed responsibility for destroying a statue of Pakistan’s founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, in Gwadar with explosives. On October 10, BLA claimed responsibility for an explosion that killed a journalist in Hub city, Balochistan, whom they accused of cooperating with the military.

Authorities conducted operations targeting militants throughout the year. For example, on March 8, Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) personnel killed five BLA militants in Mastung District, Balochistan. On August 25, CTD personnel killed seven BLF members in Loralai district, Balochistan. On October 23, CTD personnel killed nine members of BLA and BLF in Mastung. On the same day, Frontier Corps killed six BLA militants in Harnai.

On January 11, five BLA members were indicted for facilitating an attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi in 2018. On

July 5, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced his intention to start a dialog with Baloch militants and two days later appointed a special assistant on reconciliation and harmony in the province. Balochistan National Party-Mengal leaders expressed their reservation concerning these efforts. plo

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## PAKISTAN (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)

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

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Conflict parties: al-Qaeda, JuA, LeJ, TTP vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between Islamist militant groups, such as Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP), and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

On April 12, the government arrested TLP leader Saad Hus-sain Rizvi, in Lahore city, Punjab province, after he threatened mass protests if the government did not expel the French ambassador over caricatures of Mohammed. The arrests triggered nationwide violent protests that continued for a second day on April 13, resulting in the death of two police officers and one TLP member, and injuring at least 43 others. The government banned TLP on April 14.

In October, 10,000 TLP protesters marched from Lahore city, Punjab province, toward Islamabad Capital Territory. They again demanded the French ambassador's expulsion and the release of their arrested leader. On October 22, they clashed with police in Lahore, killing three officers and injuring six. On October 27, they again clashed with police in Sheikhpura district, killing four officers and injuring 263. Police arrested more than 500 militants.

Throughout the year, the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and security forces carried out at least 35 raids across the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Balochistan, and Sindh. In the resulting firefights, more than 50 militants and soldiers were killed and at least 35 militants arrested. For instance, in March, the CTD shot and killed at least 15 militants and arrested one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Moreover, security forces also arrested militants suspected of financing terrorists. For example, on January 2, security forces arrested a high-ranking member of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) on these grounds.

On November 9, the government and TTP and TLP, respectively, agreed to a one-month ceasefire. On December 9, TTP accused the government of not honoring the November agreement and declined to prolong the ceasefire. The government stated on December 13 that it would only conduct negotiations with those respecting the constitution and laws of Pakistan. mau

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## PAKISTAN (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1973**

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Conflict parties: JUI-F, PML-N, TLP vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis over national power, the orientation of the political system, and ideology between the opposition,

including the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and the Jamiat Ulema-e Islam (F) (JUI-F), on the one hand, and the government led by Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), on the other, continued.

PTI, PPP, and PML-N supporters clashed repeatedly throughout the year. For example, on July 25, during polling for the general election in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir region, PPP supporters killed two PTI members in Kotli district and Jamaat-e-Islami supporters injured five police officers with batons. Subsequently, opposition leaders did not accept the PTI win, calling it "rigged".

On March 6, the National Assembly held a vote of confidence in the PTI government of Prime Minister Imran Khan. All but one opposition member boycotted the vote, demanding the PM's resignation. Later that day, PTI supporters attacked PML-N leaders in front of the National Assembly building.

On October 20, eleven opposition parties united as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) began 15 days of countrywide protests against inflation and the rising price of food products and petrol. PDM held further demonstrations after the government increased petrol prices on November 6.

On March 17, the National Accountability Bureau reopened its corruption investigation into PML-N leaders, including former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. One of the leaders was released on bail on April 23, but not permitted to leave the country on May 8 due to the ongoing investigation. Sharif remained in the UK, although the UK government rejected his visa extension on August 8.

Several violent attacks against journalists were reported in 2021. For example, the beaten body of a video reporter was found on November 3 in Karachi city, Sindh province. The journalist had previously received threats for reporting on a local politician's illegal hunting party. On November 8, two unidentified assailants shot a citizen journalist dead in Sakhakot town, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In another case on April 20, unknown assailants injured a journalist known to be critical of the military, in the capital Islamabad. Journalists also faced non-violent restrictions. For example, the government intensified regulations on November 18 by passing a law which prohibited journalists from spreading state-defined misinformation. Previously, on June 1, a show host of a private news channel was forced to take leave after taking part in a protest for press freedom in Islamabad on May 28. In addition, journalists were the targets of online hate campaigns, in one case directed by a government-supported news website. mom

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## PAKISTAN (PASHTUNS / PTM)

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

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Conflict parties: Pashtuns, PTM vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

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The violent crisis over autonomy between Pashtuns, organized in the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) and supported by the Ashraf Ghani Afghan government, and the government, continued.

Several deaths were recorded due to the conflict throughout the year, all in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK). On March 21, four Pashtuns were found shot dead in Bannu District. 10,000 people, including PTM and Jani Khel Pashtun tribe members, protested for a week, threatening to march to Islamabad Capital Territory with the dead bodies. The protesters finally buried the dead after negotiations with

the state government. On April 25, security forces shot at Pashtuns in Makin Area, South Waziristan District, killing two and injuring one. Hundreds of people protested the attack, demanding the arrest of the involved security personnel. The following day, an unidentified gunman killed a Pashtun soldier in Bannu. This was then protested by members of the Jani Khel tribe, who again demanded the arrest of allegedly involved security personnel. On May 30, unidentified gunmen shot a leader of the Jani Khel tribe.

Security forces arrested several PTM leaders throughout the year. For instance, on January 3, police arrested PTM leader Said Alam Mahsud in Peshawar, KPK. On the same day, PTM organized protests in several cities and towns in Pakistan, calling for the release of all recently arrested PTM leaders. Mahsud was released on bail, but four days later, he was arrested again. On March 1, the Anti-Terrorism Court in Karachi city, Sindh province, issued arrest warrants against several PTM leaders including Manzoor Pashteen. Two days later, police arrested the father of a PTM leader in Islamabad on charges of terrorism.

The bans on PTM leaders entering certain regions within Pakistan continued. For example, police arrested a PTM leader on January 17 in Zhob District, Balochistan province, and expelled her. On March 1, security forces expelled PTM leader Pashteen from Balochistan and on December 22, the government of Azad and Jammu Kashmir also banned him from entering.

The PTM held protests and sit-ins throughout the year to protest human rights violations by the authorities. The government restricted the coverage of these protests by shutting down mobile networks. For example, on February 6, one day before a public meeting organized by PTM in Peshawar, police forces arrested several activists. The next day, hundreds attended the public meeting. In response, security forces arrested eight PTM leaders. Furthermore, cellular services were blacked out without announcement until that evening. On September 1, several leaders split from PTM to form a political party, the National Democratic Movement, due to disagreements on the future of PTM. mom

## PAKISTAN (SINDH)

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

Conflict parties: Mohajirs, MQM vs. Balochs, PPP, Sindhis vs. ANP, Pashtuns vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance, resources

The violent crisis over secession, resources, and subnational predominance between the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA), various ethnic groups and their affiliated political parties, the Mohajirs and the affiliated Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Balochs, and Sindhis, with their affiliated Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The SRA continued to conduct attacks, which took place solely in Sindh province. On March 23, the group carried out an attack in Karachi city, injuring three people, including personnel of the Pakistan Rangers. In another incident, on October 5, the SRA killed a politician of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party and injured a civilian in Qambar Shahdadkot district. There were discrepancies in claims made by SRA and press reporting.

Throughout the year, the Sindh-based Counter-Terrorism De-

partment (CTD) made a number of arrests of members of SRA and MQM-London (MQM-L), one of two factions of MQM. On March 6, CTD killed an alleged MQM-L assassin in Korangi, Sindh.

There were also several other clashes in Sindh province. On September 3, supporters of the Pak Sarzameen Party, led by two party officials, and supporters of MQM-Pakistan (MQM-P) clashed close to the latter's office in Hyderabad city. The two groups assaulted each other verbally and physically. In another incident, on December 3, personnel of different law enforcement agencies demolished parts of the MQM-P headquarters in Azizabad city. Officials of the district administration were present during the demolition, but the Central District Commissioner denied any involvement by the agency. On December 9, Pakistan Rangers assaulted and detained a journalist covering an MQM-P event in Azizabad. lih

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA (BOUGAINVILLE)

Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **1964**

Conflict parties: national government vs. Autonomous Bougainville Government  
 Conflict items: secession, resources

The dispute over autonomy of the Autonomous Region Bougainville and resources between the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the national government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) continued.

Between 1988 and 1998, PNG and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army fought a civil war over several issues, especially the Panguna gold and copper mine, resulting in the death of thousands. In 2001, the conflict parties signed the Bougainville Peace Agreement, providing a roadmap along three pillars of autonomy, disarmament, and a non-binding referendum on the island's future political status. At a non-binding referendum from 11/23/19 until 12/7/19, 97.7 percent of Bougainville's citizens voted for independence from PNG.

This year saw further progress towards an independence agreement. PNG Prime Minister James Marape, and the 2020 elected president of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Ishmael Toroama, discussed the items of the independence of Bougainville from February onward. In an official statement on December 13, both parties announced power transfers to Bougainville from 2023 onwards and full independence of Bougainville between 2025 and 2027.

she, awa, nro

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

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

Conflict parties: Agarabi vs. Tapo vs. Enga Tari vs. Kopiago vs. various other tribes  
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources, such as arable land, between various communal groups continued.

Over the course of the year, inter-communal clashes, particularly in the Highlands region, left at least 76 people dead and more than 2,000 internally displaced. For example, the disagreement over land rights between the Tapo and the Agarabi communities escalated between March and April in Kainantu, Eastern Highlands province. In mid-March, Tapo militants killed six Agarabi and destroyed several houses. In further clashes in mid-March and April, Tapo killed at least nine Agarabi, while Agarabi killed at least ten Tapo using bows, knives, and hand grenades. The clashes displaced more than 1,000 people. With a total of at least 23 deaths, many injured and more than 1,000 IDPs, the conflict attracted international attention and on April 14, the UN called for peace. According to local officials, a ceasefire agreement between the Tapo and Agarabi ended the tensions between the communal groups in early May.

In a separate incident, on April 3, a fight between the Kopiago and the Enga-Tari in North Fly's Tabubil, Western province, escalated, when one Enga was killed and another severely injured with a knife. It remained unclear whether the initial perpetrator was a policeman or a Kopiago. In turn, Enga-Tari killed two and injured four Kopiago. Subsequently, a Kopiago killed an Enga which caused the police opened fire, injuring a Kopiago.

In late January, a clash between several communal groups erupted in Tari town, Hela province, after a land dispute, resulting in the death of 19 persons and internally displacing at least 1,000. Both parties used high-powered firearms during the fight. In the aftermath of the clash, the government deployed at least 300 Papua New Guinea Defence Forces personnel to secure the area.

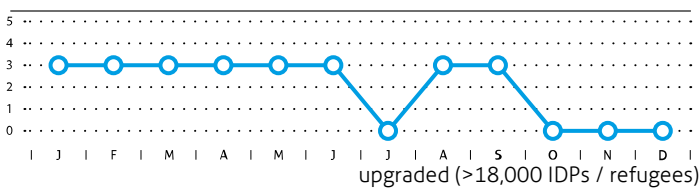
Throughout the year several communal groups successfully concluded peace talks. For example, on February 19, the Leapi Pako and the Leapi Pende reached a peace agreement after three years of fighting, establishing a disarmament process. Similarly, the Yalingin and Yambalekin reconciled on March 8, settling a conflict which had started in 2020 in Western province. The Emigari and the Gegru held peace mediation talks in early January in Upper Bundi, Madang province, settling their conflict.

awa, nro

PHILIPPINES (BIFM, BIFF – GOVERNMENT)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2008

Conflict parties: BIFF, BIFM vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance



The violent crisis 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 Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), on the other, escalated to a limited war.

Violence mainly occurred in BARMM in the first half of 2021. Clashes involving artillery and IEDs led to at least 80 deaths

including two soldiers, 68 BIFF members, and ten civilians. Meanwhile, at least 142 BIFF members surrendered. Casualties increased overall while the number of surrenders decreased compared to the previous year. Over the course of the year, more than 18,000 people were internally displaced due to fighting.

Due to a prolonged land conflict, BIFF allegedly ambushed the convoy of the Mayor of Maguindanao province on January 3, killing a civilian and injuring four others. Similarly, on January 8, a gunfight with an unknown number of casualties broke out between alleged BIFF members and security personnel, following an ambush on a town councilor in Lamud, South Upi municipality, Maguindanao province. On March 1, the military killed four BIFF members in Shariff Saydona Mustapha municipality, Maguindanao, while seizing ten IEDs. On March 17, BIFF fought alongside Dawla Islamiyyah against security forces in several areas in BARMM. This led to several clashes in which approx. 5,700 families were forced to flee [→ Philippines (Islamist militant groups)].

From March 18 to 25, soldiers conducted clearing operations against BIFF in Guindulungan municipality, Maguindanao, killing at least 20 BIFF members, injuring 28, and displacing at least 5,000 families. On May 7, military personnel killed a BIFF sub-leader in Datu Saudi Ampatuan municipality, Maguindanao. One day later, BIFF occupied the public market of Datu Paglas municipality, Maguindanao. In response, military forces took over the market using heavy weapons, such as tanks and commanding air support. In the encounter, five BIFF members were injured and 5,000 civilians displaced. Nine retreating militants were killed in two separate clashes four days later. Following the market occupation, the military initiated clearing operations in Datu Paglas against BIFF, killing two and injuring three BIFF members on May 16, and killing a sub-leader on May 21. On September 24, 16 BIFF members and one soldier were killed in a two-day gunfight in Shariff Saydona Mustapha.

The military employed artillery against BIFF to prevent potential attacks. For example at the border of Maguindanao and North Cotabato provinces on April 23, killing four militants. On April 26, the military initiated another offensive at the border between Shariff Saydona Mustapha and Datu Piang municipality without causing casualties.

The government repeatedly accused BIFF of using IEDs. On January 25, in South Upi, a BIFF-linked IED explosion killed a civilian and injured another. On June 22, BIFF allegedly planted an IED, killing one civilian and injuring two in Datu Hoffer Ampatuan municipality, Maguindanao. On August 4, BIFF allegedly killed a soldier and injured seven in Datu Hoffer with an IED. On September 18, BIFF allegedly bombed a town plaza with an IED in Datu Piang, Maguindanao, killing one civilian and injuring seven others.

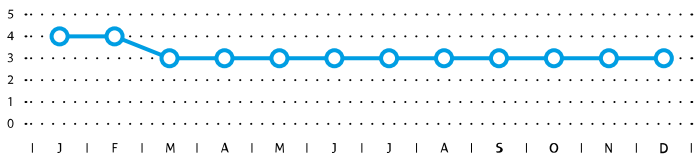
On January 22, national and international newspapers reported that two of three factions of the BIFF had expressed their wish to rejoin Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and to support the peace process [→ Philippines (MILF)]. Bangsamoro Chief Minister Ebrahim stated that more than 900 BIFF fighters were willing to rejoin MILF. According to Ebrahim, however, warrants of arrests constituted challenges to integrate some of the commanders.

wwk

PHILIPPINES (CPP, NPA)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 1968

Conflict parties: CPP, NPA vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology



The limited war 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, continued.

Over the course of the year, at least 284 people were killed, including 190 NPA militants, 75 government troops, and 19 civilians. Among the total 138 injured, 32 were NPA militants, 82 military personnel, and 24 civilians. While the clashes between NPA and government forces occurred all over the Philippines, Bicol and Caraga regions as well as the Visayas were particularly affected by heavy fighting. Throughout the year, encounters between government troops and the NPA led to the internal displacement of approx. 1,000 civilians.

The number of attacks involving heavy weaponry increased from at least two in 2020 to at least five in 2021. For example, from January 5 to 7, the Armed Forces of the Philippines dropped at least 23 bombs near Barangay Pacgued and Barangay Mataragan, Malibcong, Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), as well as in the vicinity of Barangay Buneg, Lacub, CAR. The bombing followed a clash between approx. 40 NPA militants and government troops in Barangay Pacgued, in which at least one soldier was killed. In another instance, on January 10, at least 20 families were evacuated due to two consecutive days of fighting in Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan, Central Visayas region, during which the government deployed helicopters.

NPA frequently set up IEDs along roads, highways, and especially in the vicinity of their encampment sites. For example, on May 15, an NPA-placed IED injured at least one soldier during a military operation in Barangay Alimodias, Miagao, Western Visayas region. In at least two instances, the government conducted airstrikes to set off IEDs surrounding NPA camps. For example, on August 16, the Philippine Air Force dropped bombs on an encampment site in Barangay Osmeña, Dolores, Eastern Visayas region. Following the airstrike, government troops launched a ground attack and destroyed the camp, killing at least 19 militants. On multiple occasions, NPA also utilized IEDs in clashes with police forces, setting them up along roads frequented by police vehicles and detonating them during fights. For instance, on October 24, NPA detonated IEDs during an encounter in Barangay Jolason, Tubungan, Western Visayas, injuring two police officers.

Furthermore, throughout the year, at least two civilians were killed and ten injured due to explosives allegedly laid by NPA members. For example, on June 7, an IED placed by the NPA injured four civilians in Barangay Homapon, Legazpi, Bicol region.

Over the course of the year, NPA militants repeatedly targeted construction projects which supported the government’s access to remote communities occupied by NPA. For instance,

on July 29, approximately 20 NPA militants torched construction equipment in Barangay San Francisco, Las Navas, Eastern Visayas.

