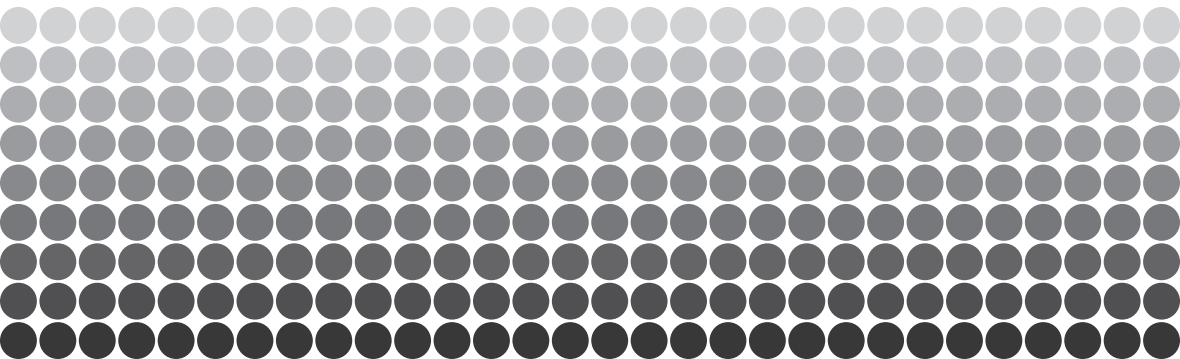


SIPRI YEARBOOK 2014

Armaments, Disarmament and International Security

Patterns of organized violence, 2003–12

LOTTA THEMNÉR AND PETER WALLENSTEEN



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III. Patterns of organized violence, 2003–12

LOTTA THEMNER AND PETER WALLENSTEEN
UPPSALA CONFLICT DATA PROGRAM

This section provides a 10-year overview of three categories of organized violence used by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP): state-based conflict, non-state conflict and one-sided violence. The number of incidents of violent action that resulted in the deaths of more than 25 people in a particular year (UCDP's threshold for counting) was slightly lower in 2012, at 97, than in 2003, when it stood at 111. While the number of state-based and non-state conflicts had increased over the decade, the number of incidences of one-sided violence declined continuously (see figure 2.1). Looking at the overall trend in the number of fatalities in organized violence, a more negative picture emerges. Largely due to developments in state-based conflict, the number of deaths from organized violence increased from almost 36 000 in 2003 to nearly 46 000 in 2012 (see figure 2.2).

Within the overall trend, each of the three types of violence has its own internal dynamics, only partially affected by the other forms. The full picture is, of course, more complex, but there is no clear indication that the three types of violence offset each other, for instance, with a decline in one type leading to an increase in the other two.

State-based conflicts

State-based conflict is defined as a contested incompatibility between two parties—at least one of which is the government of a state—that concerns government or territory or both, where the use of armed force by the parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year (see 'Sources and methods' below for more detail).¹ A state-based conflict that results in 1000 battle-related deaths in a year is classified as a 'war' in that year; other state-based conflicts are classified as 'minor state-based conflicts'.² This definition extends from low-intensity conflicts that are active for just one or a few years—such as the territorial conflict between the politico-religious movement Bundu-dia-Kongo and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), active in 2007–2008—to high intensity, protracted conflicts that go on for a long period—such as the conflict over governmental power in Afghanistan that has pitted successive governments against a range of rebel groups since 1978 and where fighting is still ongoing.

¹ This category is called 'armed conflict' in other UCDP data sets.

² Minor state-based conflict is called 'minor armed conflict' in other UCDP data sets.

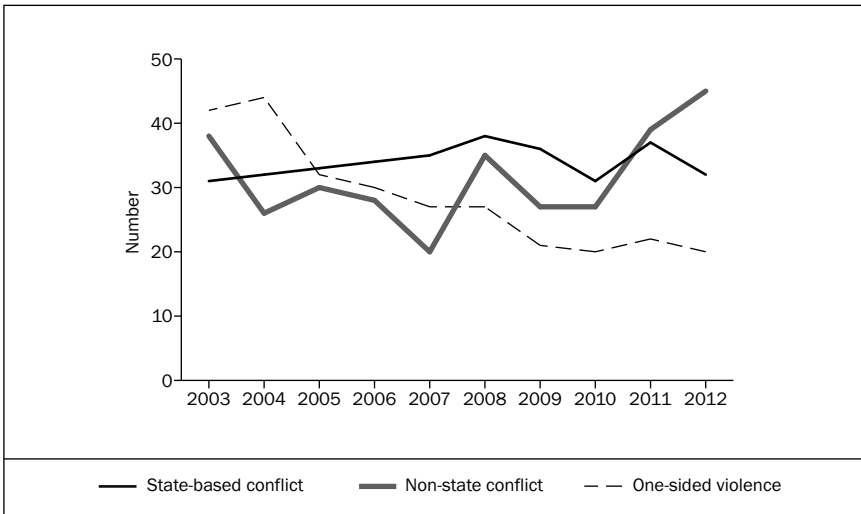


Figure 2.1. Number of state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence, 2003–12

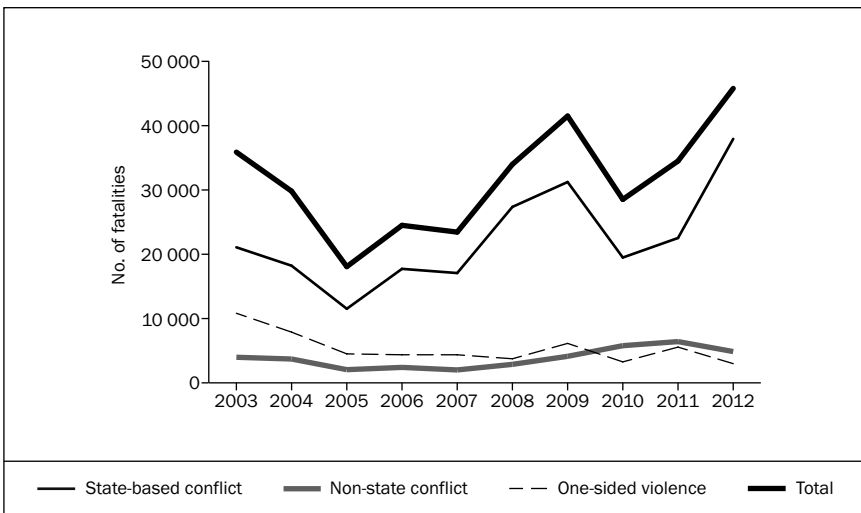


Figure 2.2. Fatalities due to state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence, 2003–12

In the 10-year period 2003–12 there were 76 active state-based conflicts, including 32 in 2012 (see table 2.7). While the number of active conflicts in the first and last year of the period was similar, the years in between saw two separate peaks, one in 2008 and one in 2011 (see table 2.8).³

³ Note that the UCDP counts fighting between different sets of actor over the same incompatibility (government power or a specific territory) in the same country as the same conflict.

Table 2.7. State-based conflicts in 2012

For more detailed definitions of the terms used see 'Sources and methods' below.

