I. Patterns of organized violence, 2007–16

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This section provides an overview of the past 10 years of active armed conflicts with a focus on 2016.[1] In this section, armed conflict is defined as a contested incompatibility between two parties, at least one of which is the government of a state, that concerns government, territory or both, and where the use of armed force by the parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year. An armed conflict that results in 1000 battle-related deaths in a year is classified as a 'war' in that year; other armed conflicts are classified as 'minor armed conflicts'. This definition extends from low-intensity conflicts that are active for just one or a few years—such as the 1989 conflict in the Comoros when the Presidential Guard took power in a coup d'état—to high-intensity, protracted conflicts that go on for a long period, such as the conflict over governmental power in Colombia that has pitted successive governments against a number of leftist rebel groups since 1964 and is still ongoing, albeit at a low level of activity in the most recent years (see section II). For the purpose of this section, a conflict is classified as 'active' when fighting causes 25 or more battle-related deaths in a year. Cases that fall below this threshold for any reason, such as a de-escalation of hostilities or the signing of a ceasefire, are not listed as active in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) data.[2]

Global patterns

The number of active armed conflicts decreased from 52 in 2015 to 49 in 2016, a decrease of 6 per cent (see table 2.1).[3] Despite this reduction in the number of active armed conflicts, 2016 is part of a trend towards a significantly higher number of conflicts in the past three years. The period 2007–13 had seen steep falls and rises in the number of conflicts from one year to the

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[1] In the 2012–14 editions of the SIPRI Yearbook, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) contributed a chapter on 'organized violence', which included armed conflict, as reported here, conflicts between non-state actors and one-sided violence (violence carried out by a state or an organized group, targeting unarmed civilians). UCDP will present new data on all these categories in the July 2017 issue of the *Journal of Peace Research*, which will be freely available from <ucdp.uu.se>. See the *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 54, no. 4, (July 2017).

[2] It should be noted that listing conflicts as no longer active—fewer than 25 fatalities in a calendar year—does not mean that the incompatibility has been permanently resolved. In some conflicts this may be the case, in others it may not. Thus, in this section, the description of a conflict as not active refers only to the fact that it is not included in the list of active armed conflicts in a given year.

[3] *SIPRI Yearbook 2016* reported 50 active conflicts for 2015. Based on new information, this number has been revised to 52. The two conflicts added both concern Islamic State (IS): between the Algerian Government and Jund al-Khilafah (IS); and between the Turkish Government and IS.

Table 2.1. Number of armed conflicts, by region, type and intensity, 2007–16

Region	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Africa										
Type										
G	7	8	9	8	12	9	10	10	10	11
T	5	5	4	2	4	4	3	3	11	8
G/T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intensity										
Minor	11	12	11	8	13	11	11	10	17	15
War	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	4	4
Americas										
Type										
G	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
G/T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intensity										
Minor	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
War	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asia										
Type										
G	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5
T	10	11	11	7	8	6	10	10	11	10
G/T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intensity										
Minor	12	12	12	10	11	8	12	12	13	13
War	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Europe										
Type										
G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
T	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	5	4	3
G/T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intensity										
Minor	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	4	3	3
War	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Middle East										
Type										
G	2	2	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	4
T	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	7	5
G/T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Intensity										
Minor	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	2	6	4
War	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	5	4	6
Total Type										
G	16	17	19	19	23	18	19	21	19	22
T	19	21	18	12	15	15	17	21	33	26
G/T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**35**	**38**	**37**	**31**	**38**	**33**	**36**	**42**	**52**	**49**
Total Intensity										
Minor	31	33	31	26	32	27	30	30	41	37
War	4	5	6	5	6	6	6	12	11	12
Total	**35**	**38**	**37**	**31**	**38**	**33**	**36**	**42**	**52**	**49**

G = Government; T = Territory; G/T = Government and territory.

next, but the total number was at a distinctly lower level than it has been in the years 2014–16. Much of the increase in the number of conflicts in these years stems from the spread of the Salafi jihadist militant group Islamic State (IS), which often transforms active conflicts causing them to be recorded as new conflicts in the UCDP data.[4] The expansion of IS was particularly pronounced in 2015 when 11 of the 14 new conflicts added to the table of conflicts that year involved the group.[5] In contrast, only two new conflicts involving IS were added in 2016.

Of the 49 active conflicts in 2016, two were fought between states (India–Pakistan and Eritrea–Ethiopia). There were only five interstate conflicts in the 10-year period 2007–16 (Cambodia–Thailand, Djibouti–Eritrea, Eritrea–Ethiopia, India–Pakistan and South Sudan–Sudan) and on an annual basis the number was between zero and two. All interstate conflicts, including the two conflicts active in 2016, have concerned the territorial status of disputed common borders. The conflict between India and Pakistan over the status of the state of Kashmir, focused on the Line of Control (LOC), has been active intermittently since 1948. The last spell of skirmishes that crossed the 25 battle-related deaths threshold began in 2014 and continued in 2015 and 2016, but fighting has been largely sporadic and at a low level. The border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia became active again in 2016, having been dormant since the war in 1998–2000 (see below).

The remaining 47 conflicts were fought within states and concerned government (22), territory (24) or both (1). There has been no clear pattern or dominant type of incompatibility in the period 2007–16. Instead, this has tended to vary from year to year. The number of territorial conflicts increased drastically in 2015, largely as a result of developments linked to IS. In 2016 the difference was much smaller, however, mainly due to the fact that several conflicts over territory ceased to be active in 2016 and new conflicts were evenly distributed between the two categories (see below).

In recent years a clear pattern has emerged for a larger proportion of intrastate conflicts to be internationalized, that is, conflicts that involve troops from other states on the side of one or both of the warring parties. In 2016, just over one-third (38 per cent) of intrastate conflicts were internationalized (18 of the 47). The majority of these (13) were fought against IS, the Taliban, al-Qaeda organizations or other Islamist organizations, such as Boko Haram (Nigeria) and al-Shabab (Somalia). This trend raises concerns about

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[4] For a conflict to be sufficiently transformed to be recorded as new, the organization fighting the government must have: (*a*) changed its name or become part of another group; and (*b*) stated a new incompatibility.