As in 2020, there was no bilateral ceasefire declared by the end of December. akw

PHILIPPINES (DRUGS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2017

Conflict parties: Cartels, Drug syndicates vs. Human rights activists vs. government  
 Conflict items: resources

The violent crisis over resources between drug cartels, drug users, drug dealers, and human rights activists, on the one hand, and the government on the other, continued.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) cooperated in operations all over the country, seizing drugs worth more than USD 150 million. Reports by research institutes and local NGOs estimated that at least 400 persons were killed as a result of the war on drugs throughout the year.

Security forces conducted various anti-drug operations and raids throughout the year. So-called Death Squads, vigilante groups connected to the government, committed numerous extrajudicial killings. For instance, on January 23, security forces raided a residential compound tied to a former village chief suspected of involvement in illegal drug trade in Maguindanao, Bangsamoro Autonomous Republic of Muslim Mindanao. In the ensuing gunfight, twelve suspects and one police officer were killed. On August 3, the PDEA raided the hideouts of three drug groups in Quezon City, Valenzuela City and Bulac, Central Luzon region. During the gunfight in Bulacan province, security personnel killed a Chinese civilian suspected of drug dealing. On September 7, PNP conducted a drug raid and killed four Chinese citizens in Candelaria, Zambales province, Central Luzon region, suspected of being part of a large drug syndicate and arrested further three. On September 10, the PDEA killed two drug suspects in two buy-and-bust operations in Cavite, Central Luzon region. On December 12, a Filipino journalist, known for his coverage on the war on drugs, was shot dead in public by unknown assailants in Calbayog City, Samar, Eastern Visayas region.

Numerous national and international organizations continued their political and legal assessment of the war on drugs. In February, the government admitted for the first time that the police failed to examine weapons and crime scenes after they had shot dead suspected drug dealers and promised an investigation. ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda started an investigation into the war on drugs on September 18, after claiming sufficient reason to believe that crimes against humanity had been committed. Since 2018, the ICC had been following complaints by activists and family members of the victims accusing authorities of carrying out extrajudicial killings.

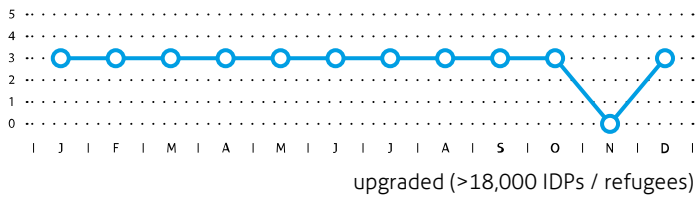
President Rodrigo Duterte announced on November 5 that he would take full responsibility for all killings in the war on drugs. On November 20, the ICC halted its investigation after Philippine ambassador Eduardo Malaya had requested the ICC for a deferral, saying his country was able to ensure successful prosecution of the drug war cases within its jurisdiction. On December 14, Human Rights Watch urged the ICC to continue its investigation labeling the request for deferral a “stalling tactic”. aya

PHILIPPINES (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **•** | Start: **1991**

Conflict parties: Abu Sayaf Group, Maute et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, other



The limited war over ideology, the orientation of the political system between Islamist groups, such as Maute, also known as Dawla Ismailiyah (DI), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and Ansar al-Khilafah (AKP), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, the number of attacks and intensity of the military operations of the Joint Task Force (JTF) declined. At least 56 militants and soldiers were killed and more than 50 were injured in the year's clashes. More than 70,000 people were internally displaced. The intensity of the operations of this and last year caused ASG to shift its focus to Malaysian targets, according to Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Islamist groups, especially ASG, experienced a spike in surrenders, with at least 72 militants yielding to authorities.

The JTF, formed by the National Police (PNP) and AFP, appeared mainly to target leaders of the militant groups. In January, security forces killed four members and one leader of AKP during separate raids and law enforcement operations in Polomolok, South Cotabato, Bangsamoro Autonomous Republic of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). On February 2, police killed an ASG sub-leader in Zamboanga City, when he reportedly violently resisted arrest. On February 14, JTF conducted another raid in a DI lair in Madamba, Lanao del Sur province, BARMM, which led to a seven-hour firefight in which JTF deployed air forces and artillery troops, resulting in an unknown number of casualties. On April 12, JTF killed a DI sub-leader during fighting in Marawi, Lanao del Sur. He and his supporters had attacked security forces with an IED in the Guimba section of Marawi earlier this year, injuring seven security personnel. On July 18, AFP killed a DI sub-leader and arrested two militants. On October 29, AFP killed the leader and emir of DI and his wife during an attempted arrest. During another violent encounter on December 2 between DI and AFP, the leader's son was killed by security forces. On December 4, AFP killed the then-newly appointed leader along with four DI militants in a violent clash in Maguindanao province, BARMM.

In March, DI fought alongside the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters [→ Philippines (BIFF, BIFM – government)] against the JTF in different areas in BARMM. This led to several clashes in which more than 70,000 people were internally displaced. From March 17 to 19, the JTF deployed heavy weapons and reportedly killed 14 Islamists, among them at least one DI militant, in Datu Sadudi Ampatuan, Maguindanao. On March 24, a small group of Islamists attacked a military outpost in Shariff Aguak town, Maguindanao, leaving one militant dead.

On March 19, AFP rescued three Indonesian hostages abducted by Islamist groups in 2020 and captured two ASG militants on the island group of Tawi Tawi, BARMM. The

military rescued another Indonesian kidnapped by ASG in a separate operation, during which an ASG commander was killed.

Heavy fighting took place between JTF and DI from August 21 to 26 in Lanao del Norte province, which reportedly forced over 2,000 families to seek refuge. The air force provided air support to the operating troops. The fighting resulted in the withdrawal of the militants and the recovery of seven IEDs.

On April 18, AFP killed a suspected Egyptian militant and two members of ASG during an encounter in Patikul, Sulu province, who functioned as middle-men and thereby allegedly cut off significant funding sources for ASG. aya

PHILIPPINES (MILF)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1977**

Conflict parties: MILF vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy, system/ideology, resources

The non-violent crisis over autonomy of the so-called Bangsamoro Republic as well as the orientation of the political system and resources between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government escalated to a violent crisis. The current peace process between MILF and the government was initiated by the signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in 2018 and merged into the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). International observers commented that the peace process was "on track" but delayed partially due to Covid-19 and warned that this could lead to a "reemergence of violence". On September 1, fighters of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), MILF's armed wing, openly criticized the peace process and voiced opposition to the proposed extension of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA).

On October 29, President Rodrigo Duterte signed bill 2214 passed by the Senate on September 9, which included the decision to extend the period of the BTA and to postpone the elections ending the transition phase to 2025.

On February 13, it was reported that the BTA would require three more years to rehabilitate thousands of MILF militants. In light of this, the BTA along with peace advocates and groups reportedly called for an extension of the transition phase to three more years. On February 16, Duterte granted MNLF and MILF amnesty for political crimes [→ Philippines (MNLF)].

On March 1, members of MILF and ADP soldiers clashed in Sumisip Barangay Sukatan, Basilan, BARMM. The 20 MILF militants reportedly set up checkpoints which caused tensions among villagers and constituted a potential violation of the peace agreement, as MILF is prohibited from expanding its area of "temporary stay". Two soldiers were wounded when MILF members opened fire upon their arrival at the checkpoints. The presence of 20 to 50 MILF militants urged villagers to flee over safety concerns.

On November 2, ADP disarmed 35 heavily armed MILF members in Maguindanao, BARMM, as they did not coordinate their movement with government forces. Beside taking the MILF militants into custody, the government forces planned to submit complaints before the peace panels about this violation of the peace agreement. On November 6, a BIAF spokesperson admitted that its members had violated the ceasefire.

Throughout the year, the decommissioning of the former


## ASIA AND OCEANIA

MILF combatants continued with delay due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The decommissioning and resocialization of the BIAF as foreseen in the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro, were planned to be carried out in four phases, of which the third started on November 8. [aya](#)

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### PHILIPPINES (MNLF)

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Intensity: **1** | Change:  | Start: **1969**

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Conflict parties: MNLF vs. government  
Conflict items: secession, system/ideology, resources

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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 de-escalated to a dispute. No clashes were reported. Unauthorized MNLF camps were dismantled peacefully. Over the course of the year, MNLF took down three such unauthorized camps which allegedly breached the 1996 Peace Agreement. The peace-building process focused on addressing the needs of former MNLF combatants regarding MNLF's political representation in government.


On May 7, MNLF and government representatives signed a transformation program for former MNLF combatants to reintegrate them into society. Meanwhile, the House of Representatives approved President Rodrigo Duterte's proclamation to

grant amnesty to MNLF members on May 19. Nonetheless, MNLF backers voiced discontent over underrepresentation in government. On May 27, a protest took place in Tuburan town, Basilan province, involving approx. 100 civilians over a senate bill proposing to apportion zero of the 80 Bangsamoro Transition Authority Parliament seats to MNLF in the three-year extended transition period. [wwk](#)

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### TAJIKISTAN (ISLAMIST GROUPS)

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Intensity: **1** | Change:  | Start: **1997**

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

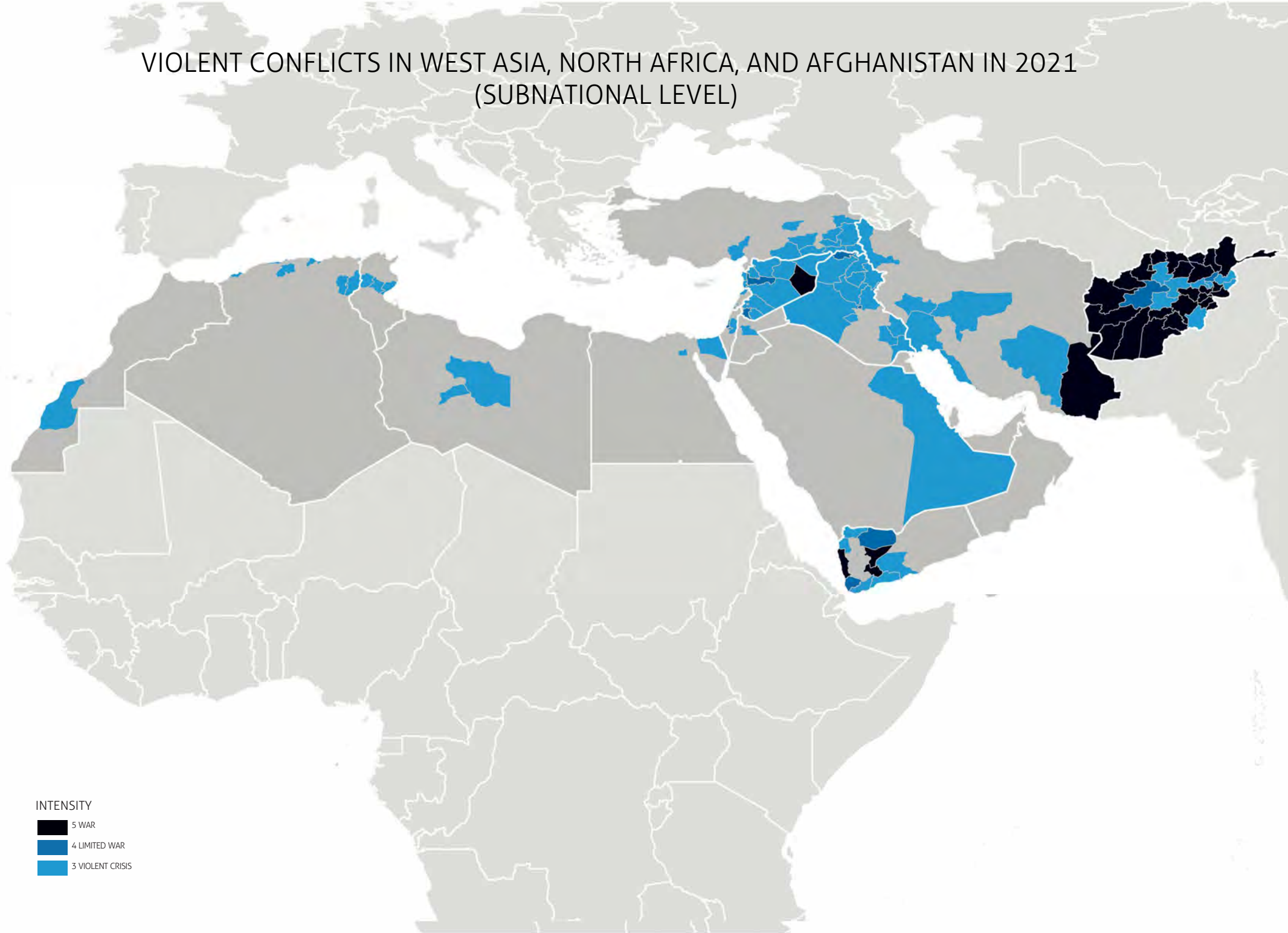
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The non-violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, ideology, and national power between Islamist opposition groups and the government de-escalated to a dispute. According to the State Committee for National Security, on April 22, the imam of the Shohmansur mosque in the capital Dushanbe was detained along with four other men on unspecified criminal charges. On May 22, a former member of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) was arrested and later sentenced to five years in prison, charged with being a member of a banned extremist organization. On August 15, Barakatullo Ghoziev, the son of a late Islamic cleric, was arrested in Kazan city, Russia, at the request of Tajik authorities. [Imu](#)



WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN

# VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN IN 2021 (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 59 active conflicts in 2021, an increase of three compared to the previous year. Overall, 33 conflicts were on a violent level, one more than last year. Only three full-scale wars retained their intensity, while four de-escalated. Altogether, three full-scale wars and three limited wars were observed in 2021.

In Afghanistan, the war between the Taliban and other Islamist militant groups, on the one hand, and the government, supported by the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and especially the USA, on the other, ended [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)]. All foreign troops withdrew from Afghanistan until August 30, marking the end of RSM. Simultaneously, President Ashraf Ghani fled the country and the Taliban took over Kabul forming the de facto new government. Starting mid-August, the international forces conducted one of the greatest evacuation operations in history and evacuated approx. 123,000 people from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul within two weeks. During this process, the Islamic State of the Province Khorasan (ISKP) executed one of its most lethal attacks in Afghanistan [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)], when an ISKP suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowd at an entrance into the airport, killing at least 170 people and injuring at least 150, including US forces. ISKP conducted several other suicide bombings throughout the year and stepped up its fight against the Taliban. Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan deteriorated significantly towards the end of the year.

In Iran, conservative Ebrahim Raisi won the presidential election held on June 18 with 62 percent of the vote [→ Iran (opposition)]. Prior to the election, the Guardian Council imposed new requirements, significantly narrowing the eligibility criteria to run as a presidential candidate. Major protests erupted throughout the year. In February, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) violently crushed protests in Sistan and Baluchestan, using tear gas, live ammunition, and helicopters. IRGC forces killed at least 63 people and injured at least 145.

The violent crisis between Iran and Israel continued with Israel Defense Forces conducting aerial assaults against pro-Iranian militias in Syria and maritime incidents involving Israeli and Iranian-owned vessels [→ Iran – Israel]. Critical infrastructure from both parties was targeted with cyberattacks. Despite accusing each other for the attack, neither side confirmed any involvement. The Iranian government continued negotiations regarding a return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action throughout the year. Simultaneously it publicly announced to ramp up efforts of uranium enrichment. On October 10, Iran's atomic energy agency announced it had successfully processed 120 kg of 20 percent enriched uranium. It also produced 17.7 kg of uranium enriched to 60 percent.

In Turkey, the dispute between the Nation Alliance and the People's Democratic Party (HDP) with the People's Alliance intensified. Party members of the Good Party (IP) and HDP were verbally and physically attacked throughout the year and parliamentary sessions between the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Republican People's Party (CHP) resulted in fist fights [→ Turkey (opposition)]. Moreover, the Turkish government continued to carry out operations against the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in the southeastern region of Turkey and northern Iraq. The PKK conducted attacks on Turkish military bases in Turkey and Iraq [→ Turkey (PKK)]. The trade of UAVs from Turkey to the Ukraine led to tensions between Russia and Turkey but both assured one another of their good relations and economic partnership by the end of the year. Despite several air strikes conducted by Russia in Syria the 2020 ceasefire was held [→ Russia – Turkey].

In Iraq, the consequences of the US drone attack of 2020 that killed the Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and deputy chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis continued to influence the tense relations between the pro-Iranian militia and political forces, other political groups, and the Iraqi government. Parliamentary elections were held in October with a low turnout of 40 percent. As in the previous year, attacks and retaliatory measures between the militia groups who opposed the US presence in Iraq, allegedly supported by Iran, and the US military continued [→ Iraq (Shiite militant groups)]. Assassinations of prominent civil and political activists by unknown assailants continued, as did varied protests by different opposition groups took place [→ Iraq (opposition)]. In the Kurdistan Region, protests against corruption and mismanagement of the Kurdistan Regional Government continued in the second half of the year [→ Iraq (KRG – opposition)]. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi survived a drone attack in November. On December 29, he announced the end of the US-led combat mission of international coalition forces in Iraq.

In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad was re-elected in a highly contested election. The 2020 Turkish-Russian ceasefire in the so-called de-escalation zone was mostly respected by the opposing factions, and led to de-escalation of the war between the opposition groups and the government. Most violent incidents took place in Daraa Governorate. Peace talks were held in different settings, providing only little progress and no effective results [→ Syria (opposition)]. Inter-opposition rivalry continued between various Islamist groups and coalitions, mostly marked by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) striving to consolidate its dominant position in Idlib and Latakia governorates [→ Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)]. Moreover, the violent conflict between Turkish-backed Syrian opposition groups and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northern Syria near the Turkish border continued and accounted for at least 254 deaths and 355 people injured [→ Syria (Turkey – SDF / northern Syria)]. The so-called Islamic State (IS) could not recapture any territory. However, its sleeper cells continued to attack government, militia, and civilian targets, mostly in SDF-held areas in northeastern Syria and in government-controlled areas in central Syria, inflicting significantly fewer casualties than in the previous year [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

In Lebanon, IS members reportedly assassinated a former army officer [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. Furthermore, the country saw growing protests over the 2020 Beirut harbor explosion, the country's economic crisis, and corruption among the political elite [→ Lebanon (opposition)]. Some of the protests turned violent, leaving over a thousand protesters injured. The violent crisis over ideology and territory between Hezbollah and the government continued. [→ Israel (Hezbollah)]. Throughout the year, Hezbollah engaged in downing Israeli drones after they entered the airspace in Southern Lebanon.