Location ^a	Parties	Incompatibility	Start year ^b	Fatalities, 2012	Change from 2011 ^c
<i>Africa</i>					
Algeria	Government of Algeria vs al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	Government	1998/ 1999	225	–
	vs Mouvement pour le Tawhîd et du Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO, Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa)	Government	2012	25	..
CAR	Government of CAR, Chad vs Séléka (Alliance)	Government	2012	44	..
DRC	Government of DRC vs Mouvement du 23 mars (M23, March 23 Movement), Rwanda, Uganda	Government	2012	660	..
Ethiopia	Government of Ethiopia vs Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)	Territory (Ogaden)	1994	25	0
Ethiopia	Government of Ethiopia vs Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)	Territory (Oromiya)	1974/ 1977	25	0
Mali	Government of Mali vs Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith)	Government	2012	60	..
	vs Military faction (Red Berets)	Government	2012	27	..
Mali	Government of Mali vs Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA, National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)	Territory (Azawad)	2012	131	..
Nigeria	Government of Nigeria vs Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad, or Boko Haram)	Government	2009	812	++
Rwanda (DRC)	Government of Rwanda, DRC vs Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR, Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda)	Government	2001	62	–
Somalia (Somalia, Kenya)	Government of Somalia, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Uganda vs al-Shabab	Government	2008	2 620	+
South Sudan	Government of South Sudan vs South Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SSLM/A)	Government	2011	137	+
South Sudan, Sudan	Government of South Sudan vs Government of Sudan	Territory (Common border)	2012	365	..
Sudan	Government of Sudan vs Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF)	Government	2011	1 119	++

Location ^a	Parties	Incompatibility	Start year ^b	Fatalities, 2012	Change from 2011 ^c
<i>Americas</i>					
Colombia	Government of Colombia vs Fuerzas armadas revolucionarias colombianas (FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)	Government	1964	211	0
USA (Afghanistan, Pakistan)	Government of USA, France vs al-Qaida	Government	2001	221	+
<i>Asia and Oceania</i>					
Afghanistan (Afghanistan, Pakistan)	Government of Afghanistan, Multinational coalition ^d vs Taliban	Government	1995	7 442	0
India	Government of India vs Communist Party of India–Maoist (CPI–Maoist)	Government	2004/ 2005	242	–
India	Government of India vs Kashmir insurgents	Territory (Kashmir)	1984/ 1989	141	0
India	Government of India vs Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA)	Territory (Garoland)	2010/ 2012	27	..
Myanmar	Government of Myanmar vs Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)	Territory (Kachin)	1961	702	++
Pakistan	Government of Pakistan vs Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Taliban Movement of Pakistan) vs TTP–Tariq Afridi faction (TTP-TA) vs Lashkar-e-Islam	Government Government Government	2007/ 2008 2012 2008/ 2009	2 328 30 347	0
Pakistan	Government of Pakistan vs Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) vs Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) vs Baloch Republican Army (BRA)	Territory (Balochistan) Territory (Balochistan) Territory (Balochistan)	2004 1973/ 1974 2007/ 2008	42 25 61	0
Philippines	Government of Philippines vs Communist Party of the Philippines	Government	1969	182	–
Philippines	Government of Philippines vs Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) vs Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM)	Territory (Mindanao) Territory (Mindanao)	1993 2012	78 36	0 ..
Thailand	Government of Thailand vs Patani insurgents	Territory (Patani)	1965/ 2003	132	0
<i>Europe</i>					
Azerbaijan (Armenia, Azerbaijan)	Government of Azerbaijan vs Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia	Territory (Nagorno-Karabakh)	1991	25	..

Location ^a	Parties	Incompatibility	Start year ^b	Fatalities, 2012	Change from 2011 ^c
Russia	Government of Russia vs Forces of the Caucasus Emirate	Territory (‘Caucasus Emirate’)	2007	516	+
<i>Middle East</i>					
Iraq	Government of Iraq vs Dawlat al-Iraq al-Islamiyya (Islamic State of Iraq, ISI)	Government	2004	565	-
Israel	Government of Israel vs Harakat al-Muqawarna al-Islamiyya (Hamas, Islamic Resistance Movement)	Territory (Palestine)	1989/ 1993	38	++
	vs Harakat al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin (Palestinian Islamic Jihad, PIJ)	Territory (Palestine)	1987/ 1995	26	-
Syria (Syria, Turkey)	Government of Syria vs Free Syrian Army (FSA)	Government	2011	14 716	++
	vs Jabhat al-Nusra li al-Sham (Support Front for the People of Syria)	Government	2012	339	..
Turkey	Government of Turkey vs Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK, Kurdistan Workers’ Party)	Territory (‘Kurdistan’)	1983/ 1984	811	+
Yemen	Government of Yemen, USA vs al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	Government	2009	2 321	++

CAR = Central African Republic; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo.

^a Location refers to the state whose government is being challenged by an opposition organization. If fighting took place elsewhere, all countries where fighting took place are listed in brackets. The location name appears once for each conflict in the location. There can only be 1 conflict over government and 1 conflict over a specific territory in a given location.

^b Start year refers to the onset of a given dyad (i.e. the fighting between a government and a rebel group or another government). When 2 years are given, the first is the year in which the first recorded battle-related death in the dyad occurred and the second is the year when fighting caused at least 25 battle-related deaths for the first time. When these occurred in the same year, only 1 year is given.

^c ‘Change from 2011’ is measured as the increase or decrease in the number of battle-related deaths in 2012 compared to the number of battle-related deaths in 2011. The symbols represent the following changes: ++ = increase in battle-related deaths of >50%; + = increase in battle-related deaths of >10 to 50%; 0 = stable rate of battle-related deaths (-10 to +10%); - = decrease in battle-related deaths of >10 to 50%; -- = decrease in battle-related deaths of >50%; .. = the conflict was not active in 2011.

^d The following countries contributed troops to the coalition in 2012: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, FYR Macedonia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tonga, Turkey, Ukraine, the UAE, the UK and the USA.

Source: UCDP Dyadic Dataset v. 1-2013, 1946–2012 and UCDP Battle-related Deaths Dataset v. 5-2013, 1989–2012, <<http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/>>.

Table 2.8. State-based conflict, by intensity, type and region, 2003–12

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total	31 ^a	32	33 ^a	34 ^a	35	38 ^a	36	31	37	32
<i>Intensity</i>										
Minor	26	25	28	29	31	33	30	27	31	26
War	5	7	5	5	4	5	6	4	6	6
<i>Type</i>										
Interstate	2	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	1	1
Intrastate	27	28	27	28	30	31	28	22	27	23
Internationalized intrastate	2	4	6	6	5	6	8	9	9	8
<i>Region</i>										
Africa	11	10	7	10	12	13	12	10	15	13
Americas	1	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2
Asia and Oceania	15	14	17	16	14	16	15	12	13	10
Europe	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
Middle East	3	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	6	5

^a Newly available information means that state-based conflicts have been added to the totals for 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2008 given in *SIPRI Yearbook 2013*: the conflict between the Government of Chad and the Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad (MDJT, Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad) in 2003, the conflict between the Government of Bangladesh and the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) and the PBCP-Janajuddha faction in 2005, the conflict between the Government of Bangladesh and PBCP-Janajuddha in 2006, and the conflict between the Government of China and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in 2008.