[5] See Themner, L. and Melander, E., 'Patterns of armed conflict, 2006–15', *SIPRI Yearbook 2016*, pp. 201–19.
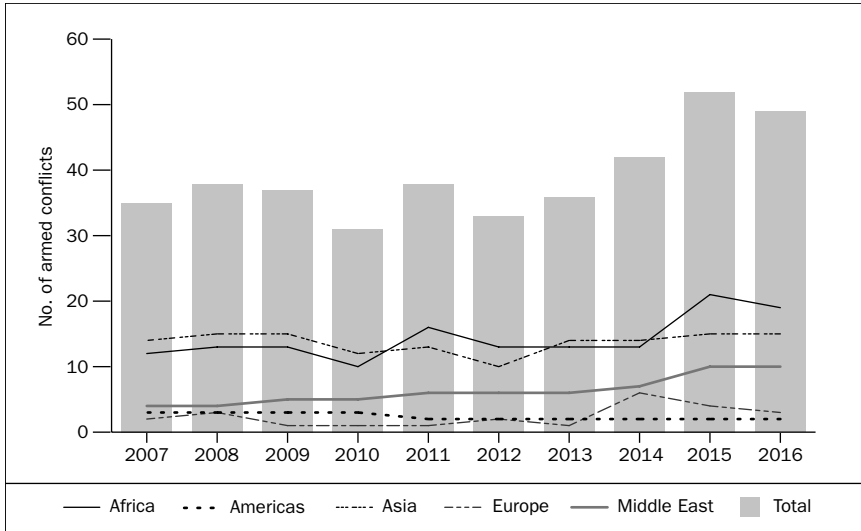
Figure 2.1. Regional distribution and total number of armed conflicts, 2007–16

containing and resolving such conflicts, as external involvement has been shown to be an obstacle to both.[6]

Twelve wars were recorded in 2016, one more than in 2015. This makes 2016 the peak year in the 2007–16 period together with 2014 (see table 2.1). In relative terms the share of wars in all conflicts was slightly lower in 2016 (24 per cent) than in 2014, when the number of wars constituted 29 per cent of all active conflicts. The high number of wars marks another trend in the three-year period 2014–16, compared to the years 2007–13, when the number of wars was between four and six and constituted between 11 and 18 per cent of all active conflicts. Moreover, it should be noted that the annual death toll in armed conflicts in 2014, 2015 or 2016 was substantially higher than in any of the first seven years of the period 2007–16.[7]

Three of the wars listed in 2015 had de-escalated to the level of a minor armed conflict in 2016 (Nigeria, Pakistan and Ukraine). At the same time, four previously recorded conflicts escalated to the level of war (Afghanistan: IS; Libya: IS; Turkey: IS; and Turkey: Kurdistan).

[6] See e.g. Linebarger, C. and Enterline, A, 'Third party intervention, duration, and civil war outcomes', eds T. D. Mason and M. S. McLaughlin, *What Do We Know About Civil War?* (Rowman & Littlefield: New York, 2016).

[7] See Allansson, M., Melander, E. and Themnér, L., 'Organized Violence, 1989–2016', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 54, no. 4, (July 2017).

Regional patterns

There were 19 conflicts recorded for Africa in 2016, the region with the highest number. Asia was the second worst hit region, with 15 active conflicts. Ten conflicts were recorded in the Middle East, three in Europe and two in the Americas. (See table 2.1 and figure 2.1 for the regional distribution of conflicts in the period 2007–16.)

From a longer-term perspective, 38 conflicts were recorded for Africa in the 10-year period 2007–16.[8] The region witnessed a marked increase in the number of active conflicts between 2007 and 2016, from 12 to 19. This is a small drop since 2015 when there were 21 conflicts. In the years before 2015 the number oscillated between 10 and 13, but with a peak in 2011 of 16. Conflicts in Africa have generally been fought over government power, but 2015 had seen a break in this pattern when conflicts over territory dominated for the first time. In 2016, conflicts over governmental power were once again the more common type, but the dominance was much less pronounced than in the earlier period. Four of the 12 wars registered in 2016 took place in Africa: Libya: IS; Nigeria: IS; Somalia; and Sudan.

At 30, the second highest number of conflicts in the period 2007–16 was in Asia.[9] There were 15 active conflicts in 2016, one more than the number recorded in 2007. Over the 10-year period, the number has fluctuated between 10 and 15. In contrast to Africa, Asia has seen a distinct predominance of conflicts fought over territory. Around two-thirds of the conflicts concerned territory throughout the period. Half of the conflicts in Asia in 2007–16 concerned territorial claims in India and Myanmar, which makes those two states the main drivers of the trend. Many of the territorial conflicts in India and Myanmar, as well as other territorial conflicts in the region—such as Pakistan: Baluchistan, the Philippines: Mindanao and Thailand: Patani—trace their origins back to the 20th century. Two of the

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[8] The 38 conflicts recorded for Africa in the period 2007–16 were Algeria; Algeria: Islamic State; Angola: Cabinda; Burundi; Cameroon; Cameroon: Islamic State; Central African Republic; Chad; Chad: Islamic State; Congo; Côte d'Ivoire; Djibouti–Eritrea: Common border; DRC; DRC: 'Kongo Kingdom'; DRC: Katanga; Eritrea–Ethiopia: Common border; Ethiopia: Ogaden; Ethiopia: Oromia; Kenya: North-eastern Province and Coast; Libya; Libya: Islamic State; Mali; Mali: Azawad; Mali: 'Macina Empire'; Mauritania; Mozambique; Niger; Niger: Islamic State; Nigeria; Nigeria: Islamic State; Rwanda; Senegal: Casamance; Somalia; South Sudan; South Sudan–Sudan: Common border; Sudan; Sudan: Abyei; and Uganda. Note that when only the name of a country is given, this indicates a conflict over government. When a conflict is over territory, the name of the contested territory appears after the country name.

[9] The 30 conflicts recorded for Asia in the period 2007–16 were Afghanistan; Afghanistan: Islamic State; Bangladesh; Cambodia–Thailand: Common border; China: East Turkestan; India; India: Assam; India: Bodoland; India: Garoland; India: Islamic State; India: Manipur; India: Kashmir; India: 'Western South East Asia'; India–Pakistan: Kashmir; Malaysia: Sabah; Myanmar: Arakan; Myanmar: Karen; Myanmar: Kachin; Myanmar: Kokang; Myanmar: Nagaland; Myanmar: Palaung; Myanmar: Shan; Pakistan; Pakistan: Balochistan; Pakistan: Islamic State; Philippines; Philippines: Mindanao; Sri Lanka: Eelam; Tajikistan; and Thailand: Patani.

12 wars in 2016 took place in Asia, both in Afghanistan (Afghanistan and Afghanistan: IS).

Only three conflicts (Colombia, Peru and the United States) were recorded in the Americas in the period 2007–16. This is the lowest number of all the regions. All three were active at the outset of the period, but only two were recorded in every year of the period (the USA and Colombia).[10] The third conflict, between the Government of Peru and the rebel group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), was active between 2007 and 2010. All three conflicts in the Americas concerned governmental power and remained at the level of minor armed conflict throughout the period.