In Israel, the violent crisis between the government and Hamas and other Islamist militant groups escalated to a limited war after a spike of violence in spring [→ Israel (Hamas et al.)]. Following the forceful eviction of Palestinian families from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, a series of protests erupted in the West Bank, primarily in May [→ Israel – State

of Palestine<sup>o</sup> (PNA)]. These were encouraged by Hamas and spilled over to the Gaza Strip. While the Israeli Defense Forces attacked the Gaza Strip with rockets and missiles, Hamas and other militant groups launched rockets and incendiary balloons mostly into Southern Israeli communities. A ceasefire was mediated by Egypt on May 20 and ended by Israel on June 16. At least 230 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed throughout the year, 1,710 people were injured and 58,000 Palestinians were displaced. In the West Bank, violence increased and escalated simultaneously from April 12 until May 20 [→ Israel – State of Palestine<sup>o</sup> (PNA)]. Unrest and protests extended throughout the West Bank, where Palestinian protesters clashed with Israeli counter protesters and the Israeli police, especially after the Israeli police entered Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Further violence took place in settlements throughout the West Bank where settlers and Palestinians clashed numerous times. Settlers damaged Palestinians possessions and several people were injured.

In Jordan, the violent crisis between various opposition groups, trade unions, and civil society organizations, on the one hand, and the government on the other, sparked protests over the dissolution of the Jordan Teachers Syndicate (JTS) union [→ Jordan (opposition)]. There were further protests in relation to the neighboring conflict between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Palestinian protesters [→ Israel – State of Palestine<sup>o</sup> (PNA)]. Most protests remained small in scale. Additionally, on April 4, Prince Hamza bin Hussein was placed under house arrest and several high-level arrests were made because of an alleged coup plot. However, Prince Hamza soon pled loyalty to King Abdullah bin al-Hussein.

In Saudi Arabia, on January 5, Saudi Arabia joined Egypt and Qatar at the Gulf Cooperation Council to sign the Al-Ula Agreement to restore diplomatic relationships [→ Qatar - Saudi Arabia et al.]. On April 5, a court sentenced Abdulrahman al-Sadhan, an operator of a regime-critical satirical internet blog, to 20 years in prison. The EU continued to express concerns about freedom of expression and assembly [→ Saudi Arabia (opposition)]. In Saudi Arabia, IS and AQAP did not conduct any violent measures this year [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS); Saudi Arabia, Yemen (AQAP)].

In Yemen the war between al-Houthi and the internationally recognized government continued. The conflict escalated in Marib Governorate and in formerly calm areas such as al-Bayda Governorate. In the first half of the year, fighting stopped on several occasions thanks to negotiations between the conflict parties for a nationwide ceasefire. However, these proved unsuccessful. The war intensified toward the end of the year [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al- Houthi forces)]. The war between southern Yemeni al-Hirak and the internationally recognized government de-escalated to a violent crisis. The 2019 Riyadh Agreement, which had aimed to integrate the STC separatists into the Hadi government, continued to be neither politically nor militarily implemented. Following the arrest of STC leaders, the STC suspended its participation in consultations with the government in June [→ Yemen (al-Hirak / Southern Yemen)]. Throughout the year, AQAP carried out attacks against Yemeni security forces and their allies, mainly in Abyan and Shabwa Governorate in southern Yemen, while attacking al-Houthi primarily in al-Bayda Governorate [→ Saudi Arabia, Yemen (AQAP); Yemen (AQAP – al-Houthi forces)]. IS moved further into Marib Governorate with battles between al-Houthi and the government [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces); Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

In Egypt, the violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between the opposition and the government continued with security forces carrying out numerous raids, violently dispersing protests and arresting individuals [ → Egypt (opposition)]. Egyptian courts further issued and carried out prison and death sentences against perceived members of the opposition. Militant Islamist groups, mostly members of IS' local affiliate Sinai Province, continued to attack the Egyptian Armed Forces and civilians who were perceived to be cooperating with Egyptian state authorities [→ Egypt (militant groups/ Sinai Peninsula)]. In April, IS killed two of 14 kidnapped bedouins and later published videos of the executions online. The Egyptian Armed Forces continued to fight against IS militants [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

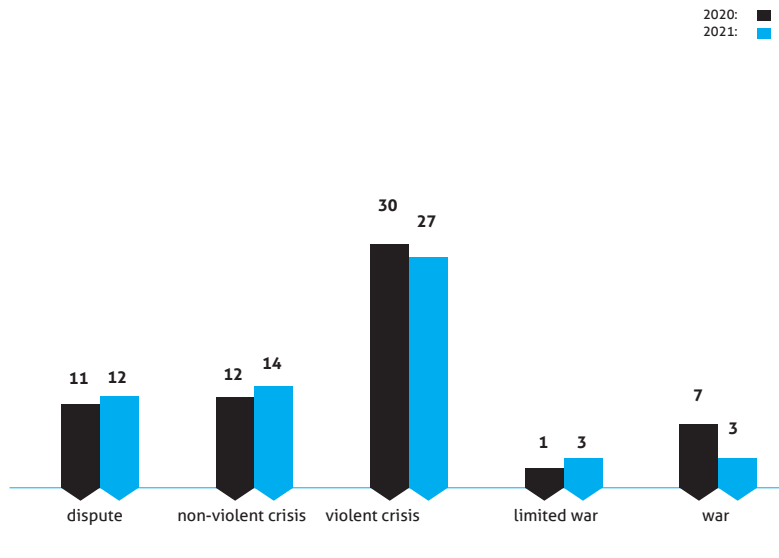
In Libya, the overall situation continued to de-escalate with the election and ratification of the interim government, the Government of National Unity (GNU), at the beginning of the year and the continuation of the 2020 ceasefire. General elections should have taken place on December 24 but were postponed to 2022 due to rising tensions close to the election date [→ Libya (opposition)]. Furthermore, various communal groups approached UNSMIL and the GNU urging mainly for improvement of infrastructure and the inclusion of indigenous minority rights [→ Libya (inter-communal rivalry)].

In Algeria, the Hirak movement continued to denounce the government, calling for a reform of the political system [→ Algeria (opposition)]. After the movement lost momentum in the wake of the pandemic and the government's suppression of protests, the ruling party won the parliamentary elections in June. Meanwhile, the Algerian Peoples' National Army continued their operations against Islamist fighters throughout the year, claiming to have killed six fighters without clear allegiance [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.)].

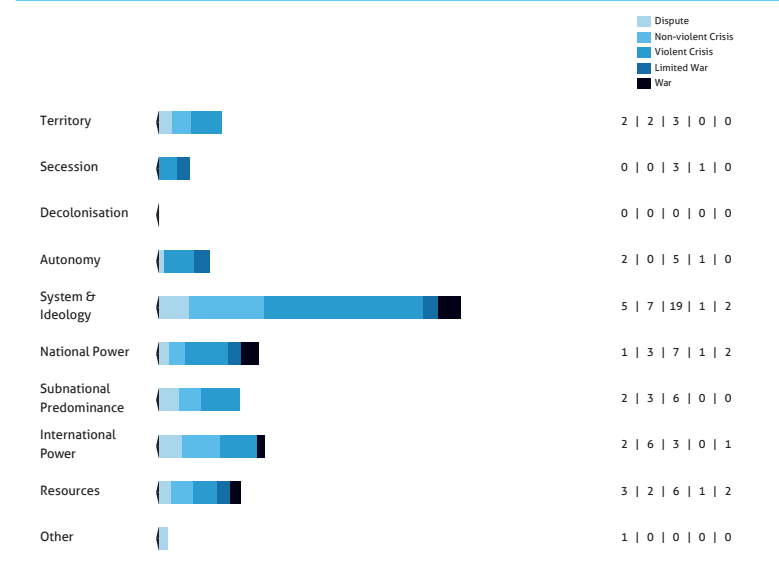
Similarly, in Tunisia military forces continued their campaign against Islamist fighters, claiming to having killed a senior member of Jund-al-Khalifa, affiliated with IS, as well as five fighters of Katibat Okba Ibn Nafaa, affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM). Islamist fighters claimed three attacks [→ Mali, Burkina Faso et al. (JNIM, AQIM et al.)]. The decentralized socioeconomic and anti-government protests were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis [→ Tunisia (opposition)].

In Morocco, the violent crisis over Western Sahara continued between the government and POLISARIO [→ Morocco (POLISARIO / Western Sahara<sup>o</sup>)]. The ongoing conflict exacerbated already strained bilateral relations between Morocco and Algeria, leading to Algeria terminating diplomatic relations with Morocco in August [→ Algeria – Morocco].

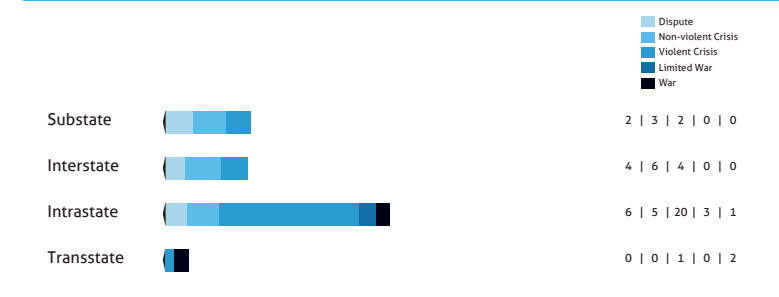
CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND AFGHANISTAN IN 2021 COMPARED TO 2020



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND AFGHANISTAN IN 2021



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 2021

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
Afghanistan (Kuchi Nomads – Hazara)*	Kuchi Nomads vs. Hazara	subnational predominance, resources	2007	↘	2
Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)	Taliban et al. vs. government	system/ideology, national power, resources	1994	END	5
Afghanistan – Pakistan	Afghanistan vs. Pakistan	territory, international power	1949	•	3
Algeria (Berbers / Kabylia)*	Berbers vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1963	↘	1
Algeria (opposition)	Hirak movement, labour unions, opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	3
Algeria – Morocco*	Algeria vs. Morocco	international power	1963	↗	2
Bahrain (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1975	•	2
Egypt (Christians – Muslims)*	Christians vs. Muslims	subnational predominance	1952	↘	2
Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)	militant groups vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2011	↘	3
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	↘	1
Iran – UAE*	Iran vs. UAE	territory	1971	↘	1
Iran – USA*	USA vs. Iran	system/ideology, international power	1979	↘	2
Iraq (KRG – opposition)	KRG vs. opposition movement	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2011	•	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)	Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Badr Organization, 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	↗	4
Israel (Hezbollah)	Hezbollah vs. government	territory, system/ideology	1982	•	3
Israel – Lebanon*	Israel vs. Lebanon	territory, international power	1948	↘	2
Israel – State of Palestine <sup>o</sup> (PNA)	Palestinian protesters, PNA vs. government, Israeli settlement movements	secession, system/ideology, resources	1948	•	3
Israel – Syria	Israel vs. Syria	territory, international power, resources	1948	•	3
Jordan (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	2011	•	3
Kuwait (Bedouns)	Bedouns vs. government	other	1959	•	1
Kuwait (opposition)	opposition movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	1
Lebanon (inner-Palestinian tensions)*	Ansar Allah et al. vs. al-Fatah vs. other Palestinian factions	subnational predominance	2006	•	1
Lebanon (opposition)*	opposition movement vs. Hezbollah vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2019	•	3
Libya (inter-communal rivalry)	Tebu, Touareg vs. Awlad Suleiman, Zway	subnational predominance, resources	2012	↓	1
Libya (opposition)	HoR, LNA vs. GNA, HSC vs. GNU, PC	system/ideology, national power, resources	2011	↓	3

## WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA, AND AFGHANISTAN

Name of conflict <sup>1</sup>	Conflict parties <sup>2</sup>	Conflict items	Start	Change <sup>3</sup>	Int. <sup>4</sup>
Mauritania (anti-slavery activists)*	IRA, opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	2015	•	2
Morocco (opposition)*	AMDH, Hirak movement, Justice and Spirituality, labor rights activists, M2OF vs. government	system/ideology	2011	•	2
Morocco (POLISARIO / Western Sahara <sup>o</sup> )	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, UAE	international power	2017	END	1
Russia – Turkey	Russia vs. Turkey	international power, resources	2015	↘	2
Saudi Arabia (opposition)	opposition vs. government	system/ideology	1992	↗	3
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 <sup>o</sup> (Hamas – al-Fatah)*	al-Fatah vs. Hamas	subnational predominance	1994	•	2
Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)	HTS vs. various Islamist groups	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	2013	•	3
Syria (Kurdish groups)*	KDPS, SDF vs. government	autonomy, subnational predominance, resources	1962	•	3
Syria (opposition)	NC, FSA, HTS vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	↘	4
Syria (Turkey – SDF / Northern Syria)	SDF, YPG, HRE vs. Turkey, FSA	autonomy, subnational predominance, resources	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 (opposition)	HDP, Nation Alliance vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2013	↗	2
Turkey (PKK)	PKK vs. government	autonomy	1978	↘	4
Yemen (al-Hirak / Southern Yemen)	Al-Hirak vs. government	secession	2007	↓	3
Yemen (AQAP – al-Houthi forces)	al-Houthi forces vs. AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2010	•	3
Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al Houthi forces)	al-Houthi forces vs. Saudi Arabia, Yemen	national power	2004	•	5

<sup>1</sup> Conflicts marked with \* are without description

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned are only those conflict parties relevant for the period under review

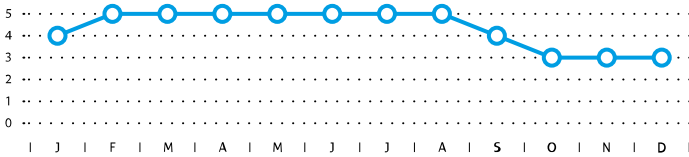
<sup>3</sup> Change in intensity compared to the previous year: ↑ or ↗ escalation by one or more than one level of intensity; ↓ or ↘ deescalation by one or more than one level of intensity; • no change

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

<sup>5</sup> 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")

## AFGHANISTAN (TALIBAN ET AL.)

Intensity: **5** | Change: **END** | Start: **1994**Conflict parties: Taliban et al. vs. government  
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources

The war over national power, orientation of the political system, and resources between the Taliban and other Islamist militant groups, on the one hand, and the government, supported by the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and especially the USA, on the other, ended. All foreign troops withdrew from Afghanistan by August 30, marking the end of the RSM. Meanwhile President Ashraf Ghani fled the country and the Taliban took over Kabul forming the new de facto government.

Following the peace agreement between the US government and the Taliban from the previous year, US President Joe Biden announced on April 14 that all US forces would withdraw by September 11, prolonging the initial deadline of the agreement, of withdrawal by May 1. The same day, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced the full withdrawal of all forces in parallel with the US, starting on May 1.

Peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government resumed in Qatar's capital Doha from January and continued until mid-August. However, no conclusive agreement was reached, and fighting between pro-government forces and Taliban militants continued. For instance, on January 30, Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) killed 34 Taliban fighters in Helmand Province. On March 6, Taliban forces attacked a military base in Balkh Province, resulting in the death of 14 police officers and five Taliban fighters. In May, concurrent to the start of withdrawal of international troops, violence increased significantly across the country. For instance, on May 2, ANDSF carried out large-scale military operations in Helmand Province, killing 106 Taliban fighters and wounding 37. The operation also led to the displacement of thousands of people. On June 2, Taliban attacked security outposts in Nangarhar Province, killing 40 soldiers and wounding twelve more. Five outposts and one military base fell to the Taliban during these attacks. The first half of the year was one of the deadliest for civilians since the beginning of the international intervention in 2001. According to UNAMA, 1,659 civilians were killed and 3,524 injured. An increase of 47 percent from the prior year and almost surpassing the record high. For instance, on January 9, an Afghan military airstrike allegedly targeting a Taliban customs center in Khashrod District of Nimroz Province, killed 18 civilians and injured two. On June 21, in their progressive advancement, Taliban entered Imam Sahib District, Kunduz Province, clashing with retreating ANDSF. During the fighting, seven civilians were killed and another 67 injured. Additionally, ten ANDSF died and 17 were wounded.

The number of districts under Taliban control increased progressively with the largest territorial gains in July and August. Often districts fell without violent encounters as ANDSF

withdrew or surrendered to the militants. Between August 8 and August 14, the Taliban captured 20 provincial capitals such as Mazar-i-Sharif, Balch Province, Kandahar, eponymous Province, and Herat, eponymous Province. Subsequently, around 250,000 people fled their homes. On August 15, Taliban fighters reached the outskirts of the capital Kabul. On the same day, Ghani fled the country and the Taliban took control of the city without resistance. The Taliban allowed the international alliance to evacuate their personnel as well as Afghan citizens from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, until August 31. In these two weeks, international forces evacuated around 123,000 people including embassy staff and primarily Afghan civilians who previously assisted NATO and US forces. On August 26, amidst the evacuation, an Islamic State of Khorasan Province suicide bomber detonated in a crowd at Abbey Gate, an entrance to the airport, killing at least 170 people, including 13 US soldiers and injuring at least 150, including 18 US forces [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. Four days later, on August 30, the last US forces left the airport marking the end of the 20-year US and NATO military presence in Afghanistan.