Focusing on the number of battle-related deaths reveals that the trend was more dramatic over the period. Starting at a little over 21 000 fatalities in 2003, the number increased to almost 38 000 in 2012.⁴ The increase was uneven, with significant drops in death tolls in 2005 and 2010. In 2009 the number passed 30 000 for the first time during the 10-year period, largely due to the dramatic escalation of the conflict in Sri Lanka. That conflict ended that year with the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan also played their part. The conflict between the Afghan Government and the Taliban escalated and a new, intense conflict erupted between the Pakistani Government and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Taliban Movement of Pakistan). The high number recorded for 2012 is by and large attributable to the intrastate war in Syria, which has escalated since it erupted in 2011, claiming between

⁴ For the full definition of battle-related deaths see below. Note that throughout the text, the numbers given are the UCDP's best estimates, if not otherwise stated. For information on low and high estimates for each conflict, see data sets for the respective category at Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 'UCDP data', <<http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/>>.

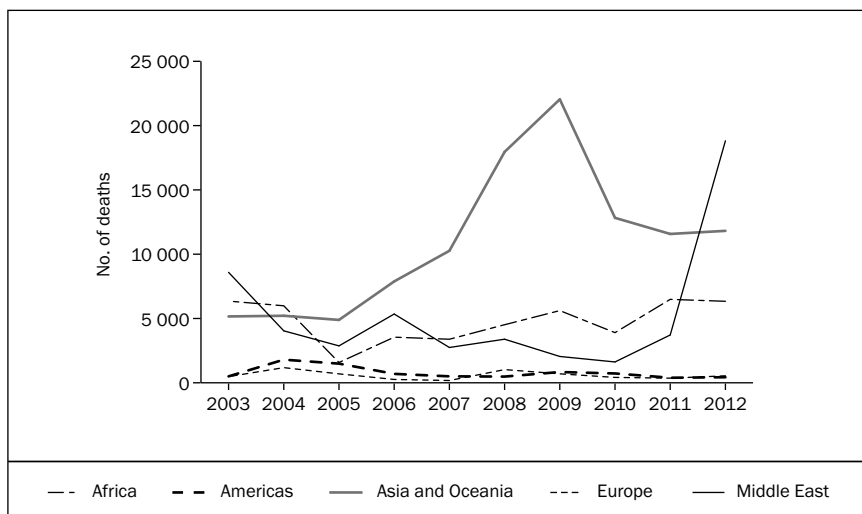


Figure 2.3. Battle-related deaths in state-based conflicts, by region, 2003–12

15 000 and 30 000 battle-related deaths in 2012 and continuing to cause massive human suffering.⁵

UDCP data distinguishes between three types of state-based conflict: interstate, intrastate and internationalized intrastate. Interstate conflicts are fought between two or more governments of states. Intrastate conflicts are fought between a government of a state and one or more rebel groups. Internationalized intrastate conflicts are intrastate conflicts in which one or both sides receive troop support from an external state. Intrastate conflicts are by far the most common; in most years they account for more than 80 per cent of all conflicts, and never less than 70 per cent. Interstate conflicts are the least common. In the 10-year period 2003–12 there were only five: between India and Pakistan (2003), Iraq and the United States with its allies (2003), Djibouti and Eritrea (2008), Cambodia and Thailand (2011), and Sudan and South Sudan (2012). Although rare, interstate conflicts should not be discounted. Given the vast resources that can be mobilized by governments compared to rebel groups, conflicts between states may rapidly escalate to a highly deadly level.⁶

Internationalized intrastate conflicts have become increasingly common. Since 2010 the proportion of conflicts with external troop involvement has

⁵ The discrepancy between the best (over 15 000) and the highest (almost 31 000) estimates stems from the fact that several non-governmental organizations report from Syria, providing summary reports that are difficult to disaggregate. Based on context, these deaths have been coded in the state-based category, but only as high estimates. They include a large number of civilians killed by indiscriminate shelling and crossfire.

⁶ See e.g. Lacina, B. and Gleditsch, N. P., 'Monitoring trends in global combat: a new dataset of battle deaths', *European Journal of Population*, vol. 21 (2005), pp. 145–66.

not dropped below 24 per cent, which is a very high figure, also seen over a longer time period.⁷ Since external involvement tends to prolong conflicts, it may not bode well for future peacemaking efforts that a quarter or more of all conflicts are internationalized in this way.⁸

The internationalized intrastate conflicts active during 2003–12 can be divided into two broad groups: (a) conflicts linked to the USA's 'global war on terrorism', such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the USA's conflict with al-Qaeda; and (b) cases of government intervention in internal conflicts in neighbouring countries, such as the conflict between Somalia and al-Shabab, where in 2012 the government was supported by troops from Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Uganda under the banner of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Of the 76 state-based conflicts active in 2003–12, 29 (or 38 per cent) were fought in Africa, 30 (39 per cent) in Asia and Oceania, 9 in the Middle East (12 per cent), 4 in Europe (5 per cent) and 4 in the Americas (5 per cent).

Asia and Oceania was the region with the highest number of active state-based conflicts for the first eight years of the period, with the number fluctuating between 14 and 17 without any dramatic changes. However, from 2010 the number started to decrease and 10 conflicts were active in 2012. This is the lowest number for this 10-year period, and a decline of over 40 per cent since the peak year, 2005. Among other explanations, this was due to a drop in the number of active conflicts in north-eastern India and in Myanmar. Both these countries have been the scene of many state-based conflicts, particularly over territorial issues, with separatist groups fighting for independence or increased autonomy. Over the past few years many of the conflicts in north-eastern India have been terminated, as the government has engaged the rebel groups in negotiation processes. While these have yet to result in resolution of any of the core conflict issues, they have led to ceasefire accords and a reduction in conflict.⁹ The same is true of conflicts in neighbouring Myanmar.

At the same time as the number of conflicts decreased in Asia and Oceania, the number of battle-related deaths increased by more than 6600, from almost 5200 in 2003 to over 11 800 in 2012, with a peak of over 22 000 in 2009 (see figure 2.3). Thus, the Asian conflicts turned markedly more deadly during the period. As indicated above, this was mainly driven by developments in a few conflicts, especially those in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and should not be viewed as a general pattern.

⁷ On the longer time period see Themnér, L. and Wallensteen, P., 'Armed conflicts, 1946–2010', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 48, no. 4 (2011), pp. 525–36.

⁸ See e.g. Cunningham, D. E., 'Blocking resolution: how external states can prolong civil wars', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 47, no. 2 (Mar. 2010), pp. 115–27.

⁹ See the entries for Assam, Bodoland and Nagaland in the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, <<http://www.ucdp.uu.se/database>>.