Nine conflicts were active in Europe in the period 2007–16.[11] Two conflicts were active in 2007, and the number remained between one and three until 2013. A major shift occurred in 2014 when six conflicts were recorded, three of which were in Ukraine. There were three conflicts recorded in 2016 (Azerbaijan: Nagorno-Karabakh; Russia: IS; and Ukraine: Novorossiya). None of these was new in 2016 and none reached the level of war during the year.[12] All three were fought over territory, as was the case for all the conflicts in Europe in the period 2007–16, with the exception of Ukraine in 2014.

In the Middle East, 16 conflicts were active between 2007 and 2016.[13] The region exhibited a steady increase from 2007, when there were four conflicts, until 2016, when there were 10 active conflicts. There was a relatively even distribution of conflicts over territory and conflicts over government in each year, but territorial conflicts have dominated over the 10-year period. Six of these involve IS. It should also be noted that half of the wars recorded in 2016 took place in the Middle East. Three of these (Iraq; Syria; and Syria: IS) were by far the deadliest among the wars in 2016, matched only by the war over governmental power in Afghanistan in Asia.

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[10] This is the conflict between the US Government and al-Qaeda.

[11] The 9 conflicts recorded for Europe in the period 2007–16 were Azerbaijan: Nagorno-Karabakh; Georgia: South Ossetia; Russia: 'Caucasus Emirate'; Russia: Chechnya; Russia: Islamic State; Ukraine; Ukraine: Donetsk; Ukraine: Lugansk; and Ukraine: 'Novorossiya'.

[12] On conflicts in the post-Soviet space, see chapter 4, section II, in this volume.

[13] The 16 conflicts recorded for the Middle East in the period 2007–16 were Egypt; Egypt: Islamic State; Israel: Palestine; Iran; Iraq; Jordan: Islamic State; Lebanon: Islamic State; Syria; Syria: Islamic State; Syria: 'Rojava Kurdistan'; Syria: Government/'Rojava Kurdistan'; Turkey; Turkey: Islamic State; Turkey: 'Kurdistan'; Yemen; and Yemen: Islamic State. On conflict in the Middle East see chapter 3 in this volume.

Changes in the table of conflicts for 2016

New conflicts in 2016

Four conflicts were recorded as active for the first year in 2016: Bangladesh; Jordan: IS; Pakistan: IS; and Syria: Government/Rojava Kurdistan (see table 2.3).[14]

In Bangladesh, the Taliban-inspired Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) was set up by its leader, Maulana Abdur Rahman ('Shaykh Abdur Rahman'), in April 1998 with the aim of transforming Bangladesh into an Islamic state run by sharia. The group was officially banned in early 2005 and in the second half of the year the JMB initiated a number of bombings, targeting judges and the police. Among the attacks were a bomb in a courthouse in Lakshmipur, Chittagong province, in October 2005 and the suicide bombing of a courthouse in Gazipur, north of Dhaka, in November the same year. Rahman was arrested together with a number of other JMB leaders. He was executed in March 2007 for his role in the 2005 bombings. Violence involving the JMB then largely ceased until 2014, by which time the organization had regrouped. It launched a new round of isolated, small-scale violence in 2014 and 2015. The JMB has increasingly targeted secular and non-Sunni minorities, in addition to the violence involving government targets. In 2016 the Bangladeshi Government cracked down on various extremists, most notably Islamists such as the JMB. The violence escalated, particularly in the second half of the year, reaching the level of a minor armed conflict for the first time.

Despite the proximity of the ongoing war with IS in neighbouring Syria, Jordan had been largely spared the violence involving IS. However, in 2016, IS expanded its activities into Jordan, leading to clashes with the Jordanian Government that resulted in over 25 battle-related deaths during the year. According to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in July 2014, IS considers Jordan to be part of 'As-Sham' (Greater Syria) and therefore claims Jordanian territory as part of the Islamic caliphate.[15] In March, Jordanian security forces clashed with IS in Irbid, near the Syrian border. In June, IS staged a car bombing on an army outpost in the north-east corner of Jordan, on the

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[14] In addition to these four conflicts, the UCDP is also including the conflict between the Government of Turkey and Islamic State for the first time. This conflict is not technically new in 2016 since it is registered as active from 2015. It is therefore not discussed in this part of the text. At the time of conflict initiation, tensions between Turkey and IS had been building for some time, particularly after Turkey joined the US-led anti-IS operation in Iraq and Syria in September 2014. IS had refrained from stating any territorial aims in Turkey but in June 2015 it condemned the Turkish regime and promised the conquest of Istanbul. From this point, UCDP considers the existence of an incompatibility over territory between the two sides. Fighting was sporadic in the latter half of 2015, but escalated to the level of war in 2016. The majority of deaths occurred in Syria, mostly in the Aleppo governorate, linked to the Turkish operation 'Euphrates Shield' initiated in August 2016. On IS, see chapter 3, section II, in this volume. On Turkey see chapter 4, section III, in this volume.

[15] Abu Mohammad al-Adnani al-Shami, 'This is the promise of Allah', 19 June 2014.

border with Syria. Fighting was not solely centred on the border areas. In December there were a number of violent incidents in and near the ancient town of Karak, in the western part of central Jordan.

In 2016, conflict involving IS was also recorded in Pakistan for the first time. As in the case of the conflict with IS in Jordan, where fighters from the Salafist organization moved in from Syria, IS also crossed borders into Pakistan from a neighbouring country, in this case Afghanistan. IS had established a presence in Afghanistan during 2014, where they were joined by local commanders and Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) leaders. On 26 January 2015, 'Wilayah Khorasan' was proclaimed a new province of the Islamic caliphate, made up of areas in Afghanistan and Pakistan's border regions.[16] IS was thus making territorial claims on both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most of the fighting with IS on the Khorasan front in 2016 took place within the ongoing war between the Government of Afghanistan, supported by the governments of Pakistan and the USA, and IS. However, IS also directly challenged the Government of Pakistan inside Pakistan for the first time, and fighting erupted which led to more than 25 battle-related deaths. A small number of lethal attacks against the Pakistani security forces were registered in 2016: in Islamabad in February; in Karachi in March, when the senior IS commander in Karachi was killed; and near Quetta in October, when IS launched a major gun and suicide bomb attack on the Balochistan Police College, leading to the deaths of a large number of police cadets.[17]

A new conflict was also recorded for Syria in 2016: between the Government of Syria and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The SDF was formed on 10 October 2015 by a diverse set of Syrian opposition forces, of which the largest is the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Democrat, PYD). The PYD had been active in a separate conflict over the territory of Rojava Kurdistan from 2012, which ended when it joined the SDF. The SDF was formed with broader aims than the more limited territorial aims of the PYD: the installation of a democratic government and the transformation of Syria into a federal state, with autonomy for Rojava Kurdistan in the northern part of the country. The SDF's aims thus concerned both government power and territory.[18] The SDF has since emerged as a formidable opposition

[16] Roul, A., 'Wilayat Khurasan: Islamic State consolidates position in AfPak region', *Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 13, no. 7 (Apr. 2015).