Following the Taliban takeover, the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF), joined by Vice President Amrullah Saleh and led by Ahmad Massoud, son of the military commander and politician Ahmad Shah Massoud, claimed to be the rightful government. The NRF violently resisted in Panjshir Valley, Panjshir Province. Eventually, the Taliban occupied the valley on September 6. News coverage deteriorated significantly after the Taliban takeover, making it difficult to establish accurate casualty numbers. Despite the Taliban forming the de facto government of Afghanistan, the former government, now acting from exile, remained widely recognized as the legitimate government by the international community.

With the takeover, the US and international organizations like the European Union and the World Bank froze Afghan central bank funds and assets, including parts of humanitarian aid. Subsequently, the Taliban struggled to pay public staff like hospital workers. The large-scale humanitarian and financial crisis was exacerbated by these measures and further intensified by ongoing droughts. Thousands of Afghans fled the country between August and the end of the year, seeking refuge in neighboring countries. While the exact number of refugees remained unclear, OCHA reported that between the beginning of the year and the end of November 710,039 people were displaced internally.

lgf, cve, tla, sap

## AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

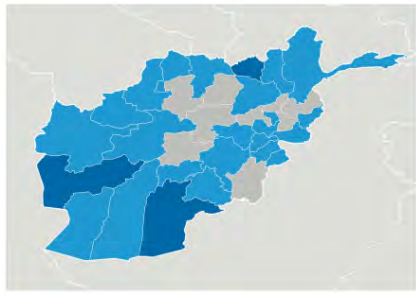
Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1949**Conflict parties: Afghanistan vs. Pakistan  
Conflict items: territory, international power

The violent crisis over territory and international power between Afghanistan and Pakistan continued. The disagreement over the demarcation of the shared border and the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan remained primary issues of contention. Pakistan continued to fence the Durand Line and completed 90 percent of the border fence as of August 3.

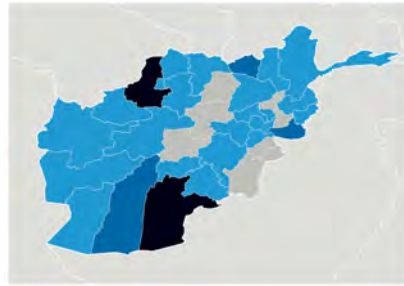
In the first half of the year, violent clashes between Pakistani and Afghan military forces continued. For instance, on February 2, at least 50 missiles were fired from Pakistan into Afghan territory in Sheltan District, Kunar Province, with



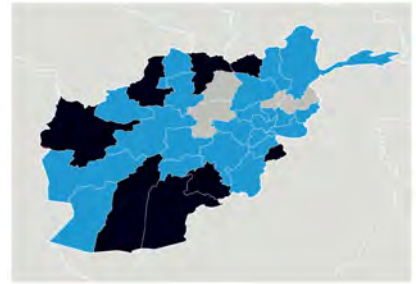
Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)



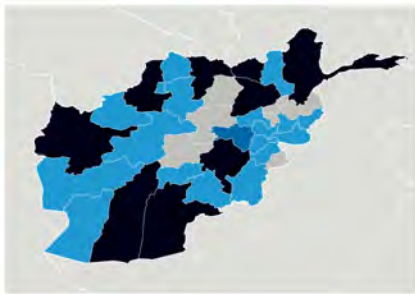
January



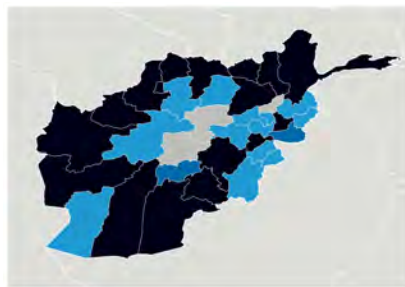
February



March



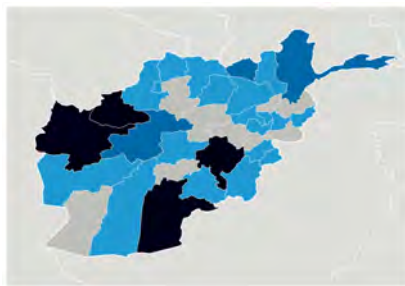
April



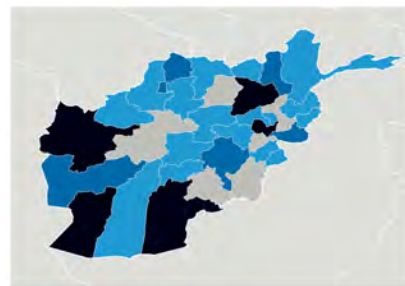
May



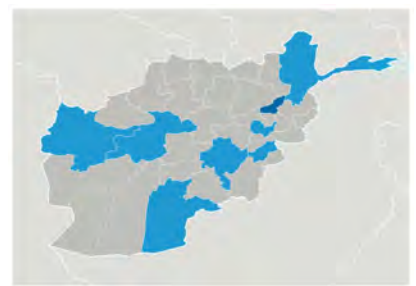
June



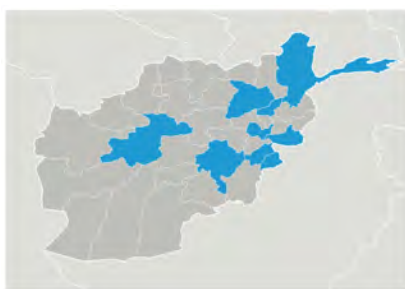
July



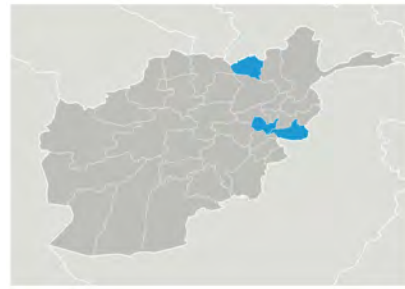
August



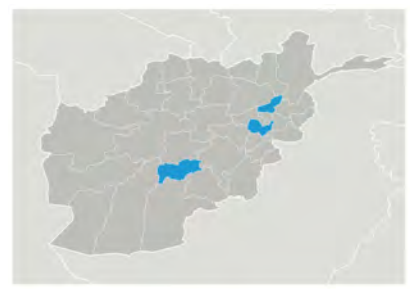
September



October



November



December



no injuries or damages. The Afghan government accused Pakistan of the attack. On March 25, mortar shells fired from Pakistani territory killed one civilian and injured another in Sarkano District, Kunar Province.

However, both governments engaged in talks and committed to strengthen bilateral relations. Tensions remained, as Afghan officials repeatedly accused Pakistan of supporting the Taliban. On May 28, Pakistan suspended contact with the Afghan National Security Adviser over such accusations. Finally, on July 18, Afghanistan recalled its entire diplomatic staff from the Pakistani capital Islamabad due to the kidnapping of the ambassador's daughter by unknown assailants two days before.

Another issue of contention was the repeated closing of border crossings. For instance, on April 26, at Luqman village, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, security forces from both countries clashed after Pakistani forces tried to extend a border fence, injuring one Afghan soldier. Subsequently, both countries closed the nearby Chaman-Spin Boldak crossing, but reopened it a day later. Furthermore, during the advance of the Taliban [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)], the militants seized control of the Afghan side of the Chaman-Spin Boldak crossing on July 14. Subsequently, Pakistan closed the border crossing. The border was reopened to trade on July 26 following negotiations between the Pakistani government and Taliban officials.

On August 15, the Taliban took over Kabul, forming the new de facto government of Afghanistan. Amid tightened border controls, Pakistani security forces killed at least three Afghan civilians and injured at least two others on August 27, when a group of Afghan civilians tried to overrun the Torkham crossing. On November 2, the Chaman-Spin Boldak crossing was reopened after it had been closed by the Taliban on October 5.

Concerning the new Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the Pakistani government called for an inclusive government and international engagement with the Taliban. On September 4, the head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence visited the Afghan capital Kabul to meet with the Taliban leadership and discuss bilateral relations, security issues, and border management. His visit was followed by that of the Pakistani Foreign Minister on October 21. Following these visits, the Taliban confirmed the reopening of the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad on November 4. cve

## 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 and national power between labor unions, opposition parties, and the Hirak movement, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. On October 12, former presidential Advisor Said Bouteflika was sentenced to six years in prison for "abuse of office", after being strongly criticized by Hirak activists for corruption during his tenure. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Hirak movement did not hold any protests in January. However, mass protests resumed in February, mainly in the provinces of Algiers, Bejaia, Tizi Ouzou, Oran, and Bouira. The government continued its campaign against Hirak activists and journalists across the

country as well as international media institutions in Algeria. On May 9, the Ministry of Interior banned protests without a permit. In the following weeks, police forces prevented protest marches in the capital Algiers by erecting roadblocks and arresting several protesters. Subsequently, the activities of the protest movement gradually shifted to Kabylia in Northern Algeria, where police are less repressive against the movement than in the capital. On July 24, the government decided to suspend the Friday marches in Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia due to the pandemic. The government also expanded restrictions on the freedom of press. For instance, on June 13, the Ministry of Communication canceled the accreditation of France 24, accusing the news channel of repeated hostility. Likewise, on July 31, the accreditation of the international television channel Al-Arabiya was withdrawn.

On June 12, Algeria held parliamentary elections. When protests recommenced in February, Hirak protesters rejected the roadmap concerning the organization of early parliamentary elections proposed by Tebboune. In a similar vein, the elections were boycotted by Hirak protesters and opposition parties. Thus, voter turnout reached a record low (30.2 percent), while the governing National Liberation Front secured most of the seats in parliament again.

In late August, Hirak activists tried to revive the movement after the suspension of protesting in the provinces of Bejaia and Algiers. Subsequently, police forces used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse crowds on several occasions. By September 1, protesters resumed the Friday marches to denounce arrests in the cities of Bejaia, Algiers, and Bouverdes, eponymous province, in the preceding weeks. For instance, on September 1 and 2, approx. 900 protesters participated in demonstrations in Kherrata city, Bejaia province. Police used rubber bullets and tear gas canisters against several protesters. On September 27, a general strike occurred in the town of Naciria, Bouverdes province, to denounce the arrests of Hirak activists with the widespread support of the town population. In October, the popular marches to protest the arrests of Hirak activists continued in Bejaia province. bdb

## BAHRAIN (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The non-violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between mostly Shiite opposition groups and the government continued. On February 14 and 15, security forces arrested at least 13 civilians while trying to prohibit protesters from gathering to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the oppositional uprising. On March 10, Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) quoted the arrestees and their families who accused the police of beating and threatening them with electric shocks from a car battery. Between April 1 and 4, hundreds took part in protests in more than 18 districts nationwide and demanded the government to release opposition prisoners in view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. On April 6, the main opposition group, the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, published a statement that an opposition politician had died at Jau Prison as a result of inhumane conditions. On June 9, human rights activist Husain Barakat died from Covid-19 in the same prison, sparking protests of


hundreds of people on the same day in Diah village, Capital Governorate. On July 30, 16 organizations including Amnesty International and BIRD called on the government to release a prominent human rights activist who was serving a life sentence for his involvement in the 2011 uprising. On September 15, the government conditionally released 30 prisoners under new laws that allow electronic monitoring as well as home detention. Most of the released prisoners were considered political detainees by human rights groups. On December 11, members of Bahrain's opposition party, Al Wefaq, living in exile in Lebanon, presented a report on human rights abuses in Bahrain at a press conference in Beirut, Lebanon. On December 15, Lebanon's interior ministry announced the deportation of all non-Lebanese members of Al Wefaq, stating its desire to uphold good relations with the Bahraini government.

jol, buk

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## EGYPT (MILITANT GROUPS / SINAI PENINSULA)

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

Conflict parties: militant groups vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

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The limited war over ideology and subnational predominance in the Sinai Peninsula between militant groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis. Over the year, at least 132 militants, 23 military personnel, and four civilians died in clashes. As in previous years, most clashes occurred in the North Sinai Governorate. Throughout the year, militant groups carried out several attacks against the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF), the Egyptian National Police, and civilians. On January 1, for instance, an IED killed two security personnel and injured five security and medical officials in Bir al Abd city, North Sinai. The attack was followed by another bombing on January 22, killing one security officer and wounding three. On April 8, militants killed two of 14 bedouins who had been kidnapped the previous week for collaborating with the military in North Sinai. The executions were published on a Telegram channel affiliated with IS.


Security forces continued their fight against militant groups. From May 23 to 30, EAF killed 19 militants in security operations in the cities of Bir al-Abed, Rafah, and Sheikh Zuweid, North Sinai. During one of the operations, an explosive device killed five soldiers. The army found automatic rifles, hand grenades, and RPGs. In August, the military announced that EAF had killed 89 suspected insurgents in previous operations in North Sinai without specifying the time frame. The army destroyed a further 404 IEDs, four explosive belts, and 13 tunnels used by militants. During the operations, militants killed eight soldiers.

rbu

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## EGYPT (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1954**

Conflict parties: militant opposition groups, political opposition and activists vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between the opposition and the government continued. Despite increasing international pressure to uphold human rights, the government prosecuted and arrested protesters as well as representatives from the media, civil society, academia, and the outlawed Islamist Muslim Brotherhood (MB).


Throughout the year, security forces carried out numerous raids and arrested at least 18 individuals, on charges including spreading false news and joining or financing a terrorist organization. For example, on January 25, state security forces arrested the owner and founder of cartoon blog Egyptoon at his home in the city of Giza, eponymous governorate, for commemorating the anniversary of the 2011 protests. In addition, security forces targeted the families of four perceived opposition members living abroad. For instance, national security officers raided the homes of several family members of a US-based human rights blogger between January 28 and February 2 and arrested three. Security forces also arrested dozens of protesters. On June 6, security forces used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse a protest in the Nadi Al-Seed area, Alexandria city, eponymous governorate, injuring four and arresting approx. 50. Egyptian courts continued to issue and oversee prison and death sentences against perceived members of the opposition. For example, on July 12, four senior MB leaders and four men who allegedly participated in the 2013 Rabaa sit-in were executed. On December 20, three human rights activists received prison sentences for allegedly spreading false news. After international pressure, the government launched Egypt's National Strategy for Human Rights on September 11 and officially lifted the nationwide state of emergency on October 25.

jbe

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## IRAN (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change:  | Start: **1993**

Conflict parties: intra-systemic opposition, non-systemic opposition vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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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.

Throughout the year, large-scale peaceful protests took place against economic grievances, infrastructural shortcomings, and violence against civilians, among others. At the beginning of the year, retirees in several cities protested, demanding an increase in their pensions. For instance, on January 10, February 15, and 28, hundreds of retirees gathered in at least 20 different cities including the capital Tehran, Isfahan city, eponymous province, and Kermanshah city, eponymous

province. In mid-June, workers at petrochemical plants, refineries, and power stations protested over an increase in wages and working conditions. More than 20,000 contract workers downed tools nationwide, making these strikes the largest in the sector for 40 years. In other instances government forces violently cracked down on demonstrations. On February 22, members of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) killed at least ten fuel couriers close to Saravan Border Post, Sistan and Baluchestan Province. In response, protesters took to the streets across Sistan and Baluchestan for days. IRGC forces used tear gas, live ammunition, and helicopters to disperse the crowds, killing at least 63 people and injuring at least 145. Electricity blackouts and insufficient water supply in a period of an ongoing drought sparked additional protests. On May 21 and 23, unannounced power cuts hit major cities like Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz, Fars Province. Following similar instances, protesters took to the streets in affected cities on July 5. Starting on July 16, protests erupted over water shortages in Shadegan town, Khuzestan Province. In the course of the following week, IRGC killed at least eight protesters in Khuzestan. Similar protests erupted in Isfahan on November 19, leading to 67 arrests. In the run-up to the presidential election held on June 18, the Guardian Council imposed new requirements, significantly narrowing the eligibility criteria to run as a presidential candidate, on May 11. Out of 592 candidates the Guardian Council approved only seven, most of whom were conservatives. Conservative Ebrahim Raisi won with 62 percent of the votes. A turnout of 48.8 percent represented a record low in Iran's presidential elections. In the following months, protesters, activists, and non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International demanded investigations against Raisi for crimes against humanity. The government restricted free journalism and repeatedly violated prisoners' human rights via torture, arbitrary transfers, and restriction of medical treatment. On November 8, the regime-critical newspaper Kelid was shut down by the authorities. On October 27, an imprisoned regime-critic committed suicide by setting himself on fire, after his requests for parole was rejected several times.

mal, mwe

**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 nuclear program and Iran's support of militant groups remained an issue, the two conflict parties faced military confrontations in Syria [→ Israel - Syria; Syria (opposition)]. Additionally, both parties launched intelligence operations such as sabotages and cyberattacks. From February 23 onwards, the Iranian government limited international verification means regarding its nuclear program by restricting the IAEA's access to nuclear facilities and announced to ramp up efforts of uranium enrichment [→ Iran - USA]. Israel upheld its position that it would not allow Iran to achieve nuclear military capabilities and continued to oppose the ongoing renegotiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

As in previous years, the Israel Defense Forces conducted aerial assaults against pro-Iranian militias in Syria, killing at least 88 and injuring at least 82. On January 13, for instance, more than 18 Israeli airstrikes close to Deir ez-Zor and Abu Kamal, both Deir ez-Zor Governorate, killed at least 57 Syrian soldiers and presumably pro-Iranian militants, injuring 37 [→ Iraq (Shiite militant groups)]. Maritime incidents involving Israeli and Iranian-owned vessels occurred repeatedly throughout the year. On April 7, for instance, limpet mines inflicted minor damage on the Iranian cargo vessel "Saviz" in the Red Sea. According to the USA, the ship was targeted by Israel. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed that the ship was a civilian vessel deployed to secure the area against pirates. On July 29 and 30, UAVs attacked the Israeli-operated oil tanker "Mercer Street" off the coast of Oman, killing two crew members and causing minor damage. According to the US and the UK, recovered components of the UAVs were nearly identical in their composition to Iranian UAV models. Both countries accused each other of conducting cyberattacks. On April 11, for instance, a cyberattack on the nuclear plant in Natanz, Isfahan Province, damaged the electrical power supply and the centrifuges attached to it. Only the day before, Iran had installed advanced centrifuges used for uranium enrichment. Statements by the Israeli government hinted at Israel's responsibility for the attack. Moreover, cyber operations extensively affected social life in both countries. On October 26, a cyberattack paralyzed Iran's fuel distribution system. Only unsubsidized fuel was available for twelve days. Four days later, allegedly Iran-affiliated hackers attacked an Israeli LGBTQ dating app and published user identities.