In Africa, there was a slight overall increase in the number of state-based conflicts, from 11 active conflicts in 2003 to 13 in 2012. After an initial drop to 7, the number started to climb in 2005, increasing dramatically from 10 in 2010 to 15 in 2011—the year when Africa passed Asia and Oceania. Despite a slight decrease to 13 in 2012, Africa remained the region with the highest number of state-based conflicts at the end of the period.

In terms of battle-related deaths in conflicts in Africa, similar numbers were recorded at the start and end of the period: a little over 6300. Between 2003 and 2005 the number of fatalities dropped dramatically, to under 1600. This was by and large due to the de-escalation of the conflict between the Ugandan Government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and a lull in the conflict in Sudan. Between 2006 and 2011 the number of battle-related deaths increased, albeit unevenly, followed by a slight drop in 2012. Thus, conflicts in Africa were less deadly than those in Asia and Oceania. However, given the fragility of many African states, the societal consequences might be greater.

Both the Americas and Europe experienced no major oscillations in the number of conflicts from one year to the next over the period 2003–12. In terms of battle-related deaths, a small increase occurred in Europe, with peaks in 2004 and 2008; the first was due to intense fighting in the conflict in Chechnya and the second to the internationalized intrastate conflict in Georgia, where Russia contributed troops to the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia. In the Americas, the number of battle-related deaths increased significantly between 2003 and 2004, with the number rising from 500 to almost 1800, largely attributed to the escalation of the conflict in Colombia. The number then fell unevenly, and in 2012 a little over 400 battle-related deaths were recorded.

In contrast, both the number of armed conflicts and battle-related deaths increased in the Middle East, the latter more dramatically than the former. While the number of conflicts rose from three in 2003 to six in 2011, the number of battle-related deaths fell—albeit unevenly—until 2010, after which a significant increase was recorded: from a little over 1600 battle-related deaths in 2010 to almost 19 000 in 2012. This mirrors the dramatic developments in the region.¹⁰ In addition to the eruption and escalation of the war in Syria, the principal reason for the increase, the conflict between the Government of Yemen and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) also deteriorated, with fatalities increasing from fewer than 100 in 2009 to more than 2300 in 2012.

¹⁰ See e.g. Allansson, M. et al., 'The first year of the Arab Spring', *SIPRI Yearbook 2012*; and Allansson, M., Sollenberg, M. and Themnér, L., 'Armed conflict in the wake of the Arab Spring', *SIPRI Yearbook 2013*.

Non-state conflicts

A non-state conflict is defined as the use of armed force between two organized groups—neither of which is the government of a state—that results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year. Non-state conflicts are divided into three subcategories according to the groups' level of organization: (a) conflicts between formally organized actors, such as rebel groups; (b) conflicts between informally organized supporters and affiliates of political parties and candidates ('informally organized supporter groups'); and (c) conflicts between informally organized groups that share a common identification along ethnic, clan, religious, national or tribal lines ('informally organized ethnic or religious groups').¹¹ Thus, non-state conflict relates to a broad spectrum of violence that tends to greatly affect ordinary people but often has fewer implications for international relations than state-based conflict. For example, the category includes conflicts between highly organized groups, such as the numerous Mexican drug cartels fighting one another, as well as conflicts between ethnic communities in the Horn of Africa, such as that between the Degodia and Garre in north-eastern Kenya.¹²

A total of 231 non-state conflicts were active around the world during the 10-year period 2003–12, including 45 that were active in 2012 (see table 2.9). The number of active non-state conflicts increased over the decade and the level of conflict in 2012 was higher than in any other year in the period, but the rise was far from even (see table 2.10).

The increase in the number of conflicts was accompanied by an expected increase in the number of fatalities. The 38 conflicts fought in 2003 caused almost 4000 fatalities, while the 45 conflicts in 2012 accounted for almost 4900 fatalities. The average number of people killed by each non-state conflict in these two years is thus comparable, 105 in 2003 and 108 in 2012; subsequently, non-state conflicts generally did not become more deadly (see figure 2.4). However, over the 10-year period, trends in the number of conflicts and the number of fatalities often diverged. This is clearly illustrated by, for example, the change from 2011 to 2012, when the number of conflicts increased by six, while the number of fatalities decreased by

¹¹ There is a potential overlap between the latter 2 types of non-state conflict. E.g. in many countries supporters of different political parties are almost by definition members of a specific ethnic group. During election years these groups are mobilized under a political banner, whereas they are mobilized as an ethnic group in conflicts occurring in other years. To be able to get a good overview and to follow a conflict even though it is reported in different ways in different years, the UCDP has a coding rule that if there is a conflict between 2 ethnic groups in 1 year, and these ethnic groups are then involved in fighting mobilized along political lines (i.e. as supporters of a party) in another year, all conflict years are coded as part of the same ethnic conflict.

¹² See e.g. Baumann, J. et al., 'Organized violence in the Horn of Africa', *SIPRI Yearbook 2012*.

Table 2.9. Non-state conflicts in 2012

For more detailed definitions of the terms used see 'Sources and methods' below.

Location ^a	Side A	Side B	Organ- ization level ^b	Start year ^c	Fatalities, 2012	Change from 2011 ^d
<i>Africa</i>						
DRC	APCLS	M23	1	2012	30	..
DRC	FDC	FDLR	1	2011	35	+
DRC	FDLR	Raia Mutomboki (Angry villagers)	1	2012	339	..
Kenya	Borana	Gabra	3	2005	27	..
Kenya	Degodia	Garre	3	2000	30	..
Kenya	Orma	Pokomo	3	2012	160	..
Libya	Gontrar, Zintan	Mashashia	3	2012	78	..
Mali	AQIM, Boko Haram ^e , MUJAO	MNLA	1	2012	26	..
Mali	Dogon	Fulani	3	2012	30	..
Mali	MNLA	MUJAO, Signed-in- Blood Battalion	1	2012	25	..
Nigeria	Alago	Eggon	3	2012	60	..
Nigeria	Birum	Fulani	3	2010	63	-
Nigeria	Christians (Nigeria)	Muslims (Nigeria)	3	1991	123	--
Nigeria	Fulani	Tiv	3	2011	102	-
Nigeria	Greenlanders	NDV	1	2012	48	..
Somalia	Duduble subclan of Gorgorte clan (Hawiye)	Suleiman subclan of Habar Gidir clan (Hawiye)	3	2004	38	..
Somalia	Khatumo administration	Republic of Somaliland	1	2012	158	..
Somalia	Mujahideen in the Golis Mountains ^f	Puntland state of Somalia	1	2010	79	++
South Sudan	Balanda	Dinka	3	2012	28	..
South Sudan	Bul Nuer	Luac Jang Dinka	3	2012	87	..
South Sudan	Gok Dinka	Rek Dinka	3	2010	81	..
Sudan	Bor Dinka	Murle	3	2007	118	++
Sudan	Lou Nuer	Murle	3	2006	424	--
Sudan	Misseria	Rizeigat Abbala	3	2008	58	..
<i>Americas</i>						
Mexico	Gulf Cartel	Los Zetas	1	2010	555	++
Mexico	Jalisco Cartel New Generation (Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación)	Los Caballeros Templarios (Knights Templar)	1	2012	68	..
Mexico	Jalisco Cartel New Generation	Los Zetas	1	2011	30	--
Mexico	Juarez Cartel	Sinaloa Cartel	1	2008	547	--
Mexico	La Familia (The Family)	Los Caballeros Templarios	1	2011	25	--
Mexico	Los Zetas	Sinaloa Cartel	1	2010	335	++
Mexico	Los Zetas-Trevino faction	Los Zetas-Velazquez Caballero faction	1	2012	77	..
<i>Asia and Oceania</i>						
India	Bangladeshi migrants	Bodo	3	2012	72	..
India	NSCN-K	NSCN-K-K	1	2012	54	..
Myanmar	Buddhists (Myanmar)	Muslims (Myanmar)	3	2012	114	..
Pakistan	Ansaar ul-Islam (Supporters of Islam)	Lashkar-e-Islam (Army of Islam)	1	2007	25	..