[17] Associated Press Newswires, 'Gunmen kill police officer, wound 2 in Pakistani capital', 13 Feb. 2016; Press Trust of India, 'Top IS commander killed in Pakistan', 17 Mar. 2016; and Agence France-Presse, 'Islamist militants kill 61 in Pakistan police attack', 25 Oct. 2016.

[18] The UCDP defines different conflicts according to which incompatibility is being disputed by force. When a new group emerges and the incompatibility changes, a new conflict is recorded. A similar example from previous years is that of Chechnya. The UCDP recorded an intrastate conflict over Chechnya fought between the Russian Government and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) between 1994 and 2007. In the mid-2000s the conflict spread to large parts of the North Caucasus and radical Islamists gained influence. This development led to the official abolition of the ChRI and its replacement with the Caucasus Emirate by the ChRI leader, Doku Umarov, in 2007.

organization in Syria, receiving various types of support from the USA and other Western states. The SDF, like the PYD, engaged in fighting government forces but in addition to the conflict with the Government of Syria, it also served as the main antagonist of IS in that part of Syria. The conflict between the SDF and IS, however, is coded as a non-state conflict and therefore not included in the table of conflicts in this section.[19]

Restarted conflicts

Six conflicts restarted in 2016, having been recorded as inactive for at least one year: the Republic of the Congo; Eritrea–Ethiopia; Mozambique; Rwanda; Myanmar: Arakan; and Turkey.

A minor armed conflict was recorded in the Republic of the Congo in 2016. The conflict over government power in Congo was last active in 2002. Like then, the organization fighting the Government of Congo in 2016 was the Ntsiloulous, led by Frédéric Bintsamou ('Pastor Ntoumi'). Congo had suffered a large-scale civil war in 1997–99, preceded by a smaller conflict in 1993–94. This period of violence had pitted various militias against each other in a power struggle between then President Pascal Lissouba and Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas, on the one hand, and former President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, on the other. The war ended with Sassou-Nguesso being reinstated as president; a position he continues to hold. One of the militias fighting against the forces of Sassou-Nguesso was the Ntsiloulous, which is primarily active in Pool, the region that surrounds the capital, Brazzaville. Ntsiloulous, which withdrew to Pool after the war, kept its arms and fighting with government forces erupted again in 2002.

The 2002 fighting ceased after a March 2003 agreement, according to which the Ntsiloulous would be disarmed and reintegrated. Implementation of the agreement stalled, however, and intermittent clashes have been reported in subsequent years, none of which reached the level for inclusion in the data on armed conflicts. After Sassou-Nguesso was re-elected once more in March 2016, fighting erupted yet again in an episode of violence that struck Brazzaville in early April. An initial attack by the Ntsiloulous was followed by government airstrikes on residential areas in the Pool region. Isolated violent incidents in Pool involving the two sides were also reported from September and throughout the year, but the circumstances surrounding the fighting were often difficult to verify.[20]

The territorial incompatibility over Chechnya was therefore terminated and replaced with a new conflict over territory, the 'Caucasus Emirate', which spanned Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Ossetia, Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria.

[19] On the conflict in Syria and the activities of IS, see chapter 3, sections I and II, in this volume.

[20] 'Republic of Congo: President Tightens Rule', *Africa Research Bulletin* vol. 53, no. 4 (Apr. 2016), p. 20968; Amnesty International, 'Republic of Congo: Air strikes hit residential areas including schools', 18 Apr. 2016; and 'Republic of Congo: Pool Region Violence', *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 53, no. 10 (Oct. 2016), p. 21183.

The border area between Eritrea and Ethiopia saw renewed conflict in 2016 between Eritrean and Ethiopian armed forces. The two states fought a major war in 1998–2000, initially centred on the area surrounding the town of Badme, but later concerning various parts of the border. The war occurred against a backdrop of consistently deteriorating relations between the two governments. An accord to settle the border dispute was signed in 2000 and a United Nations mission—the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea—was deployed. Tensions remained high despite the accord and after the UN mission was disbanded in 2008, these tensions increased further. Unverified reports of clashes surfaced, for example in early 2010 when Eritrea claimed that it had been attacked by Ethiopian forces.[21] This volatile situation culminated in June 2016 in a battle near the border town of Tsorena, which resulted in at least 25 battle-related deaths.[22]

In Mozambique, the conflict over government power again reached the level of a minor armed conflict in 2016. It had last been recorded as active in 2013. The Mozambican civil war of 1977–92, between the Government of Mozambique and the Mozambican National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, RENAMO), was settled by the 1992 General Peace Agreement. In 2013, however, tensions were reignited between the Mozambican Government and RENAMO (which has been led by Afonso Dhlakama since 1979). RENAMO accused the government of violating the 1992 peace agreement, most notably through the rigging of elections. It should be noted that at the time, RENAMO was experiencing dwindling political influence and an accompanying loss of revenue and thus had an incentive to renegotiate its political standing. After the police raided RENAMO premises in Muxunge in April 2013, a series of skirmishes ensued. Talks between the two sides followed, but these soon collapsed and fighting continued. Sporadic clashes resulted in fewer than 25 deaths in both 2014 and 2015 and the conflict was therefore not included in the table of conflicts in these years. The political situation did not improve, however, and new skirmishes erupted in 2016 when the conflict yet again escalated to the level of a minor armed conflict. A small number of clashes were reported in provinces with a heavy RENAMO presence: in Sofala province in February, April and October, and in Manica province in April.[23] One of the main areas of contention was the outcome of the October 2014 general election, in which Dhlakama claims that RENAMO won six provinces—including Sofala and Manica—that should therefore be

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[21] Agence France-Press, 'Eritrea says attacked by Ethiopia', 3 Jan. 2010; Reuters, 'Eritrea says it killed 10 Ethiopian troops', 3 Jan. 2010.