**IRAQ (KRG – OPPOSITION)**

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

Conflict parties: KRG vs. opposition movement  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance and the orientation of the political system between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the local opposition movement continued. Protests erupted in the second half of the year. Protesters demonstrated against poor public service provision and infrastructure, threats to freedom of the press, and socio-economic grievances due to governmental austerity measures. Months of drought placed a significant burden on lower-income families in Erbil and Duhok Governorates, leading to protests. For example, on September 3, residents in Eminke village, Duhok, blocked the Duhok-Amedi main road to demand government allocations. Youth and public service workers protested against austerity measures introduced in 2014 in response to the financial crisis, such as cuts to student stipends and the launch of the non-contract employment status. Between October 5 and 26, non-contract teachers protested in cities across Sulaymaniyah Governorate, such as Ranya, Kalar, Sulaymaniyah, and Qaladze, demanding permanent positions. Observers noted the ongoing issue of freedom of the press, given the arrests of journalists and press censorship during protests. For instance, on October 31, security forces

prevented journalists of the independent TV channel NRT from covering a protest by non-contract teachers in Duhok Governorate. In addition, thousands of students participated in a five-day protest beginning on November 21, in Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, and Halabja Governorates and the Raparin and Garmian administrations, demanding the reintroduction of a monthly stipend. On November 23, protests turned violent in Sulaymaniyah, when security forces used tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets to disperse crowds, injuring at least 20 protesters. When security forces attacked protesters and reporters with batons, protesters retaliated by throwing rocks and using tear gas. KRG's pledge to reinstate student stipends reduced the intensity of the protests in December.

paj

## IRAQ (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: opposition 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, protests were held mainly in the capital Baghdad, Nasiriyah city, Dhi Qar Governorate and Karbala city, eponymous Governorate, often following the killings of political activists. Droughts and resulting water shortages as well as power cuts sparked further protests.

On January 3, a demonstration took place in Baghdad to commemorate the anniversary of the 2020 US drone attack which had targeted and killed Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps major general and Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani as well as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) [→ Iraq – Shiite militant groups]. Several thousand protesters attended the event. Additionally, clashes erupted all over the country between January 8 and 10, especially in Nasiriyah, where at least one protester and one policeman were killed and more than 100 injured. Demands including the dismissal of corrupt politicians and changes in the federal budget, led to protests throughout spring. For instance, protesters shut down government buildings in Dhi Qar Governorate on March 18 and three oil wells in the same region on April 1.

As in previous years, there were multiple prominent activists were assassinated by unknown assailants. On January 8, a lawyer activist was killed in his home in Nasiriyah. On the same day, another activist was kidnapped and later killed in Suq Al-Shuyoukh district, Dhi Qar Governorate. On March 8, the father of an abducted activist was killed in the southern city of Amara, Maysan Governorate, after he pursued a public campaign against those responsible for the abduction of his son. On May 9, an opposition figure was shot dead in Karbala, eponymous governorate, sparking protests, for example on May 25 in Baghdad, which led to the death of two further protesters. On July 24, an activist who was the son of a prominent female activist was shot in Basra city, eponymous governorate. The October 10 parliamentary election was boycotted by multiple groups and had a turnout of just over 40 percent. The Federal Court rejected appeals against the election results and ratified them on October 27. On November 5, pro-Iranian groups protested the results and tried to storm Baghdad's Green Zone while throwing stones at the police. Security forces used live ammunition and tear gas, killing

two and injuring over 125. The opposition conflict became increasingly interconnected with the Shiite militant groups conflict [→ Iraq – Shiite militant groups]. On the one hand, opposition protesters blamed militias for killings of activists and attacked their headquarters, for instance on May 9 in Karbala. On May 26, the Al-Anbar PMF leader was arrested for the murder of two activists. On the other hand, the protests of November 5 supported the pro-Iranian militias and their parties.

anb

## IRAQ (SHIITE MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2004**

Conflict parties: Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Badr Organization, 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 ideology as well as national power between Shiite militant groups and the government continued. The Shiite militias, including Badr Organization, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Kata'ib Hezbollah, as well as Saraya al-Salam, organized themselves into the Popular Mobilization Front (PMF). Following the so-called Islamic State's (IS) offensive in June 2014, the government had turned to Shiite militias to support the Iraqi Armed Forces (IAF) to regain territory previously lost to IS [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. After IS was pushed out of the territories, some Shiite militias began to operate largely outside of government control, increasingly focusing on terminating the USA's military mission in Iraq.

The consequences of the US drone attack of 2020, which killed Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps major general and Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani as well as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of the PMF, continued to influence the tense relations between the pro-Iranian militias and the Iraqi government. Last year's cycle of attacks and retaliation of both the US and the Shiite militias continued. Throughout spring, rocket attacks targeted bases hosting US forces, for instance Ain al-Asad air base in Al-Anbar Governorate on March 3, killing a US contractor, and Balad air base in Salah al-Din Governorate on April 18 and May 4, injuring three. Most of the attacks were unclaimed, however Shiite militant groups were allegedly behind them. After the US airstrikes on June 28 which killed approx. seven militants at the Iraqi-Syrian border around Abu Kamal, Deir ez-Zor Governorate in Syria, the militias repeated their demand for US troop withdrawal and carried out retaliatory rocket attacks, for instance on Ain al-Asad air base on July 7, injuring two.

Subsequently, the US and Iraqi governments agreed in July that the US would withdraw the remaining 2,500-3,000 troops deployed in Iraq. The withdrawal began in October, with the ambition of completing it by the end of the year. Attacks ceased as a result. However, after poor results of pro-Iranian parties associated with Iran-affiliated militias in the parliamentary election of October 10, protests erupted in the capital Baghdad, led by pro-Iranian groups who tried to storm the capital's Green Zone and threw stones at the police. Security forces used live ammunition and tear gas, killing two and injuring over 125 on November 5 [→ Iraq (opposition)]. Two days later, the house of Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi was attacked by drones laden with explosives. Six bodyguards were injured while Al-Khadimi remained un-

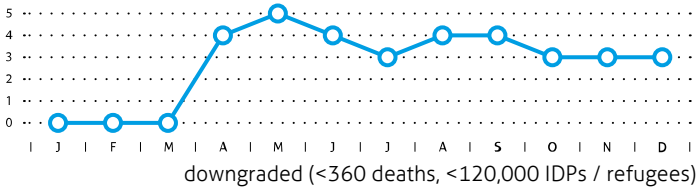
harmed. The government and various organizations accused pro-Iranian groups of the attack. On December 29, Al-Kadhimi announced the end of the US-led combat mission of international coalition forces. A limited number of US troops remained in the country to train and advise the military. and

throwing explosives at IDF soldiers. IDF killed one Palestinian and four people were injured. On November 21, a Hamas member killed one and injured four in a shooting. Israeli police officers shot the assailant dead. hma

ISRAEL (HAMAS ET AL.)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **↗** | Start: **1988**

Conflict parties: Hamas, other Islamist militant groups, PIJ vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession, resources



The violent crisis over the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state and over resources between Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and other Islamist militant groups operating in the Gaza Strip, on the one hand, and the government of Israel, on the other, escalated to a limited war.

The conflict experienced a spike of violence in spring. Throughout the year, at least 230 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed, and 1,710 people injured.

Tensions intensified in May following the forceful eviction of Palestinian families from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. Subsequently, a series of protests erupted between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters [→ Israel – State of Palestine<sup>o</sup> (PNA)] which were encouraged by Hamas and spilled over to the Gaza Strip.

Tensions in Gaza and Israel escalated over the course of May. On May 9, for instance, Islamist militant groups in Gaza launched rockets and incendiary balloons into southern communities in Israel. Israel Defense Force (IDF) attacked infrastructure and Hamas sites throughout Gaza, but also hit buildings, either entirely or partly residential, displacing at least 58,000 Palestinians. On May 11, IDF missiles destroyed a twelve-story tower block which housed international media offices in Gaza, claiming that Hamas was also operating in this building. In the same night, Hamas responded by firing rockets towards the cities of Ashkelon, Southern district, and Jerusalem, damaging houses. After eleven days of ongoing bombardments, the Egyptian government mediated an unconditional ceasefire between Hamas and the government of Israel on May 20. On June 16, IDF fired several missiles into the southern besieged Gaza Strip, allegedly hitting resistance sites and breaking the ceasefire. Rocket attacks between Hamas and Israel continued from July to September, damaging residential sites and a weapons manufacturer of Hamas. Following the decision of the newly sworn in Prime Minister Naftali Bennett to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank on June 23, violent protests re-erupted between Palestinian protesters, on the one hand, and Israeli forces and Israeli settlers, on the other, both in the West Bank and along the Gaza Border. On August 22, for instance, hundreds of Palestinians gathered along the Gaza Border to commemorate 52 years since the burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, throwing stones and severely injuring an IDF soldier. Israeli soldiers injured 41 Palestinians with live ammunition during this incident. On September 3, Palestinians gathered six days of protests along the Gaza border,

ISRAEL (HEZBOLLAH)

Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1982**

Conflict parties: Hezbollah vs. government  
 Conflict items: territory, system/ideology

The violent crisis over ideology and territory between Hezbollah and the government continued. Over the course of the year, Israeli airstrikes in the Syrian governorates Damascus, Deir ez-Zor, Homs, and Quneitra killed at least 76 people, including a minimum of four Hezbollah militants, and injured a further 47.

On January 13, Israeli Air Forces (IAF) launched over 18 missile airstrikes on Abu Kamal and al-Mayadeen, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, targeting Syrian regime forces, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, members of Hezbollah, and the Iranian Fatemiyoun Brigade [→ Iran-Israel; Israel-Syria]. The airstrikes killed 57 people and injured 37, and led to the destruction of military infrastructure and weapon storages. On February 3, IAF and Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) carried out two missile strikes on Damascus International Airport, Damascus, posts of Syrian regime forces, and Iranian-backed militias, including Hezbollah, in Quneitra, causing material damage. In May, Israeli missiles wounded four people, one allegedly belonging to Hezbollah, in Jubata al-Khashab, Tel al-Sha’ar, and Hader, Quneitra Governorate. For the first time in 2021, Israeli forces targeted Lebanon’s South Governorate on May 26, by firing tear gas shells at hundreds of Hezbollah supporters celebrating the end of Israel’s military presence in Lebanon in the town of Al Adeyse. No injuries were reported. On June 8, Israeli aircrafts targeted a Hezbollah weapon facility close to Homs city along with Syrian military bases near Kharbat al-Tinah [→ Israel – Syria], Homs Governorate, killing seven Syrian military personnel and four militants, none of them belonging to Hezbollah.

On July 10, IDF announced the launch of an investigation into Hezbollah’s alleged involvement in the smuggling of a number of weapons from Lebanon into Israel. IDF believed the weapons would be used for terrorist activities. In the second half of the year, IDF and IAF continued their missile airstrikes, targeting Hezbollah military positions and weapon warehouses. On August 19, for example, Israel fired missiles into Qalamoun area, killing four Hezbollah fighters.

Throughout the year, Hezbollah activities were mainly limited to incidents of downing Israeli drones after they entered the airspace into Southern Lebanon. On March 8, Israeli forces reacted by firing flares. Furthermore, on August 6, Hezbollah fired 19 rockets into Israel’s Northern District after Israeli forces targeted Lebanon. The IDF’s rockets were a response to an attack allegedly carried out by Palestinians living in Lebanon over its conflict with Hamas [→ Lebanon (inner-Palestinian tensions)]. Subsequently, IDF fired artillery shells in the Kafr Shuba and Habariya area of Lebanon’s Nabatieh Governorate. sap

ISRAEL – STATE OF PALESTINE<sup>o</sup> (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, resources, and territory between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Palestinian protesters, on the one hand, and the Israeli government as well as Israeli settlers, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, Palestinians violently clashed with Israeli settlers and the police on several occasions. Violence escalated across the West Bank between April 12 and May 20, paralleling the eruption of violence in Gaza [→ Israel ( Hamas, et al.)].

On April 15, a video showing a Palestinian teen injuring an ultra-orthodox Jewish man on Jerusalem's light rail went viral on social media. Following this incident, the Jewish supremacist Lehava group marched through Jerusalem on April 22. The march led to clashes with Palestinians and the Israeli police, resulting in 105 injured Palestinians and 20 injured police officers. Furthermore, on May 7 and 10, at least 500 Palestinians and 38 police officers were injured in clashes after the police entered Jerusalem's Temple Mount on both occasions to combat rioters.

Unrest extended to the wider West Bank and on May 14, Israeli forces killed ten Palestinians, the highest number of Palestinian fatalities recorded in a single day in the West Bank since 2005. In Lod city, Central district, a Jewish man shot dead an Israeli Arab on May 10, leading to intense riots the day after, in which Palestinians burned down three synagogues and numerous shops and killed an Israeli. On May 20, Hamas and Israel established a ceasefire which led to an ease of violence throughout the West Bank.

Since mid-May, the settlement of the Evyatar outpost near Nablus, West Bank, remained a contentious issue and led to clashes between Israeli forces, settlers, and Palestinians in which Israeli forces killed at least four Palestinians until mid June.

Settlers continued to attack Palestinians over the course of the year. On September 28, for instance, at least 50 masked settlers damaged Palestinian vehicles and water tanks and injured at least twelve Palestinians near the village Khirbet al-Mufkara in the West Bank. Settlers reportedly uprooted and destroyed around 8,000 olive trees owned by Palestinian farmers.

Throughout the year, Palestinians attempted several stabbing and car ramming attacks, mostly at checkpoints controlled by Israeli forces. On January 5, for instance, a Palestinian was shot by an Israeli soldier in a failed stabbing attack in Bethlehem city, West Bank. voe

## ISRAEL – SYRIA

Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **1948**

Conflict parties: Israel vs. Syria

Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The violent crisis over territory, international power, and resources between Israel and Syria continued. Throughout the year, Israel continued to conduct airstrikes against Syrian Arab Army (SAA) positions, Hezbollah outposts, and Iranian military infrastructure in Syria, which led to the killing of Syrian civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure [→ Israel (Hezbollah); Iran – Israel]. In most instances, Israel did not acknowledge its military operations in Syria. The Syrian Air Force reportedly responded to the escalations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by firing three missiles at Israel, two which went down in uninhabited areas in northern Israel [→ Israel – State of Palestine<sup>o</sup> (PNA)].

As the Syrian and Iranian governments continued to work closely together, tensions increased significantly between Israel and Syria after the assassination of an Iranian nuclear scientist on 11/27/2020, for which Iran blamed Israel. On January 7, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) targeted SAA positions also used by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps in Al-Suwayda countryside, eponymous governorate, and in al-Kiswah, Rif Dimashq Governorate, killing at least three and injuring eleven. Five days later, on January 12, IAF targeted at least 16 positions and arms depots of Iran-backed forces near the towns of Deir ez-Zor, Mayadeen, and Abu Kamal, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, killing at least 40 persons and injuring at least 30. On April 22, Syrian Air Force fired a surface-to-air missile at an Israeli combat aircraft, which missed its target and went down near a nuclear reactor in the Negev desert. On the same day, Israel fired several missiles from the Golan Heights on Syrian air defense systems around the capital of Damascus. On June 1, the Israeli army destroyed a Syrian observation post established on the Israeli side of the buffer zone in the Golan Heights. On June 8, Israeli airstrikes targeted air force positions and an arms depot belonging to Hezbollah in Damascus, as well as in Homs, Hama, and Latakia governorates. The airstrikes were operated from within Lebanese airspace and killed at least eight. Furthermore, on October 8, IAF fired missiles at the T4 air base near Homs, eponymous governorate, injuring six people. On October 16, Syrian state media claimed that an Israeli sniper had killed a former Syrian Druse lawmaker in Ein el-Tinneh, Quneitra Governorate, where he ran Syria's Golan Affairs Office.

Apart from conducting airstrikes against army positions, in December Israel also targeted the port of Latakia, eponymous governorate. For instance, on December 7, an Israeli airstrike hit an Iranian weapons shipment, followed by another Israeli airstrike on the container yard, on December 28. No casualties were reported.

gew

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**JORDAN (OPPOSITION)**


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

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

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups, such as the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated political party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), trade unions, and civil society organizations, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Protests erupted over the dissolution of the union Jordan Teachers Syndicate (JTS) as well as the neighboring conflict between Israel and Palestine [→ Israel – State of Palestine° (PNA)]. Compared to the previous year, most protests remained small in scale, with only several hundred participants.

After the Magistrate’s Court in the capital Amman issued a decision to dissolve JTS and imprison its board members, hundreds of teachers gathered in the vicinity of parliament on January 3 to protest the forced retirement of 62 colleagues. The deputy head of the JTS and other teachers were arrested. In March, hundreds participated in protests against the emergency laws imposed due to Covid-19. People took to the street in several cities including Amman to protest an extended curfew as part of the measures taken by the government to contain the pandemic.

On April 4, security forces put Prince Hamzah bin Hussein under house arrest, accusing him of acting against national security and stability by organizing a coup d’état. The authorities further made a number of high-level arrests linked to the alleged coup plot.