Location ^a	Side A	Side B	Organ- ization level ^b	Start year ^c	Fatalities, 2012	Change from 2011 ^d
Pakistan	Lashkar-e-Islam	Lashkar (Army) of Akakhel tribe	1	2012	33	..
Pakistan	Lashkar-e-Islam	Lashkar of Zakakhel tribe	1	2011	98	-
Pakistan	Lashkar-e-Islam	Tawheed ul-Islam	1	2012	39	..
Pakistan	Lashkar-e-Islam	TTP	1	2010	44	..
Pakistan	Shia (Pakistan)	Sunni (Pakistan)	3	2012	260	..
Papua New Guinea	Akul	Kambrip	3	2012	57	..
<i>Middle East</i>						
Egypt	Supporters of al-Ahly football team	Supporters of al-Masry football team	2	2012	74	..
Lebanon	Alawites (Lebanon)	Sunni (Lebanon)	3	2012	52	..
Syria	Ghuraba al-Sham (Strangers of Greater Syria), Jabhat al-Nusra li al-Sham (Support Front for the People of Syria)	PYD	1	2012	29	..
Syria	FSA, Jabhat al-Nusra li al-Sham	PYD	1	2012	30	..

APCLS = Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo); AQIM = al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb; CAR = Central African Republic; CPJP = Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace); DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo; FDC = Forces de défense congolaise (Congolese Defence Force); FDLR = Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda); FSA = Free Syrian Army; M23 = Mouvement du 23 mars (M23, March 23 Movement); MNLA = Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad); MUJAO = Mouvement pour le Tawhîd et du Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa); NDV = Niger Delta Vigilantes; NSCN-K = National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Khaplang faction; NSCN-K-K = NSCN–Khole-Kitovi; PYD = Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat (Democratic Union Party); TTP = Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement of Pakistan); UFDR = Union des Forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (Union of Democratic Forces for Unity).

^a Location refers to the geographical location of the fighting.

^b Organization level: 1 = formally organized groups; 2 = informally organized supporter groups; and 3 = informally organized ethnic or religious groups. See 'Sources and methods' for full details.

^c Start year is the first year (since 1988) when conflict caused 25 fatalities.

^d 'Change from 2011' is measured as the increase or decrease in the number of battle-related deaths in 2012 compared to the number of battle-related deaths in 2011. The symbols represent the following changes: ++ = increase in battle-related deaths of >50%; + = increase in battle-related deaths of >10 to 50%; 0 = stable rate of battle-related deaths (-10 to +10%); - = decrease in battle-related deaths of >10 to 50%; -- = decrease in battle-related deaths of >50%; .. = the conflict was not active in 2011.

^e Boko Haram is also known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad).

^f Mujahideen in the Golis Mountains was previously called the Forces of Shayk Muhammad Said Atom.

Source: UCDP Non-state Conflict Dataset, v. 2.5-2013, 1989–2012, <<http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/>>.

Table 2.10. Non-state conflict, by subcategory and region, 2003–12

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total	38 ^a	26	30 ^a	28 ^a	20 ^a	35	27 ^a	27	39 ^a	45
<i>Subcategory</i>										
Formally organized groups	15	13	12	7	11	13	9	16	19	22
Informally organized supporter groups	3	1	–	1	–	2	1	–	2	1
Informally organized ethnic or religious groups	20	12	18	20	9	20	17	11	18	22
<i>Region</i>										
Africa	33	20	23	22	12	23	18	13	23	24
Americas	2	3	3	–	–	3	3	7	7	7
Asia and Oceania	2	2	4	5	5	8	6	6	7	10
Europe	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Middle East	1	1	–	1	3	1	–	1	2	4

^a Newly available information means that non-state conflicts have been added or removed to the totals for 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2011 given in *SIPRI Yearbook 2013*: the conflict between Itsekiri and Urhobo in Nigeria in 2003 has been removed; the conflicts between Forces of Agala and Forces of Edu in 2005, between Deebam and Deewell in 2006, between Black Axe, Bush Boys, Deebam, KK and NDV on the one side and Outlaws on the other in 2007, and between NURTW-Auxiliary and NURTW-Tokyo in 2011, all in Nigeria, and the conflict between Dimasa and Zeme Naga in India in 2009 have been added.

1550 (or 24 per cent). This substantial reduction was mainly due to the distinct de-escalation of three conflicts: those between the Juarez Cartel and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico; between the Lou Nuer and Murle ethnic groups in South Sudan; and between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. While all three conflicts remained active and relatively bloody in comparison to other non-state conflicts, they did not cause the large-scale bloodletting that took place in 2011. The uneven development in both the number and magnitude of non-state conflicts from one year to the next is characteristic of this type of organized violence: non-state conflicts rarely last for more than one year and, if they do, they typically do not remain at the same level of violence. The few non-state conflicts that escalate to particularly deadly levels, such as those registered for 2011, rarely remain at that level, as the actors seem unable to sustain conflict behaviour at this level in the long run.

The most common type of non-state conflict in 2003–12 was conflict between ethnic or religious communities: 126 of the conflicts (55 per cent) were fought between such groups. Ninety-seven of the conflicts (42 per cent) were between formally organized groups, such as rebel organizations

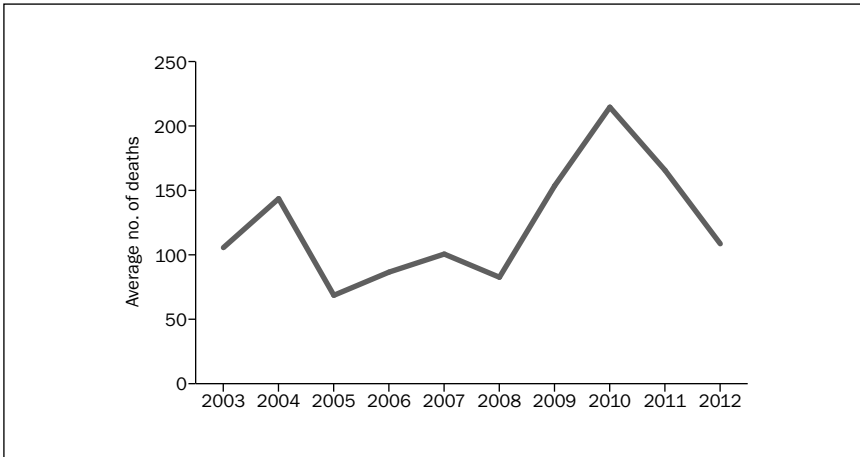


Figure 2.4. Average number of fatalities in non-state conflicts, 2003–12

or militias. Conflicts between supporters and affiliates of political parties and candidates were uncommon: only 8 (3 per cent) were recorded in the entire period, and this was the least common of the three subcategories in all years of the period.