[22] Eritrea, however, claimed that the number was much higher. See e.g. Agence France-Press, 'Eritrea claims it killed 200 in Ethiopian clash', 16 June 2016.

[23] International Crisis Group, 'Mozambique', *Crisis Watch*, Feb. 2016, Apr. 2016 and Oct. 2016.

handed over to RENAMO control. RENAMO's interpretation of the election outcome is denied by the government and also questioned by observers.[24]

Rwanda saw a reignition of the conflict over government in the country in 2016. It was last active in 2012, and the fighting in 2016 involved the same Hutu-based group, the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, FDLR), which opposes the Tutsi-dominated Government of Rwanda. The FDLR was formed in 2000 as a successor to the Army for the Liberation of Rwanda (ALIR), which had previously been fighting against the Rwandan Government. ALIR, in turn, had grown out of the remnants of the Interahamwe militia and former Rwandan army forces, which had been responsible for the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The FDLR fought Rwandan forces, which were supported by forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), between 2000 and 2012. The fighting mostly took place in the DRC. In 2012 the Rwandan military forces, which had been present in the DRC intermittently since the 1990s, left the country after relations with the Government of the DRC deteriorated. The conflict was not registered as active in subsequent years. From 2015, however, the two governments began cooperating again and since then, government forces from the DRC have been supporting Rwanda in the conflict with the FDLR. All the fighting in 2016 took place in the province of North Kivu in the DRC, and all the fighting involved DRC troops rather than Rwandan troops, as recorded by the UCDP.

Of the many conflicts over territory that have been fought in Myanmar since independence in 1948, the conflict over the territory of Arakan is one of the oldest. The most recent year in which it was recorded as an active armed conflict was 1994. In October 2016 a completely new group surfaced: the Faith Movement of Arakan (Harakah al-Yaqin, HaY). Like the Rohingya Solidarity Organization, which was active in the 1990s, HaY is a Muslim organization that draws its support from the Muslim Rohingya, which constitutes the majority group in the northern part of Arakan state but a minority group throughout the state as a whole. The exact origins of the group are not known but HaY has been linked to various other Muslim organizations, some of which are in neighbouring Bangladesh where its members are reported to have trained before the attacks that took place in October 2016.[25] These attacks were met with a major, indiscriminate military crackdown on Rohingyas in general, and suspected separatists in particular.

In Turkey, two separate developments unfolded in 2016, which led to the inclusion of a conflict concerning government in Turkey with two separate opposition organizations, both of which were active at the level required for

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[24] AllAfrica, 'Mozambique: not true that Renamo "won six provinces", says Nyusi', 27 Aug. 2016.
[25] International Crisis Group, 'Myanmar: a new Muslim insurgency in Rakhine State', Asia Report no. 283, 15 Dec. 2016.

inclusion for the first time.[26] First, Turkey—which has a history of both successful and unsuccessful military coups d'état—experienced an attempted coup on the evening of 15 July 2016. Just before midnight, units of the Turkish Armed Forces calling themselves the 'Peace at Home Council' (Yurtta Sulh Konseyi) stated on national television that they had seized control of Turkey in order to reinstate constitutional order, human rights and freedoms, the rule of law and general security. They declared martial law as troops deployed in the country's two biggest cities, Istanbul and Ankara. By the early morning of 16 July, the coup attempt had all but failed and its leaders had been defeated by forces loyal to the state. Around 300 people had died and the material destruction was substantial.

The repercussions of the attempted coup were extensive. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused the 'Gülen movement' of being behind it. Fethullah Gülen and his Hizmet movement, a social and religious (Islamic) movement, had once been allied with Erdogan but fell out with him and the ruling Justice and Development party in late 2013. Tens of thousands of alleged Gülen supporters were imprisoned in the days following the coup attempt, including military officials, judges and various other types of civil servant, and also teachers. Observers have claimed that the increasingly authoritarian regime took advantage of the coup attempt to crack down on all types of real or perceived opposition; or even that the coup occurred in an attempt to prevent upcoming purges of the kind that occurred after it.[27]

Second, the Kurdish Freedom Hawks (Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan, TAK) staged a number of attacks on Turkish security forces in 2016, most notably a 17 February bomb attack on military buses in Ankara and another bomb attack at an Istanbul football stadium on 10 December. Details of the exact origin and aims of the TAK are somewhat unclear, but it is reported to have split from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, PKK) around 2004. Since then, it has operated as a separate organization despite obvious similarities linked to both groups' staunch Kurdish nationalism. The TAK differs from the PKK in terms of its focus on the Turkish regime and its policies, its area of operation, which is mainly centred on Istanbul and Ankara, and its choice of targets, which includes the tourism industry in addition to the security forces. The TAK had staged several small attacks since its formation, but only in 2016 did its activities result in more than 25 battle-related deaths in one year.

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[26] Note that the UCDP counts fighting between different sets of actors over the same type of incompatibility (government or territory) in the same country as a single conflict. The conflict in Turkey over government was last active in 2005 when it involved the Maoist Communist Party (MKP), a group which has been largely inactive since.

[27] On the attempted coup in Turkey see chapter 4, section III, in this volume.

Conflicts that are no longer active

Of the conflicts recorded in 2015, 13 were removed from the table in 2016: Algeria: IS; Burundi; Chad; Lebanon: IS; Libya; Mali: Azawad; Mali: Macina Empire; Myanmar: Kokang; Myanmar: Palaung; Myanmar: Shan; Russia: Caucasus Emirate; Syria: Kurdistan; and Yemen: IS.[28]

The conflict in Algeria involving Jund al-Khilafa had become active in 2015. The group pledged allegiance to IS in November 2014 and this conflict is thus one of the many territorial conflicts recorded that concern the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. The conflict just reached the level for inclusion (25 battle-related deaths) in 2015, but fighting was more sporadic in 2016 and it remained below the threshold for inclusion.

In Burundi, the conflict over government power, which took place in a situation of generalized and widespread political violence, had involved two groups in 2015. An attempted coup against the Government of President Pierre Nkurunziza was launched on 13 May by an army faction led by Officer Godefroid Niyombare. Fierce fighting followed in the capital, Bujumbura. Separately, a new group emerged in December 2015: the Republican Forces of Burundi (Les Forces Republicaines du Burundi, Forebu).[29] Forebu attacked a number of military installations in late 2015. Clashes were also reported in the first months of 2016, but the level of reported violence that could be attributed to this particular pair of actors was below the 25 battle-related deaths threshold. It should be stressed that Burundi has been embroiled in a massive political and human rights crisis since 2015. There has been large-scale and widespread political violence involving the security forces and various militias. Much of the violence has targeted civilians and the deaths that have occurred often cannot be attributed to any particular actor.[30]

The conflict in Chad involving the Government of Chad against IS became active in 2015 after the originally Nigerian group Boko Haram pledged allegiance to IS and laid claim to territory that stretched across many states, including Chad. By 2016, however, the situation had de-escalated. There were only a small number of attacks, all near Chad's border with Niger and Nigeria, and fatalities did not reach the 25 battle-related deaths threshold.