On June 5, after a lawmaker was banned from parliament, hundreds of supporters gathered in Amman resulting in clashes with security forces, leaving four police officers wounded.

In November and December, thousands gathered in Amman to protest the water-for-energy deal between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan, demanding independence from Israeli influence. According to the proposed agreement, Jordan will export solar energy to Israel in exchange for desalinated water. phg

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**KUWAIT (BEDOUNS)**


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

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Conflict parties: Bedouns vs. government  
 Conflict items: other

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The dispute over the right to nationality between the Bedouns, stateless inhabitants of Kuwait, supported by human rights activists on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, human rights activists attempted to raise international awareness as members of the Bedouns community committed suicide. On February 23, a Bedoun hanged himself in Sulaibiya town, Al Jahra Governorate. In early June, a Bedoun committed suicide by setting himself on fire, in Al-Sabahiya, Al Ahmadi Governorate. In response, on June 9, five members of the parliament submitted a draft law to stipulate basic human rights for the stateless minority. Subsequently, when the UNHRC met on June 24, the human

rights group Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain delivered an oral intervention on violations towards the Bedouns, such as the lack of access to education, healthcare, and employment. suf

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**KUWAIT (OPPOSITION)**


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Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **2011**

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

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The dispute over ideology and national power between opposition groups and the government continued.

After Prime Minister Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah resigned and was reappointed by the Emir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 2020, discrepancies over national power between the government and the National Assembly persisted. In late March, the National Assembly passed a motion to delay the questioning of Sabah concerning his Covid-19 management and corruption accusations until the end of the year. In response, on May 25, opposition MPs obstructed a parliamentary session by taking the minister’s seats. On October 4, the government called for a national dialog together with representatives of the National Assembly to end the deadlock in parliament. On November 7, the government resigned en bloc, followed by pardons and reduced sentences for 35 dissidents administered by the Emir on November 13, which the opposition MPs had requested. Both measures were justified as further efforts to end the deadlock in parliament. On November 23, the Emir reappointed Sabah as prime minister tasked with forming a new government. suf

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**LIBYA (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)**


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Intensity: **1** | Change: ↓ | Start: **2012**

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Conflict parties: Tebu, Touareg vs. Awlad Suleiman, Zway  
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

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The violent crisis between different communities over subnational predominance, resources such as oil, and minority rights primarily in the Fezzan region in southern Libya de-escalated to a dispute.

A peace agreement between the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army was signed in the previous year [→ Libya (opposition)]. The dispute centered around the inclusion of indigenous minority rights, especially for the nomadic Tebu, Touareg, and Amazigh communities, and guaranteed citizenship rights, as well as the improvement of infrastructure in the Fezzan region. On June 19, the Supreme Council of the Amazigh of Libya and representatives of the Tebu and Tuareg movements approached UNSMIL, urging it to work towards guaranteed rights for their peoples. On August 23, Ramadan Abu Janah, Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity [→ Libya (opposition)] visited Murzuq District, a focal point for communal tensions in previous years, to review the specific needs of the regions and cities with Tebu representatives. The Tebu have also been active in an offensive in the south of the Fezzan region against Chad. jol



## LIBYA (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: HoR, LNA vs. GNA, HSC vs. GNU, PC  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources

The war over national power, control over oil fields, and the orientation of the political system between the UN-backed 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 Libyan National Army (LNA) headed by General Khalifa Haftar, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis. The ceasefire agreed in October 2020 was only partially adhered to, as foreign troops remained in the country and air cargo deliveries continued.

In January, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced Jan Kubis as the new Special Envoy to Libya and Head of the UNSMIL. On February 2, the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, a forum established by the UNSMIL consisting of 75 Libyan men and women, elected the interim government, the Government of National Unity (GNU), led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Mohammed al-Dbeibah. The GNU was ratified as the transitional government by the House of Representatives on March 10 and installed with the purpose of substituting the GNA and LNA with the focus on the reunification of state institutions, as well as of preparing the country for general elections scheduled for December 24. On July 30, al-Dbeibah announced that the Misrata-Sirte road, linking the west and east of the country, was reopened in accordance with the October 2020 ceasefire. In preparation for elections, nine presidential candidates, including Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi, son of the former de facto president of Libya Muammar al-Gaddafi, were presented on November 11. Registrations for parliamentary elections ended on December 7 with at least 2,000 people listed. Between January and December, the return of 661,892 IDPs and the further decrease of IDPs to 179,047 people was reported.

In accordance with the October 2020 ceasefire, GNA and LNA did not clash throughout the year. However, as the election date approached, tensions increased as an armed group affiliated with LNA entered the court in Sabha, eponymous governorate, on November 25 and interrupted the appeal case addressing Gaddafi's disqualification from the presidential race that had been issued by the electoral commission on account of his criminal record. Additionally, throughout the year, at least 21 protesters, journalists, and activists supporting presidential candidates were abducted in the cities of Tripoli, eponymous governorate, Benghazi, eponymous governorate, Misrata, eponymous governorate, Ajdabiya, Al Wahat governorate, and Sirte, eponymous governorate. On December 14, armed men allegedly affiliated with the LNA attacked police officers, forcing them to drive their cars to Brak al-Shati Air base, Sabha. Shortly after, LNA and GNU clashed in the city of Sabha, leaving one person dead and two injured. On December 21, three days before the election, military mobilization of different armed groups including the deployment of military vehicles and heavy weapons was witnessed by residents in Misrata city, Tripolitania region. The following day, elections were officially postponed to 2022.

krz

MOROCCO (POLISARIO / WESTERN SAHARA<sup>o</sup>)Intensity: **3** | Change: **•** | Start: **1975**

Conflict parties: POLISARIO, Sahrawis vs. government  
 Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis over the secession of Western Sahara<sup>o</sup> between the Popular Front of the Liberation of Saguia al-Hamran and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO), claiming to represent the Sahrawi people of Western Sahara, as well as Sahrawi people living in the Moroccan parts of the disputed territories, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The Moroccan government continued to claim Western Sahara as part of the kingdom, while POLISARIO continued to demand the right for self-determination of the Sahrawis in the proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

During the first half of the year, Morocco's relations with European countries and Algeria, a supporter of the POLISARIO claim, deteriorated over Western Sahara. For instance, Algeria cut diplomatic ties with Morocco on August 24 and closed its airspace to all Moroccan aviation on September 22. Furthermore on November 3, Algeria accused Morocco of killing three Algerian truck drivers in Western Saharan, east of the sand berm. Morocco denied all responsibility.

On October 6, after two years of searching, Morocco and POLISARIO agreed on the nomination of Staffan de Mistura as the new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. However, on December 4, POLISARIO withdrew from negotiations stating it would only accept bilateral talks led by the African Union. In a letter to the UN Secretary-General on December 7, POLISARIO leader Brahim Ghali said the movement might not participate in a UN-led peace process on Western Sahara, accusing the UN of not addressing Morocco's action against Sahrawi civilians.

In contrast to military confrontations at the end of 2020, only sporadic military clashes occurred. These clashes involved mostly artillery attacks by POLISARIO on the Moroccan outpost at the sand berm. POLISARIO insisted that these attacks inflicted numerous casualties while Morocco renounced these claims. On April 8, the Moroccan Army killed POLISARIO gendarmerie chief Addah al-Bendir and another high-ranking POLISARIO member and injured two others in a drone strike near the town of Tifariti inside the UN buffer zone.

Throughout the first half of the year, the Moroccan police also increased pressure on Sahrawi activists in the region. For instance, on February 13, the Moroccan police attacked and injured a pro-POLISARIO Sahrawi activist in Boujdour, Laâyoune-Sakia El Hamra province, for waving the POLISARIO flag. On May 12, dozens of Moroccan police and security forces stormed the house of the same activist, injuring her and her sister.

mfr

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## OMAN (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **1** | Change: • | Start: **2011**

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

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The dispute over the orientation of the political system between opposition groups and the government continued. On May 23, protests erupted in the city of Sohar, eponymous governorate, where 100 protesters demonstrated against poor economic conditions and recent job losses. The protests spread across the country. On May 24 and May 26, police attacked protesters with tear gas and arrested at least a dozen participants. On the evening of May 25, Omani state television interrupted TV programming, announcing Sultan Haitham bin Tariq had ordered the immediate creation of 2,000 government jobs and a plan for 15,000 private sector jobs within the next two years. On May 27, the protests ended and the government released the protesters on June 2. The government arrested at least five citizens between June 23 and August 13 for engaging via online videos on social media with content critical of the government. jue

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## QATAR - SAUDI ARABIA ET AL.

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Intensity: **1** | Change: **END** | Start: **2017**

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Conflict parties: Qatar vs. Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE  
 Conflict items: international power

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The dispute over international power between Qatar, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on the other, ended. On January 5, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani traveled to attend the Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Saudi Arabia and together with Egypt and Saudi Arabia signed the Al-Ula Agreement. The agreement acceded to reopen land and sea borders between the countries as well as resume air traffic. It was achieved with the help of mediation efforts by Kuwait and the USA. Between June and August, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar restored mutual diplomatic relations. Bahrain and the UAE had not resumed diplomatic relationships with Qatar by the end of the year. jue

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## RUSSIA – TURKEY

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Intensity: **2** | Change: ↘ | Start: **2015**

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Conflict parties: Russia vs. Turkey  
 Conflict items: international power, resources

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The violent crisis over international power and resources between Russia, supporting the Syrian government under President Bashar al-Assad, and Turkey, supporting Islamist opposition forces, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. Despite the agreed ceasefire for the de-escalation zone of Idlib Governorate, from March 2020, at least 18 people were killed and 37 injured in Idlib as well as in the Syrian Aleppo Governorate throughout the year. Negotiations within the Astana peace process continued.

Throughout the year, Russia carried out several airstrikes against Turkish-backed forces and related targets, mainly in Aleppo and Idlib. For instance, on March 6, three ballistic missiles fired from a Russian warship in the Mediterranean hit oil refineries and burned 180 tanker trucks near the cities of Jarablus and al-Bab, Aleppo. At least one person was killed and another eleven injured in the incident. On March 14, another airstrike originating from Syrian Kuweires air base in Aleppo hit oil facilities resulting in explosions which injured several people in al-Hamran village, Hama Governorate. On September 7, Russia carried out an airstrike on a refugee camp injuring four civilians in Maarrat Misrin city, Idlib. On September 26, a Russian airstrike targeting the Turkish-backed Hamza Division killed at least five and injured twelve near Afrin city, Aleppo. The same day, Turkey reinforced its bases with personnel, armored vehicles, and equipment including rocket launchers and tanks near Zawiya Mountain, Idlib. In November, Russia carried out at least three airstrikes on rural areas in Idlib and Latakia Governorate, killing 17 civilians and injuring five others.

As in previous years, negotiations between the guarantor states Iran, Russia, and Turkey, as well as the Syrian government and Syrian armed opposition groups took place within the Astana peace process, launched in January 2017. Russia, Turkey, and Iran reiterated their commitment to Syria's political unity and territorial integrity and emphasized the importance of implementing the agreements on Idlib.

In the second half of the year, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed their good relations and interest in a joint defense industry. Shortly before their bilateral meeting on trade, economic partnership, and the situations in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Caucasus in Sochi, Russia, on September 29, Erdogan mentioned Turkey's interest in purchasing more S-400 missiles from Russia. On November 11, Russia offered to support the development of advanced fighter jets by Turkish Aerospace Industries.

Tensions between Russia and Turkey increased as Erdogan opposed the Russian annexation of the Crimea in a statement on April 7. In a phone call with Erdogan on December 3, Putin criticized the Turkish sale of UAVs to Ukraine calling it "destructive behavior". However, in a statement on December 30, Putin announced that the cooperation and partnership between both countries would continue. krz

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## SAUDI ARABIA (OPPOSITION)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: ↗ | Start: **1992**

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Conflict parties: opposition vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology

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The dispute over the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the government continued.

On February 2, the government announced legal reforms as part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's broader reform program Vision 2030.

On February 10, the government released a prominent Saudi women's rights activist from prison. On April 5, a court sentenced an operator of a regime-critical satirical internet blog to 20 years in prison.

The USA imposed further sanctions on the Saudi Royal Guard's Rapid Intervention Force and a former deputy intelligence chief on February 26, following the killing of Jamal Khashoggi

in 2018.

According to an August 3 report by Amnesty International, 39 human rights activists were held in Saudi prisons. On September 27, in a meeting with a Saudi delegation, the EU expressed concerns about freedom of expression and assembly, an increase in executions, and prison conditions of Saudi detainees, while progress was made in women's rights.

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### SAUDI ARABIA, YEMEN (AQAP)

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

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Conflict parties: Saudi Arabia, USA, Yemen vs. AQAP  
 Conflict items: system/ideology

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and ideology between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its insurgent arm Ansar al-Sharia, on the one hand, and the Saudi Arabia-backed government of Yemen, as well as Al-Hirak including the Southern Separatist Movement, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year AQAP carried out attacks against Yemeni security forces and their allies, mainly in Abyan and Shabwa province in southern Yemen.

For instance, on March 18, AQAP stormed a security point in the Abyan province held by Yemeni Security Belt Forces (SBF), killing nine SBF and three civilians with hand grenades. On April 4, AQAP launched a rocket attack at a military base in Shabwa province against Emirati forces supporting the Yemeni government. In another attack on May 17, AQAP targeted the forces of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the SBF headquarter. On June 11, AQAP planted a bomb under a motorbike which killed seven SBF soldiers and injured 25 civilians. Two days later, on June 13, SBF forces claimed to have captured, among others, the members of the AQAP cell responsible for the attack. The attacks however continued. Between June 15 and 16, AQAP kidnapped six Yemeni police officers in Shabwa province. During the months of July and August, STC accused AQAP for a number of attacks on STC forces for which AQAP did not claim responsibility. AQAP did not carry out any confirmed attacks in Saudi Arabia this year. jue

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### SYRIA (INTER-OPPOSITION RIVALRY)

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Intensity: **3** | Change: • | Start: **2013**

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Conflict parties: HTS vs. various Islamist groups  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance, resources

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance, the orientation of the political system, and resources between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), on the one hand, and other Islamist groups and factions such as Jund al-Sham (JAS), on the other, continued. After the 2020 ceasefire agreement in Idlib, eponymous governorate, between Russia and Turkey, the conflict de-escalated in the previous year. However, tensions persisted between different Islamist groups, which had jointly fought against the Syrian government and the so-called Islamic State in previous years. Over the course of the year, HTS aimed to consolidate its

dominant position in Idlib and Latakia governorates by clashing with and detaining members of other Islamist groups. For instance, on February 20, HTS launched an operation in several areas in Idlib and Jisr-al-Shughur cities, Idlib Governorate, detaining at least ten members of Hurras al-Din (HAD). Throughout April, HTS detained the leader and several members of HAD in Idlib Governorate. On October 25, clashes between HTS and rival Jihadist factions such as JAS, comprising primarily of foreign fighters, erupted after HTS demanded their surrender or dissolution and withdrawal from the region. The clashes continued for several days after HTS attacked JAS positions in Jisr-al-Shughur, as well as in Jabal al-Turkman north of Latakia, eponymous governorate, which left at least eleven dead and several others injured on both sides. Subsequently, HTS reportedly executed several members of JAS in Jabal al-Turkman. hkz

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### SYRIA (OPPOSITION)

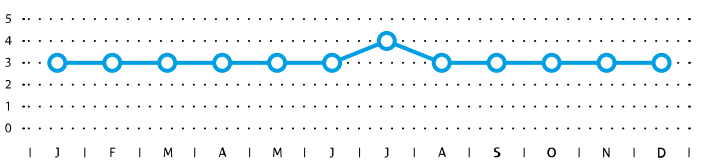
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Intensity: **4** | Change: ▾ | Start: **2011**

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Conflict parties: NC, FSA, HTS vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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The war over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition groups, primarily comprised of the Syrian National Army (SNA) backed by Turkey, Hay'at al-Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary (NC), and its armed wing the Free Syrian Army (FSA), on the one hand, and the government with its Syrian Arab Army (SAA), supported by Russia, Iran, and Shiite militias, most prominently the Lebanon-based Hezbollah, on the other, de-escalated to a limited war.

Since the beginning of the civil war in 2011, the overall death toll was estimated at between 370,000 and over 600,000. At least 5.6 million people have sought refuge in neighboring countries and 6.9 million have been internally displaced. The death toll this year was at least 3,700, which is the lowest annual death toll since the beginning of the conflict.

The ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey in March 2020 in the so-called de-escalation zone was mainly respected by the opposing factions. Turkish media claimed that more than 500,000 IDPs returned to their homes in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates since the ceasefire was put into action. Violent incidents were mainly concentrated in opposition-held areas and on the front lines between the conflict parties. Violence, on the other hand, increased in Daraa Governorate over the course of the year, peaking between July and September. President Bashar al-Assad was re-elected in a highly contested election. Peace talks were held in different settings, but brought little progress and no effective results.

The front lines along government and opposition-controlled areas saw frequent ceasefire violations from both sides in the form of assaults, mutual shelling, and airstrikes. For instance, on March 5, a Russian warship and government forces fired several missiles, causing huge blasts at oil-loading facilities in the eastern countryside of Aleppo Governorate. The resulting explosions and fire caused the destruction of up to 180 trucks and oil tankers, killing four and injuring at least

20. On June 21, government shelling on several locations along the front lines in Idlib Governorate under the control of HTS killed seven people, including four alleged opposition fighters, one policeman, and two civilians. HTS militia shot one government soldier in retaliatory fire. On several occasions, the government was blamed for intentionally targeting civilian health care facilities. For example, on March 21, the government fired mortar rounds at a hospital in Atarib town, Aleppo Governorate, killing between five and seven people and injuring several others. Service at the hospital was suspended due to the destruction caused.