The vast majority of non-state conflicts in 2003–12 were located in Africa (see table 2.10), and most of these were clustered in a few countries. Of the 160 non-state conflicts in Africa, 132 (almost 83 per cent) were located in six countries: the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan.

There are clear differences in the types of non-state conflict fought in each region. Africa was the only region where a majority of the non-state conflicts involved ethnic or religious communities (see figure 2.5). In all other regions, a majority of the conflicts were between formally organized groups. The most extreme example of this was the Americas, with 94 per cent of all non-state conflicts taking place between formally organized actors. The vast majority of these were drug cartels (primarily in Mexico), but criminal gangs, rebel groups and militias were also represented.

While the majority of the deaths in non-state conflicts occurred in Africa, the average of 146 deaths per conflict was well below the corresponding figure for the Americas: 554. This can be explained in part by the fact that most non-state conflicts in Africa involve informally organized groups, such as ethnic or religious communities, which cannot mobilize resources as effectively as formally organized rebel groups or militias, while the Americas has the highest proportion of non-state conflicts between formally organized groups. In 2012 all non-state conflicts in the Americas were located in Mexico and were fought between drug cartels (see table 2.9). Many of these conflicts are still continuing.

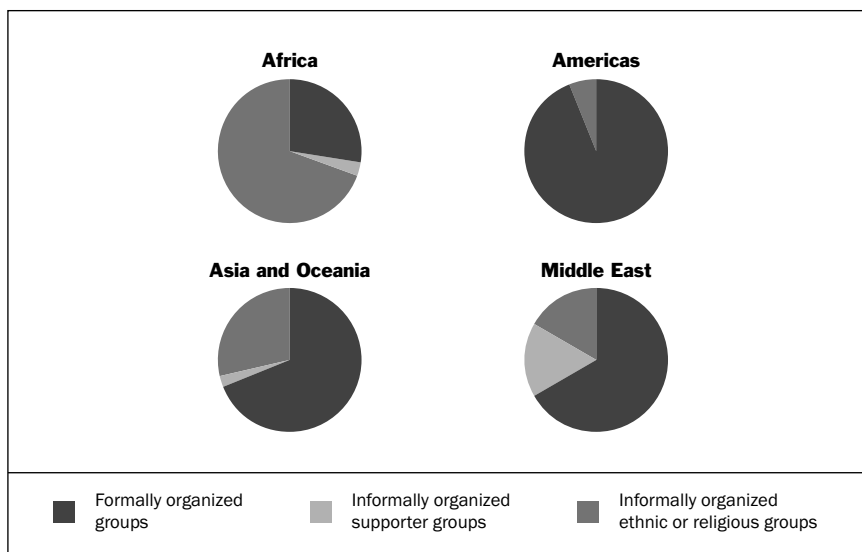


Figure 2.5. Subcategories of non-state conflict, by region, 2003–12

One-sided violence

One-sided violence is defined as the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against unorganized civilians. A state or group that kills 25 or more unarmed civilians during a year is registered as carrying out one-sided violence in the UCDP data. This includes a wide variety of situations, ranging from largely small-scale, day-to-day attacks, such as those carried out in 2012 by the Pakistani armed group Lashkar-e-Islam (Army of Islam), to large-scale cases such as the attacks on civilians by Iraqi Dawlat al-'Iraq al-Islamiyya (Islamic State of Iraq, ISI) that continued in 2012.

In 2003–12, 128 actors were recorded as carrying out one-sided violence including 20 active in 2012 (see table 2.11). The annual number has declined markedly, starting at 42 in 2003 (see table 2.12). At 20, the number of actors carrying out one-sided violence was at its lowest in 2010 and 2012—this is true for both the decade 2003–12 studied here and for the full time period for which the UCDP has data (1989–2012).

This decline was matched by a drop in the number of fatalities in one-sided violence (see figure 2.6). Between 2003 and 2008 the number of deaths decreased every year. It fell by 43 per cent between 2004 and 2005, due in part to a decline in one-sided violence by the Sudanese Government and the Janjaweed militia in Darfur. The last four years of the period saw widely oscillating figures: an increase by 64 per cent in 2009—as both the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR, Democratic Liber-

Table 2.11. One sided-violence in 2012

For more detailed definitions of the terms used see 'Sources and methods' below.

Location ^a	Actor	Start year ^b	Fatalities, 2012	Change from 2011 ^c
<i>Africa</i>				
CAR, DRC, South Sudan	Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)	1989	65	--
DRC	Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR, Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda)	2004	187	..
DRC	Government of DRC	1989	111	..
DRC	Mayi Mayi Lumumba	2012	30	..
DRC	Raia Mutomboki	2012	43	..
Kenya, Somalia	Al-Shabab	2008	112	++
Nigeria	Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad, or Boko Haram)	2010	459	++
Somalia	Government of Somalia	1989	27	-
South Sudan	Government of South Sudan	2012	37	..
South Sudan, Sudan	Government of Sudan	1989	53	--
<i>Asia and Oceania</i>				
Afghanistan	Taliban	2004	83	+
India	Communist Party of India–Maoist (CPI–Maoist)	2005	108	-
India	People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI)	2012	105	..
Myanmar	Government of Myanmar	1992	109	0
Pakistan	Lashkar-e-Islam (Army of Islam)	2012	32	..
Pakistan	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Taleban Movement of Pakistan)	2007	166	-
Pakistan	TTP-Islahi	2012	41	..
Thailand	Patani insurgents	2004	111	0
<i>Middle East</i>				
Iraq	Dawlat al-'Iraq al-Islamiyya (Islamic State of Iraq, ISI)	2004	769	++
Syria	Government of Syria	2011	337	--

^a Location refers to the geographical location of the one-sided violence.^b Start year is the first year (since 1988) when one-sided violence caused 25 fatalities.^c 'Change from 2011' is measured as the increase or decrease in the number of fatalities in 2012 compared to the number of fatalities in 2011. The symbols represent the following changes: ++ = increase in fatalities of >50%; + = increase in fatalities of >10 to 50%; 0 = stable rate of fatalities (-10 to +10%); - = decrease in fatalities of >10 to 50%; -- = decrease in fatalities of >50%; .. = the conflict was not active in 2011.Source: UCDP One-sided Violence Dataset, v. 1.4-2013, 1989–2012, <<http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/>>.

ation Forces of Rwanda) and the LRA stepped up their campaigns against civilians in Central Africa—was followed by a 47 per cent drop the following year, as the activities of these two actors de-escalated markedly. In 2011 the number of fatalities increased dramatically again, this time by as much as 70 per cent to reach almost 5600. This was largely driven by the actions