In Lebanon, the conflict between the Government of Lebanon and IS had been active in 2014 and 2015 as a minor armed conflict, but in 2016 fighting de-escalated and was just below the level for inclusion. The clashes that did occur were centred on Lebanon's border with Syria in the north.

Libya saw escalating conflict with IS in 2016 but the conflict over government power was not recorded as active. Libya has been embroiled in a com-

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[28] Note that the Algeria: IS conflict was not included in SIPRI Yearbook 2016 but has been added for 2015 after further investigation.
[29] Agence France-Presse, 'Burundi rebels announce force to oust president', 23 Dec. 2015.
[30] See e.g. Human Rights Watch, 'Burundi', *Human Rights Watch World Report, 2017*, pp. 157–63.

plex power struggle and widespread violence in the aftermath of the civil war and overthrow of President Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Following elections in 2014, two governments claimed power: one in the capital, Tripoli, and a parallel government in Tobruk. The Tripoli government is treated as the government in Libya by the UCDP.[31] Militias allied to the two sides have since been involved in armed conflict with each other. In 2016, the Tripoli government was fully preoccupied with a massive offensive on the town of Sirte in an attempt to oust IS from Libya. Militias allied with the Tobruk government, on the other hand, were embroiled in fighting with various Islamist militias in Benghazi. Thus, virtually no fighting was recorded between the two sides in the conflict over government in 2016.

In Mali, the conflict over government power involving al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar Dine continued in 2016. However, the conflict concerning the territory of Azawad, which has pitted various Tuareg- and Arab-based groups against the Government of Mali since the 1990s, did not meet the criteria for inclusion in 2016. The active group in 2015 was the, mainly Tuareg, Coordination of Azawad Movements (Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad, CMA). A peace agreement was signed in May 2015, granting the northern region limited autonomy. Armed activity between the Government of Mali and the CMA ceased after the signing of the accord. However, implementation of the accord has been slow and political violence with other groups continues.[32]

Another conflict in Mali that became active for the first time in 2015—Mali: Macina Empire—also ceased to be active in 2016. The Macina Liberation Front (Front de Libération du Macina, FLM) had first emerged in January 2015, with the aim of establishing a Fulani-led Macina Empire. Low-level fighting with the Government of Mali took place in the first part of the year but in May 2016 the FLM pledged allegiance to Ansar Dine, another Islamist group involved in the ongoing conflict over government in Mali. The merger with Ansar Dine meant that the FLM ceased to exist as a separate organization.

Three territorial conflicts in Myanmar that were active in 2015 became inactive in 2016. All three concerned territory in Shan state in north-eastern

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[31] According to UCDP definitions, 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. Following their August 2014 capture of Tripoli, we therefore coded the General National Council, and its supporting militias (e.g. Misrata forces), as the Government of Libya. From early April 2016, the GNC stepped down to be replaced by the Government of National Accord, as a result of the Libya Peace Agreement of 19 December 2015. In accordance with UCDP definitions, despite the fact that the Tobruk government (the House of Representatives) is internationally recognized, we consider it to have been a non-state actor throughout this period. On the conflict in Libya see chapter 3, section I, in this volume.

[32] On the conflict in Mali see Sköns, E. and Nyirabikali, G., 'The implementation of the peace process in Mali: a complex case of peacebuilding', *SIPRI Yearbook 2016*, pp. 159–88.

Myanmar. In the conflict between the Government of Myanmar and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) concerning the territory of Kokang, a Chinese-speaking part of the state of Shan, no fatalities were recorded by the UCDP in 2016. In contrast, a number of clashes were reported in the other two conflicts: one involving the Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF) over the territory of Palaung; and the other a conflict between the government and the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) over the territory of the state of Shan. In both cases, however, the number of battle-related deaths that could be verified was below the level required for inclusion as an armed conflict.

The territorial conflict in Russia concerning the Caucasus Emirate, which grew out of another territorial conflict over the territory of Chechnya, active in 1994–2007, did not reach the level for inclusion in 2016. The forces of the Caucasus Emirate had been fighting the Russian Government since 2007, seeking the establishment of an Islamic emirate in the region. Since the group's leader, Doku Umarov, was killed in 2013, the Caucasus Emirate has struggled under Russian military pressure and constant leadership changes. Fighters have left the organization to join Jihadist groups active in Syria, leaving it increasingly weak and fragmented.

The territorial conflict in Syria over Kurdistan, between the Government of Syria and the Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Democrat, PYD), which had been active since 2012, is not included in the table of conflicts active in 2016. The formation in October 2015 of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) by the PYD and a number of other groups with different goals than establishing a territory of Kurdistan transformed the conflict in such a way that it ceased to be active in this form (see new conflicts above).

In Yemen, the conflict between the Government of Yemen and IS, which was active in 2015, did not continue in 2016. IS remained active in Yemen, where it was involved in fighting the Forces of Hadi (see table 2.2), but no fighting with the government was recorded.[33]

Conclusions

The number of active armed conflicts in 2016 was the second highest in the 10-year period 2007–16: only 2015 was higher (see figure 2.1). The three-year

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[33] In Jan. 2015, the group Ansarallah ousted the government led by President Hadi and took control of the capital. According to UCDP definitions, 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. Following Ansarallah's capture of Sanaa, we therefore code Ansarallah as the government in Yemen. Hadi managed to escape to Aden in February and declared all measures taken by Ansarallah 'null and illegitimate'. Hadi retracted his resignation and stated that he had resumed the position of president. While his government is the internationally recognized one, the Forces of Hadi are treated as a non-state actor, in accordance with the above-mentioned UCDP definitions.