At the end of June, government forces started a blockade in Daraa al-Balad neighborhood, a remaining opposition stronghold located in Daraa city, eponymous governorate. The situation escalated on July 29, when government troops started a ground push into the neighborhood including shelling with tanks and artillery, but had to withdraw due to the resistance of the opposition fighters. Continued clashes in the countryside of Daraa Governorate ultimately resulted in the opposition seizing 18 government positions and at least 32 deaths, including twelve civilians. Opposition-affiliated media reported a further 18 civilian deaths caused by government shelling in al-Yadudah town, Daraa Governorate. Up to 40,000 people fled from the violence, mostly from or around Daraa al-Balad. On September 1, a truce was implemented. Around 50 opposition fighters and their families were evacuated to northern Syria, the opposition surrendered their firearms, and government forces took control of Daraa al-Balad.

On May 26, al-Assad was re-elected, gaining 95.1 percent of all votes cast. The election was accompanied by protests on both sides. Russia and Iran considered the election a milestone for increasing security and stability in Syria, but many Western countries, Turkey, and the opposition condemned the election as being "neither free nor fair", and refused to acknowledge the results. ses

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### SYRIA (TURKEY – SDF / NORTHERN SYRIA)

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

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Conflict parties: SDF, YPG, HRE vs. Turkey, FSA  
 Conflict items: autonomy, subnational predominance, resources

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The violent crisis over subnational predominance, autonomy, and natural resources between Turkey and the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (TFSA), on the one hand, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and its affiliated groups, such as the People's Protection Units and Afrin Liberation Forces (HRE), on the other, continued. Throughout the year, the conflict accounted for at least 254 deaths and 355 people injured. Closures of border crossings into Northern Syria restricted transportation of humanitarian aid and Covid-19 vaccines into the region.

On March 16, clashes between Turkish troops and the SDF intensified in Ain Issa town, Raqqa Governorate, killing 45 and injuring 27 on both sides. Similarly, between March 14 and 18, the HRE conducted hit-and-run operations against Turkish and TFSA positions, killing two Turkish soldiers, at least three TFSA forces, and one HRE member. Severe damage to public health infrastructure occurred when the Turkish Air Force attacked the al-Shifa hospital in Afrin, Aleppo Governorate, on June 12, killing more than 13 civilians, injuring 27, and destroying its polyclinic and emergency rooms. Throughout

July, Turkish troops and TFSA forces also launched several attacks near Manbij city, Aleppo Governorate, to which the SDF-affiliated Manbij Military Council responded by killing 16 TFSA fighters and one civilian, and injuring 17. From August onwards, Turkish airstrikes concentrated on Ain Issa. This is located on the M4 highway and boasts great strategic importance as it connects most major cities of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria.

On November 5, a SDF commander speculated about a Turkish invasion, following alleged reports of Turkish military reinforcements in October. This was impeded by the US and Russia, however attacks continued throughout the year. For instance, a drone attack on November 9 left three members of a SDF-supporting and Qamishli-based family dead. In addition, shelling intensified in Til Temir village, Al-Hasakah Governorate, on December 21 and 22, which prompted a counter attack by the SDF. Clashes resulted in 16 deaths, 17 being injured, and hundreds internally displaced. The attacks coincided with the 17th meeting of the Astana Peace process as delegations from Turkey, Russia, and Iran met in Kazakhstan to find a solution to the decade-long crisis in Syria. Besides Turkey and the TFSA combating in Northern Syria, IS attacks in the region prompted SDF to launch a number of security operations, such as the campaign in the Al-Hawl Refugee camp, Al-Hasakah Governorate [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS) – Syria].

Other points of contention included Turkey's violation of the 1987 agreement with Syria and Iraq to ensure a steady flow of the Euphrates' water through to Syria. Subsequently, water shortages peaked in June leaving large parts of the Euphrates river dried up. This resulted in electricity shortages in Raqqa and Al-Hasakah. daj, paj

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### SYRIA – USA

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

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Conflict parties: Syria vs. USA  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

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The non-violent crisis over international power, system, and ideology between Syria and the USA continued. The US continued to accuse the Syrian government of pursuing weapons of mass destruction and chemical weapons.

On May 6, US President Joe Biden announced the extension of the National Emergency Executive Order for another year. The National Emergency had initially been declared on 11/04/2004 and put sanctions on certain American goods and services to and froze the assets of certain people from Syria. Biden stated that the Syrian government's actions posed an unusual threat to national security, foreign policy, and the economy of the US.

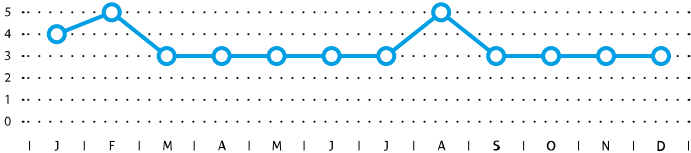
Additionally, on July 28, the US Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions against eight Syrian prisons run by the Syrian government as well as five Syrian officials who directed the prisons. These sanctions were announced after the said prisons appeared in graphic images by a former Syrian military photographer, exposing the Syrian government's treatment of detainees, including torture. gew

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 the control of resources such as oil between the so-called Islamic State (IS), on the one hand, and different governments such as Syria and Iraq, and several militant groups, on the other, continued. IS-related violent measures were also observed in Afghanistan, Yemen, Egypt, Lebanon, and Libya throughout 2021. Following its founding in 2014 by Iraqi citizen Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, IS had brought under its control large territories in Syria and Iraq. It also claimed the caliphate, implemented its interpretation of Sharia law, and set up state-like administration and social services. Due to large-scale mobilization on social media, foreign fighters from over a hundred countries have 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 and different militant groups in Asia pledged allegiance to the group, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Caucasus Emirate, as well as Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Sayyaf, and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups); Russia (Islamist militants / Northern Caucasus); Tajikistan (Islamist militant groups); Indonesia (Islamist militant groups); Philippines (Abu Sayyaf); Philippines (BIFM, BIFM – MILF, government)]. The IS-affiliated groups from Sub-Saharan Africa include an al-Shabaab faction, a Boko Haram faction, as well as other affiliates in West Africa and the Greater Sahara [→ Somalia (ISS); Nigeria (Boko Haram); Mali, Nigeria et al. (ISWAP / ISWAP-GS)].

In order to halt the territorial advance of IS, different coalitions led by the US, France, Russia, Saudi Arabia as well as some individual countries like Iran and Turkey launched several operations in Iraq and Syria in 2014 and the following years. In addition to 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 to 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 all its territory by early 2019. Since then IS has not regained any territory, however, its sleeper cells have continued to attack governments, militias, and civilian targets, primarily from their hideouts in remote areas. Several anti-IS operations

continue in countries in which the group is still present. This year, the most significant developments included the withdrawal of the NATO alliance and additional US forces from Afghanistan by August 30 and the United States' withdrawal from active combat in Iraq towards the end of the year. At country level, the conflict continued on the level of a war in Syria and escalated from a violent crisis to a war in Afghanistan, where the group operates under the name Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). IS insurgencies remained on the level of a violent crisis in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Egypt, and Libya. In North Africa, violent measures mostly occurred in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, where the group operates under the name of Sinai Province. No violent measures were recorded in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Algeria, and Tunisia.

mob, mif

SYRIA

IS was unable to recapture any of its former territories since it lost its last regional territorial strongholds to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in eastern Syria in March 2019. This year, IS inflicted significantly fewer casualties than in the previous year. IS killed at least 496 people, mainly members of the Syrian military, while the group itself lost at least 434 of its members. At least 71 civilians died in IS landmine explosions, attacks, and assassinations. The group remains most active in SDF-held areas in northeastern Syria and in government-controlled areas in central Syria.

Throughout the year, IS killed about 45 SDF fighters and internal security forces in SDF-controlled areas. At the same time, the SDF launched a number of security operations against IS, partially with international coalition air support. From March 28 to April 2, the SDF and its supporters carried out a security campaign in the Al-Hawl Refugee Camp in the Governorate of Al-Hasakah, arresting at least 100 IS members and supporters. Subsequent in-camp assassinations of Iraqi refugees brought attention to Al-Hawl-Camp's potential function as a hub for recruitment and finances for IS affiliates. From January to April, IS increased its attacks against government forces and pro-Syrian militias and killed at least 224 pro-government fighters. IS launched the majority of its attacks from the deserts of Homs, Deir ez-Zor, and the Aleppo-Hama-Al-Raqqah triangle. For example, on February 8, IS conducted an ambush on government troops and pro-Syrian militias in the Al-Mayadeen desert in Deir ez-Zor. The subsequent clashes resulted in the death of 26 pro-Syrian troops and eleven IS fighters. Russia counteracted the surge in IS activity with intensive aerial bombardments in support of government troops, conducting search operations on the ground and continuing to do so throughout the year.

From May onward, IS' activities subsided as the group reverted back to conducting small-scale attacks such as assassinations and landmine explosions, sometimes followed by minor clashes. For instance, on June 4, IS launched a surprise attack in the al-Sukhnah desert in eastern Homs that left seven pro-Syrian militias and three IS members dead. The group's activities in government-controlled regions reached an all-year low in August when all of IS' attacks took place in Deir ez-Zor, and the death toll fell down to eight dead soldiers and no fatalities on IS' side.

In the last quarter of the year, the group stepped up its efforts again, primarily in Deir ez-Zor and Raqqah. For instance, on December 2, IS killed at least ten gas and oil field workers, targeting their bus close to the Al-Kharata oil field, west of Deir ez-Zor. mif

## AFGHANISTAN

This year was marked by the complete withdrawal of the NATO-alliance and additional US-forces from Afghanistan by August 30. Simultaneously, the Taliban took over the capital Kabul, forming the de facto government of Afghanistan [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)].

On August 26, in the midst of the evacuation conducted by international forces at Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport, Islamic State of the Province Khorasan (ISKP) executed one of its most lethal attacks in Afghanistan. An ISKP suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowd at the Abbey Gate, the south entrance to the airport, killing at least 170 people, including 13 US forces, and injuring at least 150, including 18 US forces. Three days later, the US launched a drone strike at an alleged ISKP shelter in Kabul to prevent the militants from conducting another suicide attack. The raid killed ten civilians with no connection to ISKP. Weeks later, the US Pentagon admitted the strike was a "tragic mistake".

In a propaganda video released in February, ISKP vowed retaliation against the Taliban for negotiating the US-Taliban peace agreement. In exchange, the Taliban repeatedly vowed to "eradicate" ISKP. Both parties clashed throughout the year. ISKP significantly stepped up attacks against the Taliban after the takeover. For instance, on September 18, three bombs detonated close to a Taliban convoy in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar Province, killing at least three people and injuring 18. In a coordinated attack on November 2, an ISKP suicide bomber and ISKP armed forces attacked a military hospital in Kabul. The Taliban employed a helicopter and a special forces unit to fend off the attackers. At least 25 people died in the incident and over 50 were injured, including the Taliban Kabul military corps commander.

ISKP continued to conduct bombings against civilians as well as minority groups by primarily targeting public institutions. On May 8, a VBIED detonated in front of a girls' school in the Dasht-e Barchi area in western Kabul. While staff, students, and teachers left the building, two additional IEDs exploded, killing at least 85 people and injuring over 200. The attack remained unclaimed, however, ISKP has frequently targeted the neighborhood in the past, which was predominantly inhabited by the minority Shiite Hazara community. On May 14, an IED detonated in a mosque in Shakar Dara District, Kabul, when worshippers were gathered for Eid al-Fitr, killing at least twelve civilians and injuring 15. A similar incident occurred on October 8, when a suicide bomber detonated in the Shiite Gozar-e-Sayed Abad Mosque during the Friday prayer in Kunduz city, eponymous Province. At least 47 people were killed, and more than 50 injured. On October 15, suicide bombers attacked the Shiite Bibi Fatima Mosque during Friday prayer in Kandahar city, eponymous Province, killing 40 people and injuring 70.

According to a UN report released in June, there were an estimated number of 1,500 to 2,200 ISKP fighters in Afghanistan. skn, mwe

## IRAQ

In Iraq, IS was unable to recapture any of its former territories and inflicted significantly fewer casualties in 2021 than in the year before. At least 138 of IS' opponents, primarily Iraqi soldiers and pro-Iraqi militiamen, died throughout the year in attacks affiliated with IS. IS killed at least 107 civilians, while the group itself lost at least 79 members. Geographically, cells were mostly active in the Governorates

of Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Salah ad-Din. Overall, the group pursued low-level insurgencies with IED attacks, car bombs, and assassinations, however the group also carried out two major suicide bombings. Towards the end of the year, the USA withdrew from active combat in Iraq, remaining in a solely advisory position [→ Iraq (Shiite militant groups)]. On January 21, IS carried out a suicide bombing in Tayaran Square in the capital of Baghdad, which the Iraqi authorities later referred to as the group's biggest suicide bombing in three years. It left 32 civilians dead and at least 110 injured. Furthermore, on July 19, IS carried out another major suicide bombing at a market in Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood. At least 36 civilians were killed and 60 were injured. Other than these, IS conducted a series of small-scale attacks on Iraqi regime forces and allied militias throughout the year. For example, on March 4, IS attacked Iraqi regime troops in Al-Islah village in the Diyala Governorate, which led to the death of four Iraqi soldiers.

From January to May, the Iraqi military and the International Coalition countered IS' small-scale attacks with on-and-off aerial bombardments, focusing on the Governorates of Kirkuk, Saladin, Nineveh, and Baghdad, and also deliberately targeting IS hideouts. These airstrikes killed at least 31 IS fighters. On January 28, the Iraqi prime minister announced the assassination of Abu Yaser al-Issawi, IS' leader in Iraq. On June 14, the military launched a new operation in western Iraq to find IS members, which was relaunched on August 31 and continued throughout the year. On October 11, it was announced that Iraqi security forces had captured the IS deputy leader and finance chief.

In northern Iraq, IS notably stepped up its activities towards the end of the year. On December 3, IS attacked two villages in the Makhmur region, whose territory both the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Iraqi government claim for themselves. At least ten Peshmerga forces and three civilians died. The attack led to bilateral talks between the Iraqi and Kurdish prime ministers on the power vacuum in the Makhmur region. On December 8, Iraqi and Kurdish forces launched a joint security offensive, with the goal of tracking down IS cells in the contested region. For instance, on December 29, Iraq Army Special Forces killed three IS militants and freed two hostages during a raid on Hamrin area, Diyala Governorate.

mif

## EGYPT

As in previous years, most clashes occurred in the North Sinai Governorate, particularly in the cities of al-Arish, Rafah, Sheikh Zuweid, and Bir al-Abd. During the year, at least 16 security forces and three civilians died in attacks for which IS claimed responsibility on social media. On the other hand, Egyptian security forces continued their fight against IS militants and various other militant groups operating in the same area, killing three IS members. [→ Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)].

Throughout the year, IS local branch, the so-called Sinai Province carried out several attacks against the Egyptian Armed Forces, the Egyptian National Police (ENP), and civilians. Moreover, IS continued to attack civilians for their cooperation with Egyptian state authorities. On January 1, a roadside bomb in Bir al Abd, North Sinai, targeted a vehicle, killing two members of the security forces and wounding five security and medical officials. There was no clear claim to responsibility for the attack, but Sinai Province posted a statement on January 1, stating it was behind four attacks

at the end of December 2020. Sinai Province continued the attacks on January 22 by conducting another bombing, killing one security officer and wounding three others. In April, IS militants killed two of 14 kidnapped bedouins for collaborating with the military in North Sinai. The executions were shown in a video, which was published on a Telegram channel affiliated with IS. On April 19, the ENP killed three suspected IS militants involved in the assassination of a coptic man in North Sinai. Beforehand, IS had released a video where they executed the man by shooting. In the video, the IS representative said the execution of the man was due to his cooperation with the Egyptian army. On July 31, IS militants ambushed a checkpoint in northern Sinai, killing at least five security members, followed by another two attacks in August. On August 9, a senior Egyptian army brigadier was killed in an explosion targeting his vehicle. On August 12, a roadside bomb exploded in New Rafah, killing at least seven Egyptian soldiers and wounding six others. Sinai Province claimed responsibility for both attacks.

rbu

LIBYA

The so-called Islamic State in Libya (ISL) continued to lose organizational power and influence in Libya. Both the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the later interim Government of National Unity (GNU), as well as the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA) headed by Khalifa Haftar, conducted operations against ISL members. ISL operations were primarily carried out in the central and southwestern parts of Libya and claimed to have killed seven people in four attacks throughout the year.

On March 14, the LNA carried out raids on ISL hideouts in Ubari, Wadi al-Hayaa district, and arrested several ISL members including leader Mohamed Miloud Mohamed. On August 22, the LNA killed a militant attempting to use a SVBIED against a military checkpoint in Zillah, Jufrah. In Tripolitania, the GNU Counter-Terrorism Force arrested several ISL members, including a fighter in Syria, in Msallata, Murqub district, on October 23, and detained several suspects for their involvement in the 2015 attack on the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli between October and December. On June 6, ISL carried out a suicide attack with a VBIED against the LNA-held checkpoint in Mizraq, north of Sabha, killing two soldiers. In response, the LNA targeted ISL positions in the Haruj mountains, Jufra district, for two weeks, arresting several militants. Moreover, on July 8, the LNA deployed forces to the southern areas Murzuq district and Wadi al-Hayaa, close to the Chadian border.

hiik

YEMEN

The Yemeni IS branch allegedly continued to carry out attacks in Al-Bayda governorate, specifically in the district of Al-Qurayshiah. On July 15, an al-Houthi spokesman claimed in a statement in Sana'a that al-Houthi troops and allied fighters had killed around 25 IS fighters in several Districts of Al-Bayda province during operation Nasr al-Mobin [→Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi); Yemen (AQAP- al-Houthi)]. On July 21, the UNSC published a report which estimated the strength of IS in Yemen to be around a few hundred fighters that were currently restabilizing following considerable losses in fighting with al-Houthis and AQAP.