Table 2.12. One-sided violence, by actor and region, 2003–12

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total	42 ^a	44 ^a	32	30	27	27	21 ^a	20 ^a	22 ^a	20
<i>Actor</i>										
Non-state actor	31	34	22	19	18	20	17	19	13	14
State actor	11	10	10	11	9	7	4	1	9	6
<i>Region</i>										
Africa	24	18	12	10	15	14	8	7	10	10
Americas	1	3	4	1	–	2	1	2	1	–
Asia and Oceania	12	14	8	14	9	10	9	9	6	8
Europe	1	3	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–
Middle East	4	6	8	5	3	1	3	1	4	2

^a Newly available information means that actors responsible for one-sided have been added or removed to the totals for 2003, 2004, 2009, 2010, and 2011 given in *SIPRI Yearbook 2013*: the Government of Viet Nam has been removed as an actor in 2011; the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC) in Nigeria has been added for 2003, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB, Awakened Muslim Masses of Bangladesh) has been added for 2004, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in India have been added for 2009, and the People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA) in India has been added for 2010.

of the Syrian Government, which caused almost 3000 fatalities in 2011, and was the only increase of this magnitude in the period 2003–12. The total number of deaths dropped again in 2012, to a little less than 3000, but the latter figure is uncertain.¹³

As with non-state conflicts, the trend in the number of fatalities from one-sided violence can differ from the trend in the number of actors. For example, as the number of actors carrying out one-sided violence decreased from 27 to 21 between 2008 and 2009, the number of fatalities increased from approximately 3800 to over 6100. This type of discrepancy is most often due to a change in the behaviour of single actors. The increase in fatalities in 2009 was to a large extent due to the escalation of attacks by the FDLR and the LRA in Central Africa.

Non-state groups are the most common perpetrators of one-sided violence. In all years of the period 2003–12 more non-state actors were recorded than state actors (see table 2.12), and over the period as a whole 94 of the 128 actors carrying out one-sided violence (73 per cent) were rebel groups or militias. It is interesting to note, however, that in 2011 this pattern was at its weakest, with only four more non-state than state actors

¹³ The decline in 2012 is due to problems in the coding of one-sided violence in Syria. Information available at the time of writing is too imprecise to allow the coding of this type of violence with certitude. Gathering and coding information for Syria is extremely time-consuming and some of the sources that are expected to generate better data have not yet been consulted. Updated figures will be available on the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia (note 9).

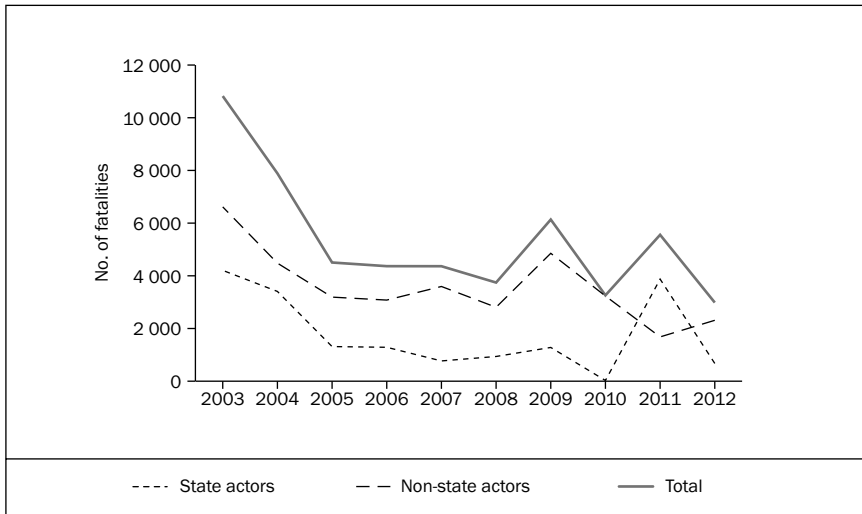


Figure 2.6. Fatalities in one-sided violence, by type of actor, 2003–12

registered. This at least partly mirrored the developments in North Africa and the Middle East, where governments targeted peaceful demonstrators during the Arab Spring.¹⁴ In 2012 the gap widened once again.

Although individual government actors can be particularly lethal, taken together, non-state actors killed more civilians in all years of the period apart from 2011 (see figure 2.6). Nonetheless, of the eight actors that killed over 1000 civilians in a single calendar year during the decade, three were governments: the Liberian Government in 2003, the Sudanese Government in 2003–2004 and the Syrian Government in 2011. The non-state actor that carried out the most deadly one-sided violence during the period was the Iraqi rebel group ISI, which caused almost 2000 civilian deaths in 2007.¹⁵

Nearly half of the 128 actors targeting civilians in 2003–12 were in Africa (61), followed by Asia and Oceania (39), the Middle East (17), the Americas (7) and Europe (4). Over the decade, Africa saw the highest number of actors carrying out one-sided violence in all but three years, when Asia and Oceania had more (see table 2.12).

Africa was also the region with the highest number of fatalities across the decade and in all but four of the individual years: 2006, 2007, 2010 and 2011. In 2006 and 2010 the highest level of one-sided violence was in Asia and Oceania, in 2006 mainly due to a marked increase in actors carrying out one-sided violence, and in 2010 due to a dramatic decrease in fatalities

¹⁴ See e.g. Allansson et al. (note 10).

¹⁵ The remaining 4 non-state actors that caused over 1000 fatalities in a calendar year were the Ugandan LRA, the Rwandan FDLR, the Congolese Lendu militia Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI, Nationalist and Integrationist Front) and the Sudanese pro-government militia Janjaweed.

in Africa. In 2007 and 2011 the highest number of fatalities was recorded in the Middle East, mainly due to attacks by ISI (in 2007) and the Syrian Government's targeting of unarmed civilians during the popular uprising that began in February 2011 and that escalated as the year passed.

Conclusions

Developments in organized violence over the 10-year period 2003–12 displayed both positive and negative trends. Most worrying was the increase in the number of fatalities, which was largely due to developments in state-based conflicts. Since the number of fatalities in the two other categories was so much lower, they did not have a significant impact on the overall trend.

Looking below the global level, two things are evident. First, developments in Africa and Asia were the drivers behind nearly all trends in organized violence. Throughout the period, these two regions were the most violent, both in terms of number of conflicts or actors carrying out one-sided violence and in terms of fatalities. However—and this is the second point—in 2011 and even more clearly in 2012, events in the Middle East shaped the increase in fatalities. By and large, the conflict in Syria was the reason behind this; not since the 1999–2000 interstate conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia has a conflict of this magnitude been recorded by UCDP. The rise in the number of fatalities in the Middle East was even further reinforced by the escalation of the conflict between the Yemeni Government and AQAP.

Sources and methods

Definition of state-based conflict

The UCDP defines state-based conflict as a contested incompatibility concerning government or territory over which the use of armed force between the military forces of two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, has resulted in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year. The separate elements are defined as follows.