Table 2.2. Armed conflicts active in 2016

Location[a]	Parties[b]	Incompatibility[c]	Start year[d]	Intensity	Change from 2015[e]
Africa					
Algeria	Government of Algeria vs. al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	Government	1998 /1999	Minor	0
Cameroon	Government of Cameroon vs. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)	Government	2015 /2015	Minor	– –
Cameroon (Cameroon, Nigeria)	Government of Cameroon vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2015 /2015	Minor	–
Congo	Government of Congo vs. Ntsiloulous	Government	1998 /1998	Minor	..
Eritrea, Ethiopia	Government of Eritrea vs. Government of Ethiopia	Territory: Common border	1998 /1998	Minor	..
Ethiopia	Government of Ethiopia vs. Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)	Territory: Ogaden	1994 /1994	Minor	0
Ethiopia	Government of Ethiopia vs. Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)	Territory: Oromiya	1974 /1977	Minor	0
Kenya (Kenya, Somalia)	Government of Kenya vs. Al-Shabab	Territory: Northeastern Province and Coast	2015 /2015	Minor	+
Libya	Government of Libya, USA vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2015 /2015	War	+ +
Mali	Government of Mali, France, MINUSMA[f] vs. al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	Government	2009 /2009	Minor	–
	vs. Ansar Dine		2012 /2012	Minor	..
Mozambique	Government of Mozambique vs. Resist ncia national moçambicana (Renamo, Mozambican National Resistance)	Government	1977 /1977	Minor	..
Niger	Government of Niger, Chad, Nigeria vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2015 /2015	Minor	+ +
Nigeria	Government of Nigeria, Cameroon vs. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)	Government	2009 /2009	Minor	– –
Nigeria	Government of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2015 /2015	War	+
Rwanda (DRC)	Government of Rwanda, DR Congo vs. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR, Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda)	Government	2001 /2001	Minor	..

Location[a]	Parties[b]	Incompatibility[c]	Start year[d]	Intensity	Change from 2015[e]
Somalia	Government of Somalia, AMISOM[g] vs. Al-Shabab	Government	2008 /2008	War	+ +
South Sudan	Government of South Sudan vs.Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO)	Government	2013 /2013	Minor	+
Sudan	Government of Sudan vs. Al-Jabhat Al-Thawriyat Al-Sudan (SRF, Sudan Revolutionary Front)	Government	2011 /2011	War	0
Uganda (DRC)	Government of Uganda, DR Congo vs. Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF)	Government	1996 /1996	Minor	–
Americas					
Colombia	Government of Colombia vs. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN, National Liberation Army)	Government	1965 /1966	Minor	–
USA (Afghanistan, Pakistan)	Government of USA, Afghanistan, Pakistan vs. al-Qaeda	Government	2001 /2001	Minor	+ +
Asia and Oceania					
Afghanistan (Afghanistan, Pakistan)	Government of Afghanistan, Pakistan, USA vs. Taleban	Government	1995 /1995	War	0
Afghanistan	Government of Afghanistan, Pakistan, USA vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2015 /2015	War	+ +
Bangladesh	Government of Bangladesh vs. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)	Government	2005 /2016	Minor	..
India	Government of India vs. Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist)	Government	2004 /2005	Minor	+ +
India	Government of India vs. United Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFW)	Territory: Western South East Asia	2015 /2015	Minor	– –'
India (Afghanistan, India)	Government of India vs. Kashmir insurgents	Territory: Kashmir	1984 /1990	Minor	+ +
India, Pakistan	Government of India vs. Government of Pakistan	Territory: Kashmir	1948 /1948	Minor	+ +
Myanmar	Government of Myanmar vs. Harakah al-Yaqin (HaY, Faith Movement of Arakan)	Territory: Arakan	2016 /2016	Minor	..
Myanmar	Government of Myanmar vs. Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)	Territory: Kachin	1961 /1961	Minor	– –
Pakistan (Afghanistan, Pakistan)	Government of Pakistan, Afghanistan vs. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Taleban Movement of Pakistan)	Government	2007 /2007	Minor	– –

Location[a]	Parties[b]	Incompatibility[c]	Start year[d]	Intensity	Change from 2015[e]
Pakistan	Government of Pakistan vs. Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA)	Territory: Balochistan	2004 /2004	Minor	+ +
	vs. United Baloch Army (UBA)		2012 /2016	Minor	..
Pakistan	Government of Pakistan vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2016 /2016	Minor	..
Philippines	Government of Philippines vs. Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)	Government	1969 /1969	Minor	–
Philippines	Government of Philippines vs. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)	Territory: Mindanao	1993 /1993	Minor	+
	vs. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFM)		2012 /2012	Minor	–
Thailand	Government of Thailand vs. Patani insurgents	Territory: Patani	1965 /2003	Minor	0
Europe					
Azerbaijan (Armenia, Azerbaijan)	Government of Azerbaijan vs. Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia	Territory: Nagorno-Karabakh	1991 /1991	Minor	+ +
Russia	Government of Russia vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2015 /2015	Minor	+
Ukraine	Government of Ukraine vs. Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), Russia	Territory: Novorossiya	2015 /2015	Minor	+
	vs. Lugansk People's Republic (LPR), Russia		2015 /2015	Minor	– –
Middle East					
Egypt	Government of Egypt vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2014 /2015	Minor	– –
Iraq (Belgium, Iraq, Libya, Syria)	Government of Iraq, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Jordan, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK, USA vs. Islamic State	Government	2004 /2004	War	0
Jordan (Jordan, Syria)	Government of Jordan vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2016 /2016	Minor	..
Syria	Government of Syria, Iran, Russia vs. Syrian insurgents	Government	2011 /2011	War	–
Syria	Government of Syria, Iran, Russia vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2013 /2013	War	+
Syria	Government of Syria vs. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)	Government/ Territory: Rojava Kurdistan	2015 /2016	Minor	..

Location[a]	Parties[b]	Incompatibility[c]	Start year[d]	Intensity	Change from 2015[e]
Turkey	Government of Turkey				
	vs. Teyr baz n Azadiya Kurdistan (TAK, Kurdistan Freedom Falcons)	Government	2005 /2016	Minor	..
	vs. Yurtta Suhl Konseyi (YSK, Peace at Home Council)		2016 /2016	Minor	..
Turkey (Iraq, Syria, Turkey)	Government of Turkey vs. Islamic State	Territory: Islamic State	2015 /2015	War	+ +
Turkey (Iraq, Turkey)	Government of Turkey vs. Partiya Karker n Kurdistan (PKK, Kurdistan Workers' Party)	Territory: Kurdistan	1983 /1984	War	+
Yemen (Saudia Arabia, Yemen)	Government of Yemen vs. Forces of Hadi, Saudi-led coalition[h]	Government	2015 /2015	War	– –

MINUSMA = United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; AMISOM = African Union Mission to Somalia.

Notes: The conflicts in the table are listed by location, in alphabetical order, within 5 geographical regions: Africa—excluding Egypt; the Americas—including North, Central and South America and the Caribbean; Asia—including Oceania, Australia and New Zealand; Europe—including the Caucasus; and the Middle East—Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and the states of the Arabian peninsula.