IS moved further into Marib governorate with the battle between al-Houthi and the government [→ Yemen, Saudi

Arabia (al-Houthi forces)]. On May 2, al-Houthi forces claimed they had killed a high-ranking commander and deputy of IS' senior intelligence official in Marib governorate. Around September 3, IS publicly declared its participation in the fighting of Marib against al-Houthi forces.

frd

LEBANON

According to the government, IS conducted one attack in Lebanon in 2021. On August 22, members of a cell that had formed in June assassinated a former army officer in Tripoli, North Governorate. Throughout the year, Lebanese forces conducted several security operations against IS members, resulting in over 22 arrests.

sap

TURKEY

IS did not conduct any attacks in Turkey in 2021. Throughout the year, Turkish security forces conducted raids and detentions as part of counterterrorism operations against IS across the country and arrested at least 537 individuals with suspected links to IS. Since the detainees were mostly foreign nationals from Iraq or Syria, the majority were repatriated while others were imprisoned.

sag

SAUDI ARABIA

IS did not conduct any violent measures in Saudi Arabia in 2021. On March 11, a Saudi Arabian court in the capital Riyadh issued a preliminary death sentence for five alleged members of an IS cell. The men were suspected of carrying out three Mosque bombings in Abha, "Asir Province, Najran Province, and Eastern Province. Throughout the year, Saudi Arabia participated in a series of international initiatives to reaffirm its intent to counter IS. For instance, on May 17 and 18, Saudi Arabia, the US, and Italy hosted the 14th meeting of the Counter ISIS Finance Group (CIFG) online. Subsequently, the CIFG released a joint statement reaffirming its commitment to seize IS financing in all forms.

suf

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TUNISIA (OPPOSITION)

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

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Conflict parties: civil society groups, opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

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The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various opposition and civil society groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The conflict was marked by decentralized socioeconomic and anti-government protests all over the country, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the related economic crisis. Between January 15 and 30, a wave of protests occurred across the country in the wake of the tenth anniversary of the Arab Spring. Predominantly young and impoverished people took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction with the government. For example, on January 16 and 17, protesters in the capital Tunis blocked streets and threw stones at police forces. Security forces responded with water cannons and tear gas, military units were reportedly deployed. According

to the Tunisian League of Human Rights, approx. 1,500 people were arrested during the January protests. Further clashes between protesters and the police occurred on January 25, in Sbeitla, Kasserine Governorate, following the death of a protester after they were reportedly hit by a tear gas canister. Following the death of a man in police custody on June 8 in Sidi Hassine, Tunis Governorate, people took to the streets in several cities over the course of eight nights to protest police brutality.

Following nationwide protests against the government, on July 25, President Kais Saied declared a 30-day curfew and issued an order lifting immunity from MPs and suspending the prime minister. The next day, opponents and supporters of the announcement clashed in front of the Tunisian parliament in Tunis. On September 22, Saied issued a decree granting him all executive power and suspending parts of the constitution. Opposition parties and the Tunisian labor union UGTT criticized the monopolization of power, demanding a change in the political system. MPs demanded to restore the constitutional order. In the months that followed, several protests opposing the president's seizure of power occurred predominantly in Tunis. On October 3, Saied named a new prime minister and approved his new government on October 11. On November 9, further clashes occurred in Agareb, Sfax Governorate, after the death of a protester reportedly caused by the heavy use of tear gas. On December 23, Saied announced a constitutional referendum for 07/25/22 and parliamentary elections for 12/17/22. The ongoing state of emergency, first declared in November 2015, was extended until 01/19/22. mls

### TURKEY (OPPOSITION)

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

Conflict parties: HDP, Nation Alliance vs. government  
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The dispute over national power and the orientation of the political system between the Nation Alliance and the People's Democratic Party (HDP), on the one hand, and the Turkish government run by the People's Alliance led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), on the other, escalated to a non-violent crisis.

On March 17, the Turkish Prosecutor General's office filed an application with the Constitutional Court to ban the pro-Kurdish HDP and 687 party officials from engaging in any political activities over alleged links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) [→ Turkey (PKK)]. The application was rejected later that month and a similar application, adding the request to freeze the party's bank accounts, was filed by the Prosecutor General on June 7. The second application was accepted unanimously by the court and the case was opened.

Throughout the year, members of the Good Party (IP) came under verbal and physical attack by unknown individuals and crowds, allegedly pro-government. For instance, on May 21, during a visit of IP leader Meral Aksener in the province of Rize, a fist fight broke out between citizens and Aksener's assistants after a crowd tried to approach her. The crowd shouted slogans supporting the president. Additionally, during budget talks, on December 8, fist fights broke out twice following mutual insults and shouting between lawmakers of the AKP and the Republican People's Party (CHP) in a parliamentary session in Ankara.

On June 17, in Izmir, eponymous province, and on July 14, in

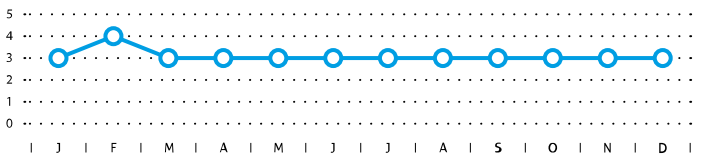
Mugla, eponymous province, two armed attacks were carried out on HDP offices, killing one HDP member in Izmir. The opposition blamed the attacks on the government's policy of division.

In October, the Democracy and Progress Party and the Future Party joined the Nation Alliance originally consisting of the CHP, IP, the Felicity Party and the Democrat Party, forming a coalition of six parties for parliamentary elections. In November and December Kemal Kilicdaroglu and Aksener called to move up the presidential election scheduled for June 2023, criticizing the government's handling of the current financial crisis. krz

### TURKEY (PKK)

Intensity: **4** | Change: **↘** | Start: **1978**

Conflict parties: PKK vs. government  
 Conflict items: autonomy



The war over autonomy between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the government de-escalated to a limited war. Throughout the year, at least 586 people were killed and 17 injured. Clashes between the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and PKK mostly took place in the southeastern Turkish provinces of Van, Hakkari, Sirnak, Siirt, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, as well as in the Iraqi Governorates of Nineveh, Duhok, and Erbil.

PKK conducted attacks on Turkish military bases in Siirt as well as in Nineveh, Duhok, and Erbil in Iraq. For instance, on August 12, militants attacked a Turkish military base in Duhok with mortars, killing one soldier. Overall ten members of Turkish security forces were killed and four were injured in clashes with PKK throughout the year.

On January 26, the government launched a series of military operations under the name Eren in Turkey's eastern and southeastern provinces targeting PKK forces. Throughout these operations at least 93 PKK members were killed while three members of the security forces were killed and two injured. On June 7, during Operation Eren-1 in Van and Agri provinces, deploying altogether 1,071 personnel, Gendarmerie Special Forces killed two PKK members. Among the dead was the alleged head of the PKK of Baskale district who was on the Interior Ministry's wanted list. On May 30, during Operation Eren-15 Agri-Cemce Madur, employing over 2,000 personnel, a Turkish soldier died in a shootout.

Between February 10 and 14, TAF conducted the combined air and ground Operation Claw-Eagle 2 in the Gara region, Duhok in order to secure the border between Iraq and Turkey and rescue 13 civilians held hostage by the PKK. TAF killed 51 PKK members and captured two in the operation. The hostages died. It remained unclear who was responsible for the death of the hostages.

On April 23, the government initiated large-scale Operation Claw-Lightning and Operation Claw-Thunderbolt in Metina, Avashin-Basyan, Zap, and Qandil regions of Duhok and Erbil, which were part of ongoing cross-border operations against PKK. Overall, TAF deployed a total of 50 aircraft units, artillery units, attack helicopters, and UAVs to target PKK members



and their bases. In clashes between TAF and PKK, eleven soldiers and 94 PKK members were killed and three soldiers injured. Kurdistan Regional Government's Coordinator for International Advocacy claimed that between January and August during clashes between PKK and TAF 165 airstrikes were conducted, 274 artillery shells fired, and six ground operations launched, which resulted in the displacement of the residents of more than 800 villages in Duhok. On June 5 and 11, during joint operations carried out by TAF and the Turkish National Intelligence Organization, Turkish forces killed alleged regional leaders of PKK and managers of a refugee camp in Makhmour district, Erbil. On July 30, TAF conducted airstrikes on at least 40 PKK targets including shelters, caves, and ammunition storages located in Erbil and Dohuk.

Security forces arrested at least 252 PKK members in the provinces of Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Mardin, Mersin, and Van primarily for propaganda activities, involvement in the logistic network, and illegal drug trade. Throughout the year, at least 52 PKK members surrendered to Turkish security forces.

sak

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## YEMEN (AL-HIRAK / SOUTHERN YEMEN)

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

Conflict parties: Al-Hirak vs. government

Conflict items: secession

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The war over secession of southern Yemen between al-Hirak, mainly represented by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) backed Southern Transitional Council (STC), on the one hand, and the government of internationally recognized President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, supported by Saudi Arabia, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis. The 2019 Riyadh Agreement between the secessionist STC and Hadi, which had aimed to include the STC separatists within the Hadi government, continued to be not implemented neither on a political nor on a military level. On January 15, for example, Hadi appointed a new attorney general and Shura council chairman for Yemen, which the STC in turn rejected on grounds of unilateralism. On January 22, the STC set up the Security Belt Forces in the interim capital of Aden.

On February 5, the President of the USA Joe Biden stated the US would stop its support for the Saudi military. On July 2, Saudi Arabia called on Yemen and the STC to respond urgently and to fully implement the Riyadh Agreement. The EU repeated this call on October 28. On the same day, the UAE withdrew their troops from al-Alam base in Shabwa, Southern Yemen. On November 7, STC criticized Hadi over appointing new general manager and executive director for the state oil company, as the choices violated the Riyadh Agreement to establish a power-sharing government. On December 22, STC seized a ship carrying oil with UN permission and prevented it from reaching the port of al-Hudaydah, eponymous governorate.

Following the arrest of leaders, the STC suspended its participation in consultations with the government in June to implement the Riyadh Agreement. For instance, on January 1, the Saudi secret service arrested the STC leader Abdel Nasser Al-Ba'wah in the region of al-Buraiqa, Aden Governorate.

Violent clashes took place mainly in Abyan Governorate and intensified throughout the year. On January 2, the STC killed a civilian in Aden. On January 14, STC militias expelled

workers from their houses in Aden's Mulla port. On January 23, a faction of the Yemeni National Army killed one STC recruit and injured three others. On March 17, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) attacked a STC headquarter with rifles in Abyan, killing twelve [→ Saudi Arabia, Yemen (AQAP)]. On May 1, STC forces killed 26 al-Houthi rebels in an attack and drove them out of the strategic al-Fakher region. On June 26, in fights with al-Houthi, two STC fighters were killed and 15 people wounded, including civilians. On August 29, al-Houthi militants killed 30 STC soldiers and injured 40 others in a drone strike on the government's al-Anad military air base, in Lahij Governorate [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)]. On October 10, STC separatists killed four people and injured six others with an IED targeting Aden's governor. Both the governor and the environment minister, who was also in the vehicle, survived.

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## YEMEN (AQAP – AL-HOUSHI FORCES)

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

Conflict parties: al-Houthi forces vs. AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

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The violent crisis over the religious system and subnational predominance between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), supported by its local arm Ansar al-Sharia, on the one hand, and al-Houthi forces, on the other, continued.

Around January 22, AQAP used IEDs to target an al-Houthi patrol in al-Bayda Governorate, killing two al-Houthi militants and injuring two others. AQAP launched a similar attack on January 25 in al-Bayda. On January 28, AQAP used an IED to kill three al-Houthi militants including a commander. Similar attacks continued throughout the year in al-Bayda Governorate. For example, on February 18, AQAP claimed an ambush on al-Houthi forces, killing one. On March 24 and on March 26 AQAP claimed attacks on al-Houthi positions in the Mukayra area, al Bayda Governorate, killing three, and another attack killing ten in the same governorate.

On April 29, AQAP released a video claiming an attack on al-Houthi forces in al-Bayda Governorate, presumably killing one. During this attack, AQAP seized ammunition and weapons from al-Houthi forces. On June 12, AQAP claimed an ambush on four al-Houthi militants in al-Bayda, killing three and injuring one. On October 28, AQAP attacked an al-Houthi vehicle with an IED in al-Bayda. No casualties were reported. AQAP attacked al-Houthi forces in several instances in November. For instance, on November 1 and 2, AQAP ambushed al-Houthi forces in al-Bayda Governorate. On November 12, AQAP used an IED to attack an al-Houthi vehicle in al-Bayda. No casualties were reported.

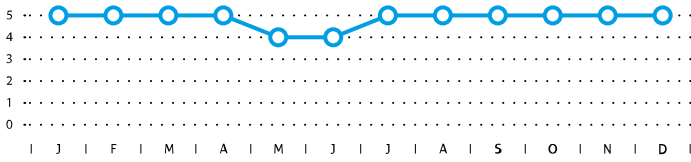
buk

YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA (AL HOUSHI 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 Ansar Allah, commonly known as the al-Houthi, supported by the Iranian government as well as affiliated popular committees, 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 as well as the Islah party, on the other, continued. At the beginning of the year, the conflict escalated in Marib Governorate as well as in formerly calm areas such as al-Bayda Governorate. However, the fighting was halted multiple times due to negotiations initiated by Oman to reach a ceasefire agreement with both conflict parties, in line with the Hudaydah Agreement of 2019 and UNMHA.

On February 15, dozens were killed in clashes between al-Houthi and the pro-Hadi Yemeni army in the western outskirts of Marib city, eponymous governorate. The Yemeni Army claimed to have killed 70 al-Houthis, while others were injured by airstrikes of the Saudi-led coalition and artillery fire of the Yemeni Army, which began on January 21. The clashes in Marib led to 8,000 displaced civilians especially from Sirwah District, which already hosted around 30,000 IDPs. On April 16, heavy fighting broke out again near Marib city. 36 Yemeni Army combatants and 60 al-Houthi militants were killed, as al-Houthis pressed their offensive on the government's last northern stronghold, the strategic Sahn al-Jan camp. From the beginning until the end of April, the Yemeni government estimated that 2,000 Houthis, including several military commanders, had been killed, while 1,800 Yemeni Army combatants, including tribesmen, were killed in the so-called Battle of Marib.

On June 15, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen Martin Griffiths stated that several rounds of shuttle diplomacy with the parties for a nationwide ceasefire initiated by Saudi Arabia had been unsuccessful. Al-Houthis demanded a stand-alone agreement on the Hudaydah ports and Sana'a airport as a precondition for a ceasefire. Clashes in Marib intensified after failed negotiations towards the end of the year. For instance, between September 7 and 8, the Saudi-led coalition conducted airstrikes while the Yemeni

Army deployed tanks and rifles, killing 60 al-Houthis. In the same clash, al-Houthi troops killed 18 pro-government troops with rifles. On November 1, the Saudi-led coalition conducted 26 operations with fighter aircrafts that killed 115 al-Houthi militants and destroyed 14 armed vehicles. On December 27, the Yemeni Army troops and tribal fighters, supported by the Saudi-led coalition warplanes, killed 100 al-Houthi militants in heavy fighting outside the city of Marib. Violence in al-Bayda Governorate escalated in July. On July 7, in a heavy attack by the Yemeni Army to reclaim al-Bayda Governorate from al-Houthi, supported by Saudi fighter jets, 320 combatants from both sides were killed.

The governorate of Hudaydah experienced continued fighting, specifically in the port area of the eponymous city, where al-Houthi militants repeatedly received shipments of food and weapons from Iran. On January 19, the Yemeni Army used rifles to kill 21 al-Houthi militants when they attempted to infiltrate army positions in the southern port city. On February 4, the Yemeni Army killed at least 10 al-Houthi militants in an ambush on Hudaydah city. In July, international carrier ships from the UK, US, and Dutch governments trained interoperability in the Gulf of Aden. On November 7, the Yemeni Army killed five al-Houthi militants in their infiltration attempt in a Yemeni Army camp in Hudaydah. Eight Yemeni soldiers were injured. On December 20, the US Navy Fifth Fleet seized 1,400 AK-47 assault rifles and 226,600 rounds of ammunition from a vessel originating from Iran to support al-Houthi militias, which represented a violation of the UN arms embargo. The US had seized similar vessels in February and May.

In the governorate of Sa'dah, clashes continued throughout the year as al-Houthi militants fired ballistic missiles towards Saudi Arabia, while Saudi Arabia thwarted most of these attacks with tanks and attacked al-Houthi positions with ballistic missiles. On January 6, the Saudi coalition killed four al-Houthi militants, as the Yemeni army thwarted their infiltration attempt northwest of Saada city. In August alone, after a failed ceasefire agreement, the Saudi coalition conducted 45 air raids in Al-Dhaher district, Kataf district, Shada district, and Baqim district in Sa'dah, killing 37 al-Houthi militants.

In the governorate of Al-Jawf continued attacks were registered, such as on August 2, when the Yemeni Army artillery targeted gatherings and locations of Houthi militias on the Khanjar front north of the city of Al-Hazm, and destroyed several armored vehicles of al-Houthi, killing those on board. Subsequently, displacement movements from Marib to Al-Jawf added to the 125,500 IDPs already living in Al-Jawf as of April. In April alone, 53 displaced families from Marib fled to Al-Jawf.

The governorates of Taiz, Sana'a, and Hajjah experienced smaller sporadic clashes throughout the year.

This year, 63,096 individuals were newly displaced, while the use of ballistic missiles enhanced the civilian death toll to 403.

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