1. *Incompatibility that concerns government or territory.* This refers to the stated generally incompatible positions of the parties to the conflict. An *incompatibility that concerns government* refers to incompatible positions regarding the state's type of political system or the composition of the government. It may also involve an aim to replace the current government. An *incompatibility that concerns territory* refers to incompatible positions regarding the status of a territory and may involve demands for secession or autonomy (intrastate conflict) or aims to change the state in control of a certain territory (interstate conflict).

2. *Use of armed force.* This refers to the use of armed force by the military forces of the parties to the conflict in order to promote the parties' general position in the conflict. Arms are defined as any material means of combat, including anything from manufactured weapons to sticks, stones, fire or water.

3. *Party.* This refers to the government of a state, any of its allies, an opposition organization or an alliance of opposition organizations. The *government of a state* is the party that is generally regarded as being in central control, even by those organizations seeking to seize power. If this criterion is not applicable, the party controlling the capital of the state is regarded as the government. An *opposition organization* is any non-governmental group that has announced a name for itself as well as its political goals and that has used armed force to achieve them. A state or a multinational organization that supports one of the primary parties with regular troops may also be included in the table. In order to be listed in the table, this secondary party must share the position of one of the warring parties. A traditional peacekeeping operation is not considered to be a party to the conflict but is rather seen as an impartial part of a consensual peace process.

4. *State.* A state is an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specific territory or an internationally non-recognized government controlling a specific territory whose sovereignty is not disputed by an internationally recognized sovereign state that previously controlled the territory in question.

5. *Battle-related deaths.* This refers to deaths directly related to combat between the warring parties and can include both deaths on the battlefield and civilians caught in crossfire. The UCDP defines a state-based conflict that has incurred at least 25 battle-related deaths during a calendar year as a minor state-based conflict and any with at least 1000 battle-related deaths during a calendar year as a war in that year.

Definition of non-state conflict

The UCDP defines non-state conflict as the use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state, which results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year. The separate elements are defined as follows.

1. *Organized groups.* There are three levels of organization. *Formally organized groups* (*organizational level 1*) are rebel and other organized groups whose level of organization is high enough to include them in the state-based conflict category. These include rebel groups with an announced name, as well as military factions. *Informally organized supporter groups* (*organizational level 2*) are groups composed of supporters and affiliates of political parties and candidates. These are commonly not groups that are permanently organized for combat, but which at times use their organizational structures for such purposes. *Informally organized ethnic or religious groups* (*organizational level 3*) are groups that share a common identification

along ethnic, clan, religious, national or tribal lines. These are not groups that are permanently organized for combat, but which at times organize themselves to engage in fighting.

2. *Battle-related deaths.* The definition of battle-related death varies according to the level of organization of the fighting groups. For formally organized groups (organizational level 1) the recording of battle-related deaths follows the same criteria as for state-based conflict, that is, the warring groups must target representatives of the other formally organized group. Targeting of civilians, even if those civilians are of, for example, the same ethnicity as a group's rivals, is coded as one-sided violence. For informally organized groups (organizational levels 2 and 3), the definition of battle-related death is extended to include both civilian and armed victims as long as there is a pattern of violent (lethal) interaction between the groups, with both parties carrying out attacks.

Definition of one-sided violence

The UCDP defines one-sided violence as the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians, which results in at least 25 deaths in a calendar year. Extrajudicial killings in custody are excluded. The separate elements are defined as follows.

1. *Use of armed force.* This is the use of arms in order to exert violent force, resulting in death. Arms are defined as any material means of combat, including anything from manufactured weapons to sticks, stones, fire or water.

2. *Government.* See above.

3. *State.* See above.

4. *Formally organized group.* This can be any non-governmental group of people that has announced a name for the group and that uses armed force. This corresponds to 'opposition organization' as defined for the state-based conflict category and to 'formally organized group' as defined for the non-state conflict category.

5. *Extrajudicial killings in custody.* This is the killing by the government of a state of a person in its custody. In custody is defined as when a person is located in a prison or another type of government facility.

Sources

The data presented here is based on information taken from a wide selection of publicly available sources, both printed and electronic. The sources include news agencies, newspapers, academic journals, research reports, and documents from international and multinational organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In order to collect information on the aims and goals of the parties to the conflict, documents of the warring parties (governments, allies and opposition organizations) and, for example, the Internet sites of rebel groups are often consulted.

Independent news sources, carefully selected over a number of years, constitute the basis of the data collection. The Factiva news database is indispensable for the collection of general news reports. It contains more than 25 000 sources in 22 languages from 159 countries and provides sources from all three crucial levels of the news media: international (e.g. Agence France-Presse and Reuters), regional and local.

The UCDP regularly scrutinizes and revises the selection and combination of sources in order to maintain a high level of reliability and comparability between regions and countries. One important priority is to arrive at a balanced combination of sources of different origin with a view to avoiding bias. The reliability of the sources is judged using the expertise of the UCDP together with advice from a global network of experts (academics and policymakers). Both the independence of the source and the transparency of its origins are crucial. The latter is important because most sources are secondary, which means that the primary source also needs to be analysed in order to establish the reliability of a report. Each source is judged in relation to the context in which it is published. The potential interest of either the primary or

secondary source in misrepresenting an event is taken into account, as are the general climate and extent of media censorship. Reports from NGOs and international organizations are particularly useful in this context, complementing media reporting and facilitating cross-checking. The criterion that a source should be independent does not, of course, apply to sources that are consulted precisely because they *are* biased, such as government documents or rebel groups' Internet sites. The UCDP is aware of the high level of scrutiny required and makes great efforts to ensure the authenticity of the material used.

Methods

The data on organized violence is compiled by calendar year. It includes data on conflict locations, type of incompatibility, onset of the conflict, warring parties, total number of battle-related deaths, number of battle-related deaths in a given year and change in battle-related deaths from the previous year. See also the notes for tables 2.7, 2.9 and 2.11.

The data on fatalities are given the most attention in coding for the UCDP database. Information on, for example, the date, news source, primary source, location and death toll is recorded for every event. Ideally, these individual events and figures are corroborated by two or more independent sources. The figures are then aggregated for the entire year of each conflict. The aggregated figures are compared to total figures given in official documents, in special reports and in the news media. Regional experts such as researchers, diplomats and journalists are often consulted during the data collection. Their role is mainly to clarify the contexts in which the events occur, thus facilitating proper interpretation of the published sources.

The UCDP codes three different fatality estimates—low, best and high—based on the reliability of reports and the conflicting number of deaths that can be reported for any violent event. All of the data presented here are based on the best estimate, which consists of the aggregated most reliable numbers for all incidents of each category of violence during a year. If different sources provide different estimates, an examination is made as to what source is the most reliable. If no such distinction can be made, the UCDP as a rule includes the lower figure in the best estimate. The UCDP is generally conservative when estimating the number of fatalities. As more in-depth information on a case of organized violence becomes available, the conservative, event-based estimates often prove more correct than others widely cited in the news media. If no figures are available or if the numbers given are unreliable, the UCDP does not provide a figure. Figures are revised retroactively each year as new information becomes available.