[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] The government party and its allies are listed first, followed by the opposition parties, which may be organizations or other states. An opposition organization is any non-governmental group that has publicly announced a name for itself as well as its political goals and has used armed force to achieve its goals. Only those parties and alliances which were active during 2016 are listed in this column. A comma between 2 warring parties indicates an alliance. In cases where 2 governments have both stated incompatible positions, e.g. over a shared border, they are listed in alphabetical order.

[c] The stated general incompatible positions, 'government', 'territory' and 'government/territory', refer to contested incompatibilities concerning (i)governmental power, i.e. type of political system or a change of central government or its composition; (ii)territory, i.e. control of territory (interstate conflict), secession or autonomy and (iii) government and territory, i.e. a mix of the former two, where it is impossible to determine which incompatibility is the primary one. A location may have incompatibilities over several different territories, but only 1 incompatibility over government.

[d] Start year refers to the onset of a given dyad (i.e. the fighting between a government and a rebel group or another government). The first year given is when the first recorded battle-related death in the dyad occurred and the second year is the year when fighting caused at least 25 battle-related deaths for the first time.

[e] Change from 2015 is measured as the increase or decrease in the number of battle-related deaths in 2016 compared to the number of battle-related deaths in 2015. 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 2015.

f MINUSMA in 2016 made up of troops from Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, China, Congo, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mauritania, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America and Yemen. Note that France, apart from contributing troops to MINUSMA, also deployed troops under the French-led counterterrorism Operation Barkhane.

g AMISOM in 2016 made up of troops from Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Uganda. United States of America also contributed troops on the side of the government.

h The Saudi-led coalition comprised armed forces from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and UAE.

period 2014–16 exhibits markedly higher annual numbers of armed conflicts than the seven years from 2007 to 2013. Compared across a longer time period, the numbers of armed conflicts over recent years are equivalent to the annual numbers of armed conflicts in the period 1990–92. The two periods 1990–92 and 2014–16 constitute two distinct peaks in the post-cold war era. The peak in the 1990s coincided with the break-up of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia, which opened up political opportunities for self-determination movements that had been impossible during the previous era, and which ultimately led to conflictual political developments. The current peak shares some of those characteristics in the form of authoritarian states disintegrating, particularly in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. A majority of the new conflicts in this period took place in the Middle East or were in other ways connected to developments in the Middle East.

The main explanation for the sharp rise in the number of active armed conflicts in 2015 is the expansion of IS. Of the 14 new conflicts added to the table in 2015, 11 were linked to the expanded activities of IS.[34] This pattern continued, but to a much lesser extent, in 2016. In contrast to 2015, which saw the rise of new IS groups as well as several existing groups shifting allegiance to IS and thus also shifting their goals, the two new conflicts, in Jordan and Pakistan, were the result of IS groups in neighbouring countries extending their zone of operation. IS expanded into Jordan from Syria and into Pakistan from Afghanistan. In addition to its stalled expansion into new areas of operation and creation of new wilayahs (provinces), IS suffered a series of major setbacks in ongoing conflicts in 2016. In Iraq and in Syria, IS lost substantial areas that they had previously controlled. The situation was particularly acute in Iraq. Moreover, the assault on IS-controlled Mosul—the second largest city in Iraq—by Iraqi Government forces reinforced by allied militias and international forces, which began in the autumn of 2016, was critical.

[34] See Themner and Melander (note 5), pp. 201–19.

The loss of Mosul would be the loss of the last major IS urban stronghold in Iraq. In Syria, it is estimated that up to 20 per cent of the territory previously controlled by IS was lost in 2016.[35] In Libya, IS suffered a crushing blow when the Government of Libya retook the town of Sirte and its surrounding areas from IS in December 2016.[36] The ousting of IS from Sirte, which it had held since June 2015, came after a seven-month long offensive and heavy losses on both sides, and in which government forces had been supported by US airpower. Libya, and Sirte in particular, had served as the centre of IS's North African front, intended to serve as a springboard for IS efforts to expand into North Africa and other parts of Africa. The end of IS control in Sirte meant that the group no longer held any sizeable territory on the African continent. However, large numbers of IS members relocated before the fall of Sirte, and where they might pick up operations remains to be seen. This could be further west in Tunisia, from where large contingents of IS fighters originate, or in any number of other locations. IS in Nigeria—which was formed when Boko Haram pledged allegiance to IS in 2015—split into two parts after Abubakar Shekau was replaced as leader, and he revived Boko Haram. Wilayah West Africa suffered setbacks in Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon.

What these IS setbacks mean in the long term remains to be seen. IS is far from the only actor driving conflicts, as shown in Syria where it is just one of many opposition groups facing ruthless military action by the Government of Syria and its allies. The end for IS in Syria or Iraq is not likely to mean an end to the conflicts ravaging these countries, which—together with the constantly escalating conflict in Afghanistan—are the most deadly currently active.

Despite the currently bleak outlook, there may be some useful lessons from history. For example, the wars in Indochina (Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam) in the 1960s and 1970s were interwoven in complex ways and seemed unresolvable at the time. Nonetheless, these wars did end and, despite many years of low-level conflict in Cambodia, the region has moved away from its conflictual past. In addition, the state of conflict today should be put in perspective. The number of conflicts and the level of violence have increased compared to the recent past. However, when comparing trends today with the destruction inflicted by the large wars of the 1980s—such as the Iran–Iraq War, the Soviet-era war in Afghanistan or the wars in Ethiopia—levels of violence are still much lower.

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[35] Mesterhazy, A. (rapporteur), 'The International Military Campaigns against Daesh', Report prepared for the NATO Transatlantic Defence and Security Committee, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, no.163, 16 Nov. 2006. On IS setbacks in 2016 see chapter 3, section II, in this volume.

[36] On the governments of Libya see note 31.

Conflict trends have been discouraging, not the least in the Middle East, but the numerous changes in recent years have not all been negative. A large number of conflicts have been initiated, but a large number also ceased to be active. Many conflicts escalated, such as in Afghanistan and Libya, but a large number also de-escalated, most notably in Syria and Nigeria. Some of the reasons for such changes are idiosyncratic, such as the lower number of fatalities in the Syrian conflict in 2016, which is the result of a ceasefire in early 2016 that only temporarily halted the fighting. Other changes are part of a more general pattern, such as the reduction in the number of conflicts in Latin America. The 2016 peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo, FARC–EP) (see section II) and ongoing negotiations with the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) in Colombia—the only guerrilla group still in conflict with a Latin American government—mean that this region might soon have no active conflicts recorded at all.